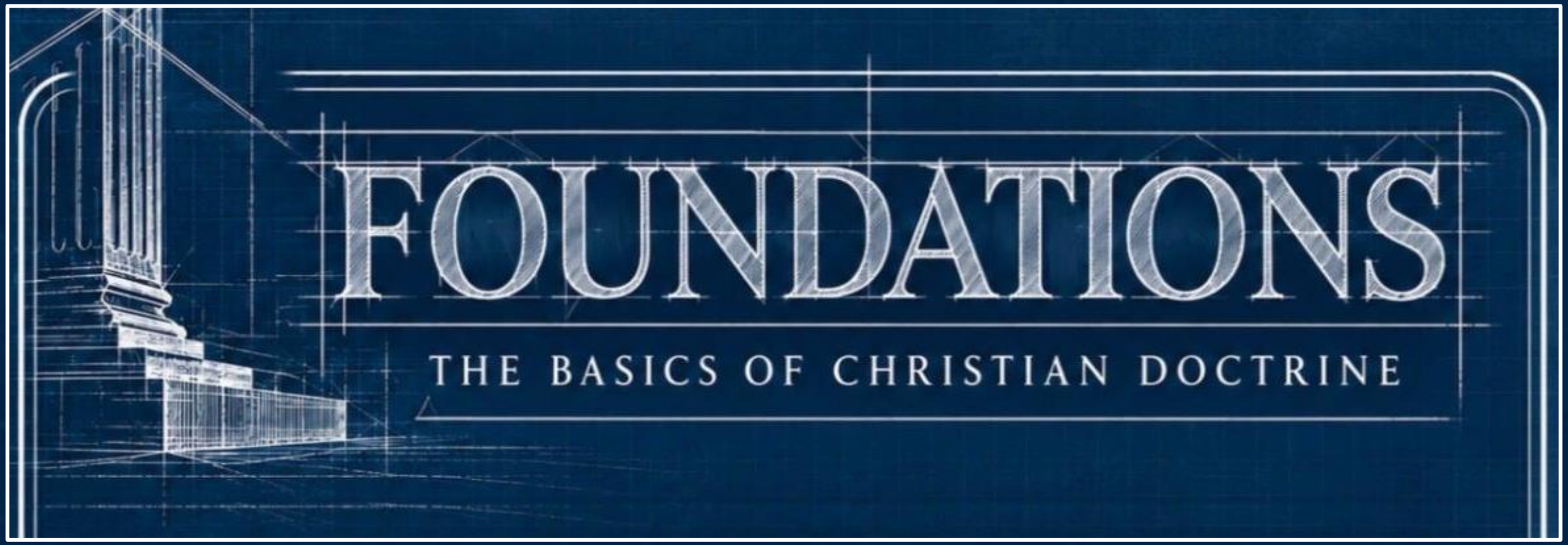

FOUNDATIONS
THE BASICS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Study Topics In This Study

Week 1: Bibliology

Week 2: The Trinity

Week 3: The Doctrine of Sin (Hamartiology)

Week 4: Christology

Week 5: The Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

Week 6: The Doctrine of the Church

Week 7: Eschatology

Bibliology

Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy… “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired [θεόπνευστος *theopneustos*] by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:14–17

The Trinity

God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

Source: Abstract of Systematic Theology by James P. Boyce

The Doctrine of Sin

Hamartiology

How can my sins be forgiven?

and He Himself bore our sins [*hamartia* ἁμαρτία] in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin [*hamartia* ἁμαρτία] and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 1 Peter 2:24

Christology

- **Christology** is the study of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. This is the most important doctrine of the Word of God, which follows from the fact that Jesus Christ is the Center and Executor of God's plan of redemption from sin, is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).
- Everything that God has ever done for man, is doing, or will ever do for man is through Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ. Paul gives the sweeping assertion of Christ being the Sum Total of our redemption and the Focal of all of God's dealings with us in (Colossians 1:13-19).

- E. C. Bragg

The Doctrine of Salvation

Soteriology

What is Soteriology?

- **Soteriology** is the theological and philosophical study of salvation. The word comes from two Greek roots: *soteria* (meaning salvation or deliverance) and *logos* (meaning study or discourse). Across various world traditions and belief systems, it explores how individuals are rescued, healed, or liberated from a dire state—such as sin, suffering, karmic bondage, or existential fear.
- Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation. Soteriology discusses how Christ's death secures the salvation of those who believe.

Other than Christology, Soteriology is the area where Christianity is the most different from the cults and other world religions. Understanding Biblical Soteriology will help us to know why salvation is by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. No other religion bases salvation on faith alone. Soteriology helps us to see why. A clear understanding of our salvation will provide a "peace that passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) because we come to know that He who can never fail is the means by which we were saved and the means by which we remain secure in our salvation. If we were responsible to save ourselves and keep ourselves saved, we would fail. Thank God that is not the case!

- https://www.gotquestions.org/Soteriology.html

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas [Simon Peter], then to the twelve.
1 Corinthians 15:1-5

The Doctrine of the Church

Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is the study of the church. The word Ecclesiology comes from two Greek words meaning "assembly" and "word" - combining to mean "the study of the church." The church is the assembly of believers who belong to God. Ecclesiology is crucial to understand God’s purpose for believers in the world today.

Ecclesiology helps us to understand the role of the church and our role in the church. It teaches us about the ordinances of the church, how church leadership is to be chosen and structured, and what the church is to be doing in regards to believers (worship and discipleship) and unbelievers (ministry and evangelism). A Biblical understanding of Ecclesiology would go a long way to correct many of the common problems in churches today. Above all, we must understand that the church is the Body of Christ and that each of us has a specific function and role within that body.

- https://www.gotquestions.org/Ecclesiology.html

Matthew 16

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Matthew 16:13



And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” Matthew 16:14

- John the Baptist - forerunner of the Messiah
- Elijah - revered Old Testament prophet
- Jeremiah - revered Old Testament prophet
- One of the prophets

*All flattering answers and all wrong answers

He [Jesus] said to them [the 12 disciples], “But who do you say that I am?” Matthew 16:15

Today we must ask… who is Jesus to me?

The most important question we will ever answer

To you... Is Jesus a nice guy or an important religious figure or a spiritual leader or a key person in history or a fairy-tale character?

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16:16

“Christos” is the New Testament Greek equivalent of the Old Testament Hebrew “Messiah,” which means “the anointed One.” In Jesus are fulfilled all the promises of God.

- Bible Knowledge Commentary

The statement by Peter here is not the product of early enthusiasm but of studied reflection and solemn faith.

– Wycliffe Bible Commentary

And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona [Aramaic for “son of Jonah”], because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 16:17

*Jesus linked Simon Peter of the New Testament to Jonah of the Old Testament… the same calling to be a missionary and testify of God to the nations of the world

*Spiritual truth is heavenly, not man-made

“I also say to you that you are Peter (Greek Πέτρος Petros… a rock or stone), and upon this rock I will build My church…” Matthew 16:18

What is the Rock?

Jesus was praising Peter for his accurate statement about Him, and was introducing His work of building the church on Himself. - Bible Knowledge Commentary

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”
Matthew 16:18

Hades (Sheol) is the realm of the dead

Gates of Hell… the continuous, creative, glamorous attempts of the enemy of God to replace Jesus with something less… to give death instead of life

This passage teaches us that the Christian church is no ordinary institution of common interest, but that it is built by Jesus Christ Himself. It is the only human institution that will endure into eternity, overcoming even the gates of hell, not because of its own human strength, but because Christ, the builder, sustains it.

The church is the people that Jesus came to save through His death and resurrection. Since the church is the redeemed people, where Christ has willed to dwell, the church is where salvation is to be found. “All who know God’s salvation know it as members of the body of Christ.” - Christopher Kou

Jesus has given His church a mission, and this mission implies an eschatology. He has commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15) and to make disciples of nations by baptizing them and teaching them to follow and obey Christ (Matthew 28:18–20). To this end, the church is to make disciples of the nations, not only by winning converts, but by “teaching them to observe” Christ’s commands (Matthew 28:20). The extent of Christ’s authority (“all authority”) defines the scope of our mission (“all nations”), and His presence with us is the guarantor of our mission’s success. - Christopher Kou

We should love the Church because Jesus loved the church.

How much did He love the church?
Enough to die for it.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
Ephesians 5:25

The Church is NOT the physical building where Christians meet, nor is it a religious institution, an ethical organization, or a sociopolitical association.

The Church is the assembly of the redeemed – those who have been called by God the Father to salvation as a gift to His Son. It is the corporate gathering of those who have been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Christ so that they are citizens of heaven, and not of this world.

- John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue

When was the Church born?

Acts 1-2

Happy Birthday Church

OUR church was founded on October 18, 1884

THE church was founded on Shavuot / Day of Pentecost

Sacrifice is the major feature of the feasts. Believers in Mashiach are not responsible to keep these feasts, but knowledge of them enhances our faith. Our Lord kept every one of them without fail, even celebrating Pesach on His last earthly night. Now I will tell you what the feasts are called, when they happen and why they remain significant.

It was on Mount Sinai that God gave Moses the dates an
observances of the seven feasts. Here are their names:

1. Passover *(Pesach)* - *Nisan 14-15*
2. Unleavened Bread *(Chag Hamotzi)* - *Nisan 15-22*
3. First Fruits *(Yom habikkurim)* - *Nisan 16-17*
4. Pentecost *(Shavu'ot)* - *Sivan 6-7*
5. Trumpets *(Yom Teru'ah)* - *Tishri 1*
6. Atonement *(Yom Kippur)* - *Tishri 10*
7. Tabernacles *(Sukkot)* - *Tishri 15-22*

When do they happen? God's calendar is based on the phases of the moon. Each month in a lunar calendar begins with a new moon. Pesach falls on the first full moon of Spring. The first three feasts, Pesach, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits fall in March and April. The fourth one, Shavu'ot, marked the summer harvest and occurs in late May or early June. The last three feasts, Trumpets, Yom Kippur and Sukkot happen in September and October.

http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Introduction/introduction.html

To these [the apostles] He [Jesus] also presented Himself alive after His suffering [crucifixion], by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Acts 1:3-5

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Acts 1:6-8

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up [ascended] while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven [Second Coming].”
Acts 1:9-11

Then they [disciples] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. Acts 1:12-14

"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" Matthew 13:55-56

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Acts 2:1

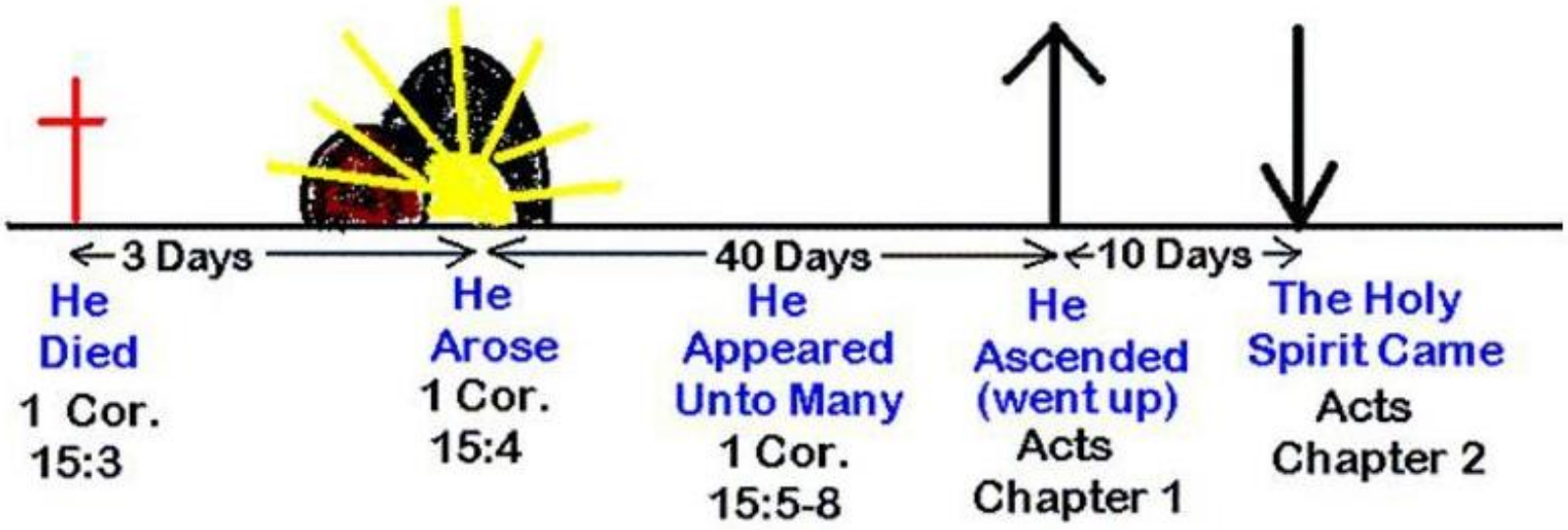


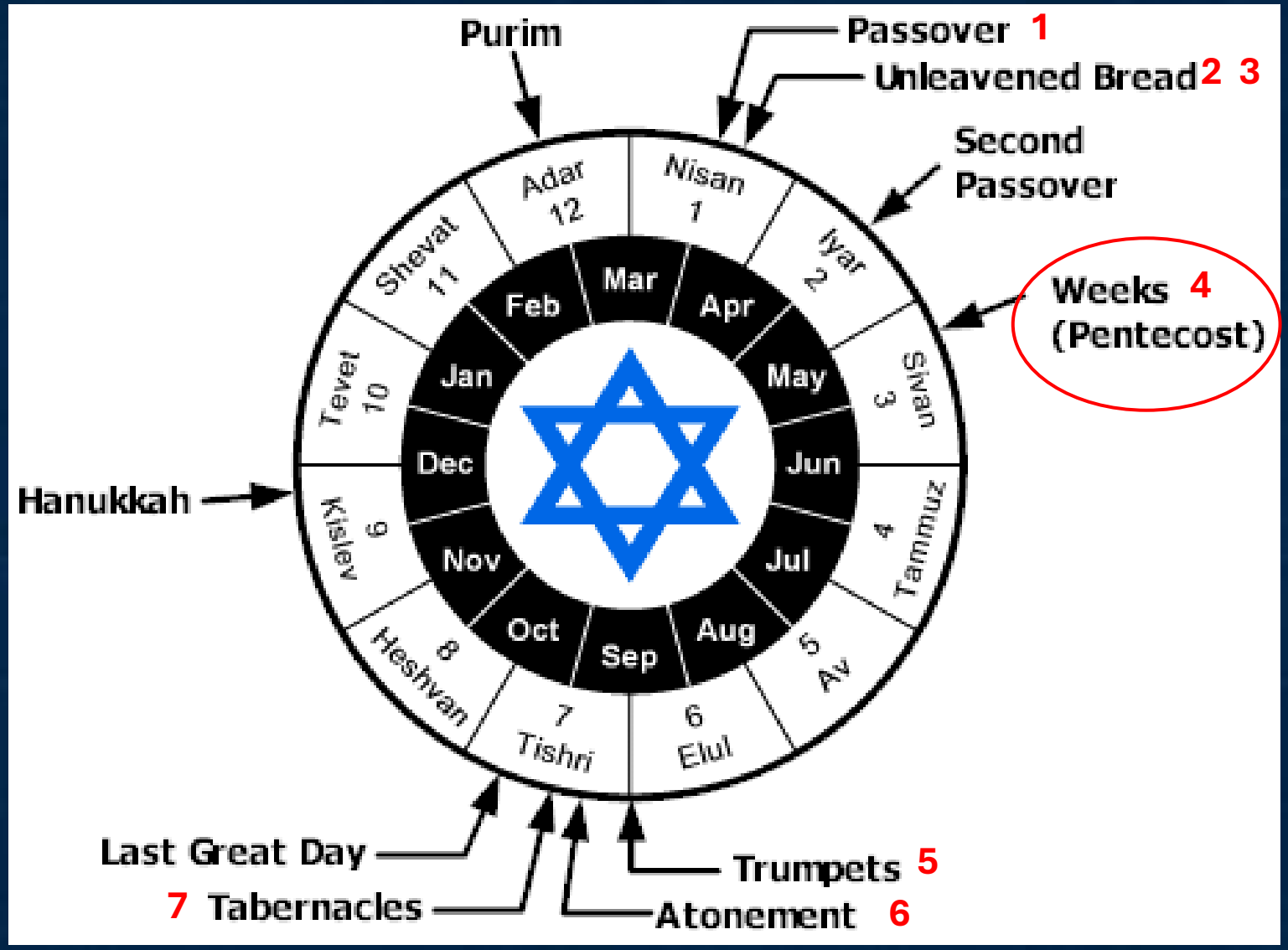
Pentecost

Pentecost means the 50th day

It was on the 50th day after Easter Sunday that the Church as we know it began.

The risen Jesus had been with his disciples for 40 days before the ascension.





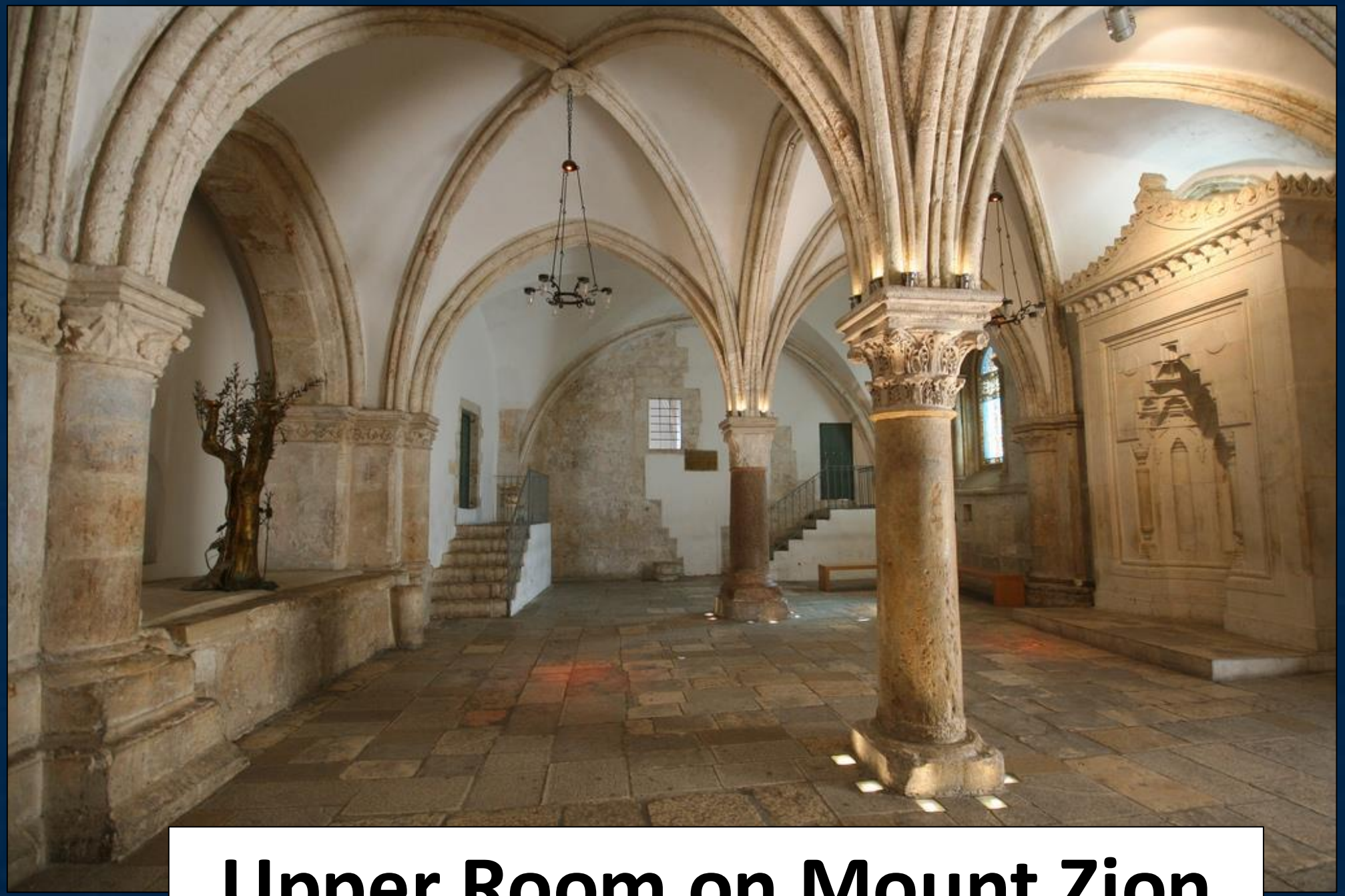
http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Introduction/introduction.html


HOLOCAUST
(C) BibleWalks.com



- Mount Zion, just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.
- Captured around the turn of the 20th century

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Acts 2:1



Upper Room on Mount Zion





Rather than picturing small round or rectangular standing tables, these words would have called to mind a room with a large U-shaped triclinium dining table with cushions.

https://rel-tour.blogspot.com/2015/04/reclining-in-upper-room-jerusalem.html

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Acts 2:2

God chose the day of Shavuot (Pentecost) to fulfill His promise in Acts 1:8 of the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus the Messiah.

Also, Jesus said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” John 14:26

Shalosh Regalim שלוש רגלים
Three Biblical pilgrimage festivals

“Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Pesach) and at the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot/Pentecost) and at the Feast of Booths (Sukkot), and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.”
Deuteronomy 16:16-17

God said to Moses… “You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot/Pentecost), that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel.” Exodus 34:22-23

The Lord said to Moses, “You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf [Hebrew עֹמֶר omer] of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days [“Pentecost” in Greek] to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord.” Leviticus 23:15-16

*The ascension of Jesus occurred 40 days after His Resurrection

*The counting period is called Sefirat HaOmer (Counting the Omer)

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. Acts 2:3

Sounds a lot like…

- The angel of the Lord appeared to him [Moses] in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. Exodus 3:2
- Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. Exodus 19:18

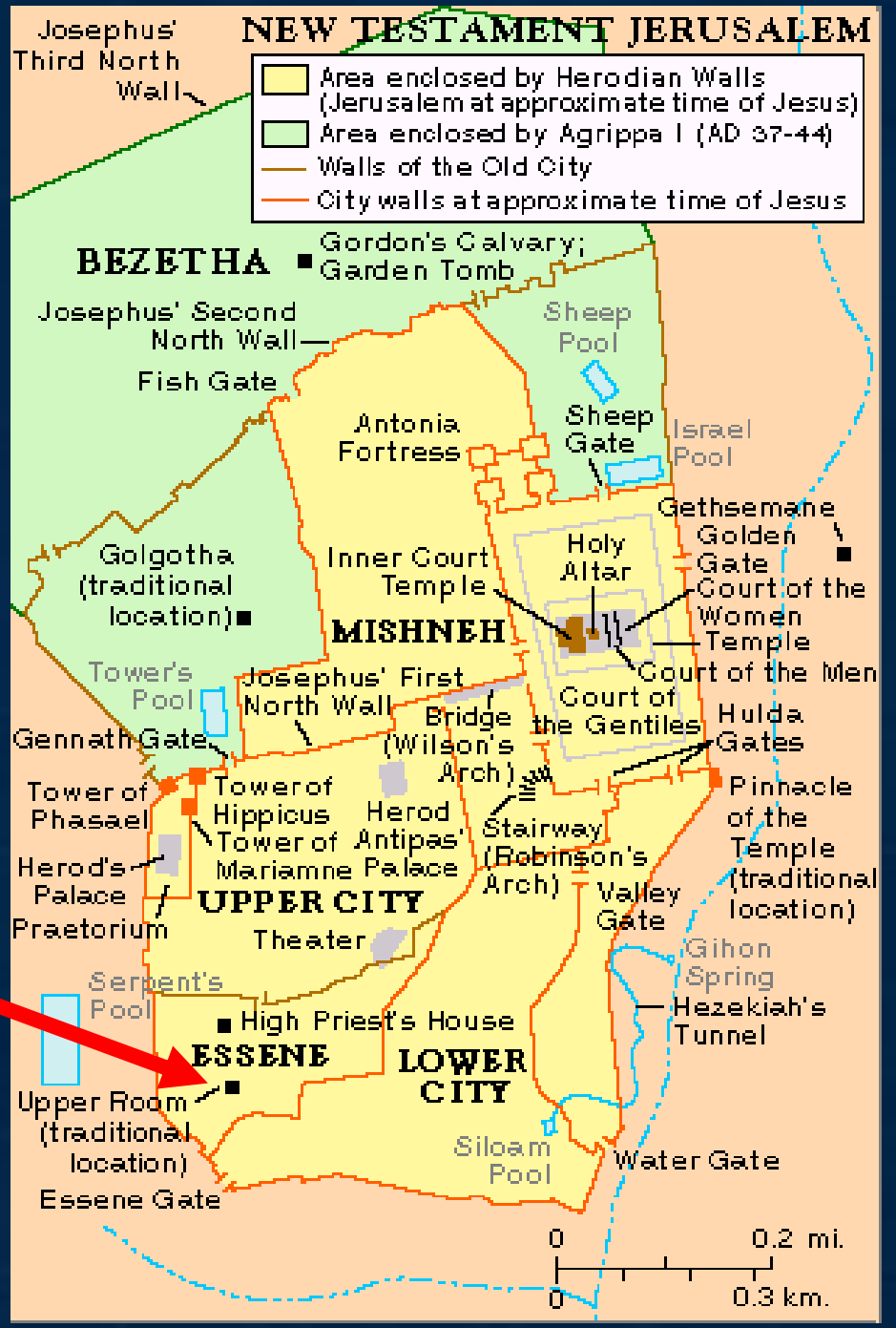
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit [Ruach HaKodesh] and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?” Acts 2:4-8



Why were all these people in Jerusalem?

Why were the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem?

Answer: Shavuot (Pentecost)





"Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."
Acts 2:9-11



We know the thousands of people spoke different languages and lived in different areas. We can assume they dressed differently and looked differently and had different skin colors.

Racism is evil and unbiblical and breaks the heart of God and can never be tolerated by those who profess to follow Jesus as Savior.

And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.” But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day [9 am];” Acts 2:12-15

“but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel [2:28-32]: ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. And it shall be that <u>everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.</u>’” Acts 2:16-21

[Peter preaching…] “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” Acts 2:22-24

“For David says of Him [Psalm 16:8-11], ‘I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.’’ Acts 2:25-28

[Peter preaching…] “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne [Psalm 132:11], he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.” Acts 2:29-31



David's Tomb on Mount Zion

Tradition tells us that King David was born and also died on Shavuot.

(Jerusalem Talmud Hagigah 2:3)

Peter said, “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says [in Psalm 110:1]: ‘The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [God the Son], “Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” Acts 2:32-36

Now when they [large crowd of Jewish pilgrims] heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” Acts 2:37-39

And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. Acts 2:40-41

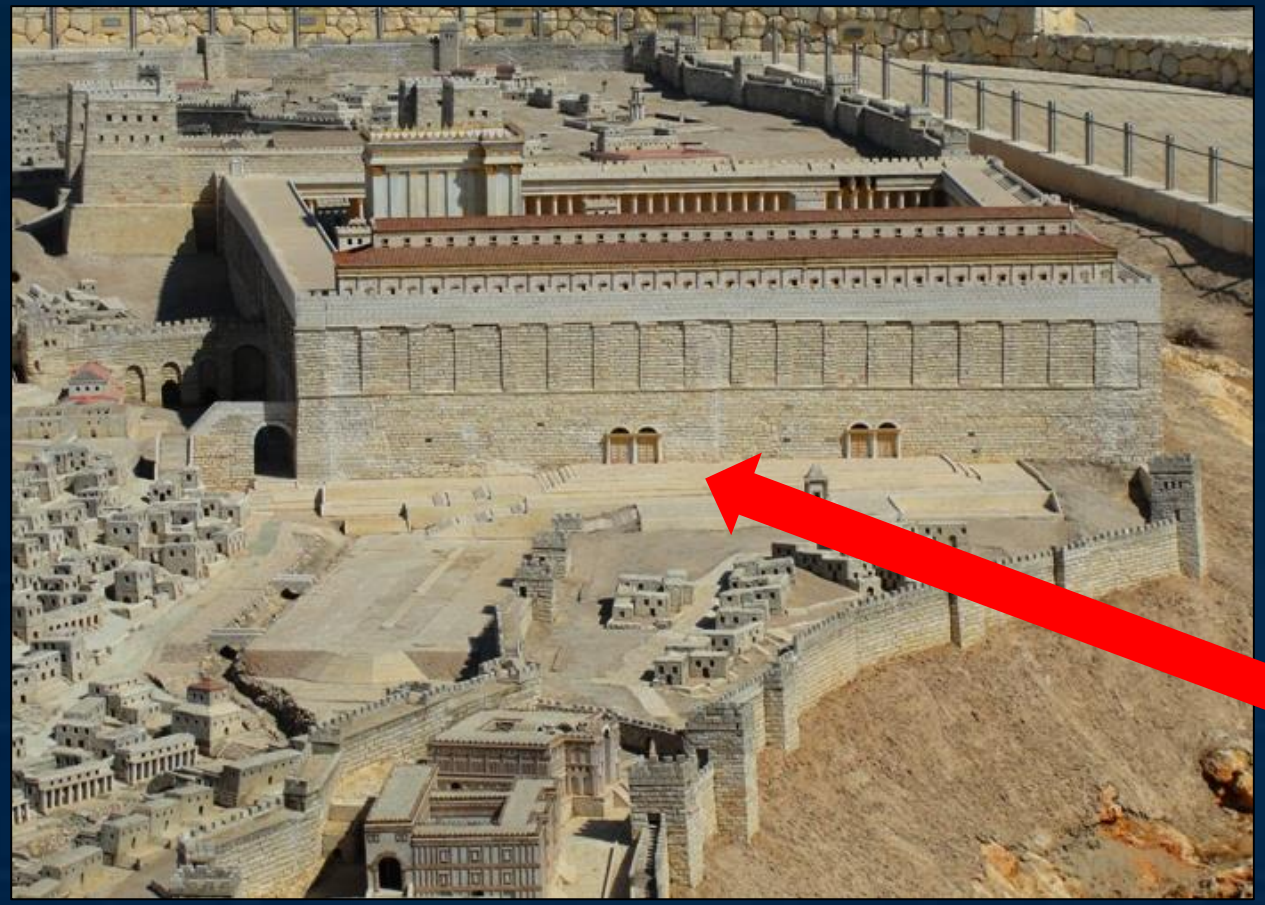
- On that Shavuot, Israel saw an amazing reversal. After receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, 3,000 souls perished because of the sin of the golden calf (see Exodus 32:28).
- On this same day 1,400 years later, this same number of souls were saved after the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) was poured out! About 3,000 people were added to the community of Believers on Shavuot.
- The Spirit of God reversed the destruction caused by the sin of man!

- Messianic Bible



Southern steps leading up to Temple Mount in Jerusalem







Southern steps leading up to the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem



A mikveh (Jewish ritual bath) near the Southern steps leading up to Temple Mount in Jerusalem



They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.
Acts 2:42-45

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.
Acts 2:46-47

What should followers of Jesus do as the Church?

Acts 2:42-47

1. Learn the apostles' teachings (God's Word)
2. Fellowship
3. Break bread together
4. Pray
5. Share with those in need
6. Praise God
7. Talk about the salvation found in Jesus
8. Do all these things with people who look like you and those who don't look like you

The Universal Church consists of everyone, everywhere, who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). This verse says that anyone who believes is part of the body of Christ and has received the Spirit of Christ as evidence. All those who have received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ comprise the universal church.

The Local Church is described in Galatians 1:1–2: “Paul, an apostle . . . and all the brothers with me, to the churches in Galatia.” Here we see that in the province of Galatia there were many churches—they had a localized ministry and were scattered throughout the province. They were local churches. A Baptist church, a Lutheran church, an E-Free church, etc., is not *the* church, as in the universal church; rather, it is a *local* church, a local body of believers. The universal church is comprised of everyone who belongs to Christ. Members of the universal church should seek fellowship and edification in a local church.

- https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-the-church.html

There are three usages of Church in the New Testament

1. **The local assembly of called out ones**, "The church in thy house," Philippians 2, The church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla; Romans 16:5, "The church in Ephesus,, etc., Revelation 2:3.

2. **The churches in a province**, "Churches in Asia," 1 Corinthians 16:1; "Churches of the Gentiles," Romans 16:4; "Churches of Macedonia," 2 Corinthians 8:1; of Judea, Galatians 1:22.

3. **The whole body of Christ**, "Christ loved the church," Ephesians 5:25; "Christ is Head of the Church," Ephesians 5:23.

– E.C. Bragg

While the New Testament does not contain a formal "membership" requirement, numerous passages describe a defined, committed, and accountable local church body to support the practice of church membership.

1. Gathering and Commitment

Scripture explicitly commands believers not to isolate themselves, emphasizing regular assembly and shared life.

Hebrews 10:24–25 urges believers not to neglect meeting together, instead encouraging one another as the day draws near.

Acts 2:41–42 describes new believers being "added" to the church in specific numbers, devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer.

2. Mutual Care and the "Body" Metaphor

The New Testament repeatedly compares the church to a physical body, implying that every believer is a necessary part attached to a specific whole.

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 explains that just as a body has many parts that belong to one another, believers are individually members of Christ's body and rely on each other to function.

Romans 12:4–5 notes that though believers are many, they form one body in Christ, and each member belongs to all the others.

3. Submission to Spiritual Leadership

To obey commands regarding church leaders, believers must know which leaders they are called to follow, and leaders must know whom they are responsible for.

Hebrews 13:17 instructs Christians to obey and submit to their leaders, because those leaders keep watch over their souls as those who will have to give an account to God.

1 Peter 5:2–3 commands elders to shepherd the specific "flock of God that is among you," exercising oversight willingly rather than domineering over those in their charge.

4. Church Discipline and Accountability

Practicing biblical accountability requires a clear distinction between those who are inside the local church community and those who are outside.

Matthew 18:15–17 outlines a step-by-step process for addressing unrepentant sin, culminating in bringing the matter before "the church" and, if necessary, treating the unrepentant person as an outsider.

1 Corinthians 5:12–13 distinguishes between judging those "inside" the church versus those "outside," instructing the congregation to expel an unrepentant member from among themselves.

How are followers of Jesus supposed to “do” Church?

Comparison of Church Governance Models

Polity Type	Seat of Authority	Key Leadership Roles	Common Traditions
Episcopal	**Bishops** (hierarchical)	Pope, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons	Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Methodist
Presbyterian	**Elders** (representative assemblies)	Teaching Elders (Pastors), Ruling Elders, Sessions, Synods	Presbyterian, Reformed
Congregational	**The Congregation** (local autonomy)	Pastors, Deacons, Church Members	Baptist, Congregationalist, Churches of Christ

Each church governance model draws on specific New Testament passages to argue that its structure reflects the pattern established by Jesus and the early apostles.

Episcopal Polity (Rule by Bishops)

- Proponents of episcopal governance argue that Jesus entrusted leadership to the apostles, who then passed that authority down to individual successors.
- **The Primacy of Peter:** In **Matthew 16:18–19**, Jesus names Peter the "rock" upon which he will build his church and gives him the "keys of the kingdom," which Catholic tradition views as establishing a central papal office.
- **Apostolic Succession:** In **2 Timothy 2:2**, Paul instructs Timothy to entrust his teachings to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others, showing a chain of delegated authority.
- **Regional Oversight:** In **Titus 1:5** and **1 Timothy 1:3**, Paul leaves Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus with individual authority to appoint elders, correct false doctrine, and oversee multiple churches—functioning like early diocesan bishops.

Presbyterian Polity (Rule by Elders)

- Proponents of presbyterian governance point out that New Testament churches were consistently led by a plurality of elders rather than a single local bishop.
- **Plurality of Elders:** In **Acts 14:23** and **Philippians 1:1**, the early church appoints multiple elders (*presbyteroi*) in every local congregation, using the terms "elder" and "overseer" (*episkopos*) interchangeably (**Titus 1:5–7**).
- **Regional Councils:** In **Acts 15**, apostles and elders from different regions gather at the Jerusalem Council to debate a theological dispute and issue a binding decision for all local churches (**Acts 16:4**).
- **Two Types of Elders:** In **1 Timothy 5:17**, Paul distinguishes between elders who direct the affairs of the church (ruling elders) and those whose work is preaching and teaching (teaching elders).

Congregational Polity (Rule by the Congregation)

- Proponents of congregational governance emphasize the priesthood of all believers and passages where the entire local assembly makes final decisions.
- **Final Authority in Discipline:** In **Matthew 18:15–17**, Jesus instructs believers to take unresolved sin to "the church" (*ekklesia*) as the final court of appeal, rather than to a bishop or regional council.
- **Congregational Elections:** In **Acts 6:1–6**, the apostles tell the whole assembly of disciples to choose seven men to serve as early deacons, demonstrating democratic participation by the members.
- **Local Accountability:** In **1 Corinthians 5:4–5** and **Galatians 1:8–9**, Paul addresses the entire congregation directly—holding all members responsible for maintaining doctrinal purity and exercising church discipline.

The idea that believers are individual parts (or "members") of the body means that every Christian is intentionally designed with a unique function that no one else can replace (1 Corinthians 12:27). Rather than being passive spectators, every believer is an active, vital component of the church's life and mission.

- For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:4-5
- Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27

1. What Being a "Part of the Body" Means

In **1 Corinthians 12:14–26** and **Romans 12:4–5**, Paul highlights four practical truths about how individual believers fit into the whole:

Intentional Placement. God places each believer in the body exactly where He wants them (**1 Corinthians 12:18**). A person's gifts, personality, and life experiences are not accidental; they are tailored for specific service.

No Inferior Parts. Believers who serve quietly behind the scenes—such as those with gifts of mercy, helps, or giving—are just as essential as visible leaders like preachers or teachers. Paul notes that the parts of the body that seem weaker or less honorable are actually indispensable (**1 Corinthians 12:22–24**).

No Independence. A hand or an eye cannot survive severed from the body. In the same way, Christians cannot grow into full spiritual maturity in isolation; they need the support, accountability, and gifts of other believers (**Ephesians 4:16**).

Mutual Ownership. In **Romans 12:5**, Paul writes that believers "belong to one another." Your spiritual gifts are not given for personal status, but for the benefit and encouragement of the people sitting next to you.

2. How Different Gifts Act as Body Parts

While the Bible does not assign a strict one-to-one symbol to every gift, theologians often illustrate how different roles mirror physical anatomy:

Eyes and Ears (Prophecy, Discernment, Wisdom). Help the church see spiritual realities, recognize truth from deception, and sense where God is leading.

Mouth (Teaching, Evangelism, Exhortation). Communicates truth, shares the gospel with the world, and speaks encouragement to weary believers.

Hands and Feet (Serving, Helps, Mercy, Giving). Carry out the practical work of love by feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and meeting physical needs.

Spine and Nervous System (Leadership, Administration, Pastoring). Provide structure, coordination, and care so all the other parts can move together smoothly without burning out.

3. Practical Implications for a Believer

Reject Comparison. Feeling inadequate because you lack someone else's visible gift is like a foot wishing it were an eye (**1 Corinthians 12:15–16**). If the whole body were an eye, it could not walk or hear.

Reject Pride. Having a prominent role does not make a believer superior to others (**1 Corinthians 12:21**). Leaders rely completely on the unseen prayers, generosity, and service of the rest of the congregation.

Stay Active. When one part of a physical body goes numb or stops working, the rest of the body has to overcompensate and suffers strain. When every believer uses their specific gift, the whole church grows healthy and strong (**Ephesians 4:16**).

Spiritual gifts (*charismata*) are supernatural abilities given by the Holy Spirit to believers to serve others and build up the church.

- But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:7
- The New Testament contains **four primary lists** of spiritual gifts across **Romans 12**, **1 Corinthians 12**, **Ephesians 4**, and **1 Peter 4**. Because no single list is identical, most theologians view them as representative examples rather than an exhaustive catalog.

1. Motivational & Service Gifts (Romans 12:6–8)

Often called "motivational gifts," these shape how a believer naturally perceives needs and serves the local church body.

- **Prophecy.** Speaking God's truth clearly to convict, encourage, and call people to righteousness.
- **Serving (Ministry).** Identifying practical, physical needs and joyfully working behind the scenes to meet them.
- **Teaching.** Explaining and applying biblical truth so others can understand and grow.
- **Exhortation (Encouragement).** Comforting, motivating, and counseling others to live out their faith practically.
- **Giving.** Contributing money, time, and material resources with extraordinary generosity and cheerfulness.
- **Leadership.** Organizing, casting vision, and directing groups toward a shared spiritual goal.
- **Mercy.** Feeling deep empathy for the suffering and taking compassionate action to relieve their pain.

2. Manifestation & Supernatural Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28)

These gifts highlight direct, often miraculous demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's power in worship and ministry.

- **Word of Wisdom.** Applying divine insight to solve complex problems or guide difficult decisions.
- **Word of Knowledge.** Supernaturally understanding spiritual truths or specific facts without prior human learning.
- **Faith.** Extraordinary, unwavering trust in God's promises and power in the face of impossible odds.
- **Gifts of Healing.** Serving as a channel for God to restore physical, emotional, or spiritual health.
- **Working of Miracles.** Performing supernatural acts that transcend the natural laws of creation.
- **Distinguishing of Spirits (Discernment).** Recognizing whether a message, teaching, or influence comes from God, human nature, or deceptive spirits.
- **Speaking in Tongues.** Speaking in an unlearned human or spiritual language to praise God or deliver a message.
- **Interpretation of Tongues.** Translating a spoken message in tongues so the entire congregation can understand and be encouraged.
- **Helps.** Supporting the work of others to free them up for their primary ministry tasks.
- **Administration.** Steering, organizing, and managing church structures and logistics effectively.

3. Leadership & Equipping Gifts (Ephesians 4:11)

These are gifted individuals given by Christ to train and mature the broader church body.

- **Apostleship.** Pioneering new churches, crossing cultural barriers with the gospel, and laying spiritual foundations.
- **Evangelism.** Sharing the gospel clearly and persuasively so non-believers come to faith.
- **Pastoring (Shepherding).** Nurturing, protecting, and guiding a community of believers over the long term. *(Note: Prophecy and teaching also appear in this list).*

4. Broad Categories (1 Peter 4:10–11)

Peter summarizes all spiritual gifts into two overarching areas of ministry, emphasizing that every believer has received at least one gift to steward:

- **Speaking Gifts.** Any gift that uses words to communicate God's truth, such as preaching, teaching, counseling, or prophecy.
- **Serving Gifts.** Any gift that demonstrates God's love through practical action, such as hospitality, administration, mercy, or financial generosity.

How are followers of Jesus supposed to “lead” the Church?

Biblical Office / Role	Original Greek Term	Primary Scriptural References	Core Function
Elder / Overseer / Pastor	*Presbyteros* / *Episkopos* / *Poimen*	1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:5–9, 1 Peter 5:1–4	Spiritual oversight, shepherding, and teaching
Deacon	*Diakonos*	Acts 6:1–6, 1 Timothy 3:8–13, Romans 16:1	Practical service, mercy, and logistics
Apostle	*Apostolos*	Ephesians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 9:1–2	Foundational leadership and church planting
Prophet	*Prophetes*	Acts 11:27–28, 1 Corinthians 14:3, 29	Delivering spiritual exhortation and truth
Evangelist	*Euangelistes*	Acts 21:8, Ephesians 4:11, 2 Timothy 4:5	Preaching the gospel to reach new believers

When is the “conclusion” of the Church?

One day, the Church age will reach its glorious fullness when Jesus Christ comes to rapture His own. At that time…

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

From that point forward, the Church will be in the presence of her Savior for all eternity.

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:3-5

What should the Church prioritize while we wait?

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:23-25