

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

If the church as God planned it and Christ built it is to exist in any age, there are certain principles to which men must be committed. As surely as any of these principles are abandoned, so surely will the New Testament church cease to exist. Consider the following necessary principles:

A commitment to the absolute authority of Christ: His authority is emphasized each time the New Testament calls Him “Lord.” He worked His miracles primarily for the purpose of establishing His Divine authority and identity (John 20:30–31). This commitment includes the recognition that the church belongs to Him, and He alone has the right to determine every feature of it. Until all men who claim to follow Christ allow Him alone to be the head of the church, religious confusion must reign.

A commitment to the New Testament as the final authority in religion: Christ expresses His authority through the New Testament alone. No alleged latter-day revelations (e.g., *The Book of Mormon*, *The Koran*) or prophets (e.g., Joseph Smith, Mohammed) can be accepted by people who are serious about the New Testament church. This principle also relates to the Old Testament. It is inspired history and is necessary for our understanding of God and His plan of redemption through His Son. However, the law of Moses was no more given to govern men since the cross than was the law of Christ (the Gospel) given to govern men **before** the cross (Col. 2:14).

A commitment to the New Testament plan of salvation: The only plan of salvation in the world is the one made possible by the cross and revealed in the New Testament. It is a plan of grace and faith, but not grace and faith only. It requires the believer’s response of repentance, confession, immersion in water, and living a faithful Christian life. Baptism either is or is not necessary for salvation—it cannot be both. The

New Testament consistently and plainly declares it is necessary (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3–4; 1 Pet. 3:21).

A commitment to the identity of the New Testament church: Jesus built the church according to His own wise plan. He prescribed its terms of entrance, its designations, its worship, its work, and how it is to be organized and financed. If the identity of the church is unimportant, why is the church important at all?

A commitment to preaching the Gospel as the foremost task of the church: Jesus had one great work and purpose—to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Such is likewise the compelling ambition of His church (Mat. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–16; 1 Tim. 3:15).