

11. Constantly occupied in her principal task on behalf of souls in sin, she **proclaims pardon and reconciliation** with God by means of the **sacrifice and resurrection** of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-8), not “by grace only” nor “by faith only,” but **“by obeying the truth”** (1 Peter 1:22). She preaches **“as the oracles of God”** (1 Peter 4:11), taking care not to go **“above that which is written”** (1 Corinthians 4:6) in the Bible, as also not to take away from the Divine Plan. She announces faithfully the terms for pardon set forth in the Great Commission: **faith, repentance and immersion in water**, *“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”* **“He that [a] believes, and [b] is baptized, [c] shall be saved”** (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49). She baptizes **“for the forgiveness of sins”** (Acts 2:38).



12. The ideal church anxiously and joyfully awaits the glorious return of the Lord, in accordance with the promise: **“...I will come again, and receive you unto myself”** (John 14:1-3). She knows that **“the dead in Christ shall rise first”** and that **God will bring them with Jesus in his return.** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16). Then, those just ones who are alive on the earth will be **“transformed”** (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), and will be **“caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17). All who are saved will receive **“an inheritance incorruptible ... reserved in heaven”** (1 Peter 1:4).

Beloved reader, many Christians already have the firm purpose of **making the ideal church a reality on the earth**, precisely as conceived, designed and presented by God Himself. As difficult as it may be to achieve perfectly, they tenaciously pursue the goal. **“...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”** (Ephesians 5:25-27), they also love it, esteeming it to be the precious **“purchased possession”** (Ephesians 1:14), which he **“purchased with his own blood”** (Acts 20:28).

Do you also value and love that church? Do you accept Christ as **“the Saviour of the body [church]”** (Ephesians 5:23)? Do you desire to be added to the church, just as, from the beginning **“...the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”** (Acts 2:42)? Well then, **the conditions** are the very same as those established on Pentecost: **believe, repent and be immersed (buried) in water (be baptized)**, submitting yourself to baptism as a requirement **“for the forgiveness of sins”** (Acts 2:37-41; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Fulfilling the conditions, and persevering **“in the apostles’ doctrine”** to the end (Acts 2:42), you will receive the crown of eternal life. At whatever hour Christ calls, you will be able to respond, confidently and happily: **“Here I am, Lord!”**

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The Ideal Church, according to God

Conceived by Him

Established by Christ

Organized by the Holy Spirit

Made a reality by the apostles

Do you know that church?

The one Christ loves so much that he gave himself for it, sanctifying it?

Twelve divine attributes of the ideal church

1. She **knows** her **origin and development.** According to her official documents (the New



Testament), she came into being on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension of the Holy One who would be her Head and King (Acts 1 and 2). During her initial

phase, the apostles used supernatural gifts to guide her (Ephesians 4:8-16).

Once she was given **“all truth”** the Holy Spirit was to reveal (John 16:13), and her ministries were

perfected, she attained **“to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of**



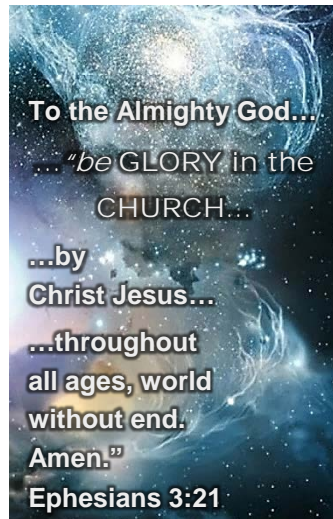
Christ.” Mature, then, in **“the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”** (Ephesians 4:11-16), she had all she needed to execute her mission on earth, without recurring to continuous wonders and signs. She takes to

“to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15-16) the complete gospel, the only full source of **“the power of God for salvation”** (Romans 1:16).

2. The ideal church is **“holy and without blemish,”** not having **“a spot or wrinkle”** (Ephesians 5:27), conducting herself **“as a chaste virgin”** **“promised... to one husband... Christ”** (2 Corinthians 11.2). The ideal church is in the world, but is **“not from this world,”** for it is a **“spiritual house,”** and not material or carnal (John 17:11-16; 18:36; 1 Peter 2:5).

3. Her **bishops, evangelists and other ministers** are to **“set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity,”** being blameless, prudent, hospitable, kindly, not drunkards, nor lovers of money, upright, devout and self-controlled, apt to teach or correct **“with gentleness”** (1 Timothy 3:1-13, 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 2:22-26; Titus 1:5-10).

4. Her **bishops** (pastors) are **married men** who **“manage... well”** their own households, keeping their **“children submissive and respectful in every way-for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?”** They are not recent converts (1 Timothy 3:1-7). They **“tend the flock of God..., exercising the oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly; not for sordid gain, but eagerly,”** not lording it over those in their charge, but



being **“examples to the flock”** (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28; 2 Peter 2:1-3). **At least two bishops** govern each mature congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

5. The ideal church **“is subject to Christ,”** being obedient to its Head (Ephesians 5:21-33). He instructs: **“Let all things be done for building up. All things should be done decently and in order”** (1 Corinthians 14:26 y 40); **she obeys,** imposing **“order”** (Colossians 2:5). Her humbleness, decorum and compliance **adorn “the doctrine of God,”** **“giving none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully”** (Titus 2:10, 1 Timothy 5:14).

6. She **honors** her Head, **taking his name,** and identifying herself before the whole world as the **“church**

of Christ” (Romans 16:16), **“...of the Lord”** or **“...of God”** (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 3:14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:32), **for she belongs to God and Christ, and not to any other lord.**

7. She **praises** her Lord **“in Spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24), knowing He is pleased with **“spiritual sacrifices”** offered according to the **New Testament** (1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15). Taught by the **new “law of Christ”** (1 Corinthians 9:21), she understands perfectly that her Lord is not pleased with worship according to the Old Testament, for he abolished it on the cross, including the Levitical priesthood and related forms of worship (Hebrews 7:12; 9:1-10; Colossians 2:14-16).

8. Faithful members of this church meet each **“first day of the week [Sunday] to break bread”** (Acts 20:7; 2:42), that is, to **“eat the Lord’s supper,”** carrying out this solemn act **“in memory”** of the sacrifice of Christ. All worthy participants

eat not only **“of that one bread”** but also each and every one **drinks** of the **“cup of blessing”** (1 Corinthians 10:16-22; 11:17-34), for: **“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”** (John 6:53-58)

9. **“Not forsaking the assembling”** of themselves together (Hebrews 10:25), **“the first day of the week... every one lays by him in store as God has prospered him”** (1 Corinthians 16:2), giving joyously and generously, **“according as he purposeth in his heart”** (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). The ideal church does not make merchandise of worship, ministries or sacred objects (1 Timothy 6:3-10). **Nor does it impose the tithe,** a means employed during the Mosaic Age to support Levitical priests, that being a **system abolished on the cross** (Hebrews 7:12-28; 8; 9).

10. **A divine work harmonious in all its facets and functions,** the ideal church perfects unity of thought and action.



Since all its members follow **“the same rule”** (Philippians 3:16), the New Testament, which is **“the perfect law of liberty”** (James 1:25), they can be **“perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment”** (1 Corinthians 1:10), fulfilling Christ’s petition **“...that they may be made perfect in one”** (John 17:21-23).