

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH DNA – A THREEFOLD CORD IS NOT QUICKLY BROKEN.

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DNA – THE BUILDING BLOCK OF LIFE ITSELF.

DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) is the basic nucleic acid in all living organisms. It contains the genetic programming for all perfect development and functioning of life.

This genetic information (called genes) is essential for life and reproduction. DNA is found in the cells and organized into structures called chromosomes. Every cell in a living body contains the same DNA for that body.

DNA structures consist of two long nucleotides – the double helix – with interconnecting backbones. DNA information is read and understood by genetic code. DNA can be twisted tighter or looser like a rope in a process called DNA super-coiling.

DNA can also replicate itself – it is *itself* the pattern for reproducing or copying itself. When cells divide, each new cell has *an exact copy* of the DNA present in the old cell. DNA is absolutely necessary for life to reproduce.

Additionally, forensic scientists use DNA to match individuals to certain bodily fluids. This is referred to as genetic fingerprinting. DNA is used to prove *paternity* – who is whose father or mother.

DNA shows undeniably that God's intelligence is programmed into the cells of all life.

CONSIDERING THE DNA OF A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

Using *Biblical Forensics*, consider the building blocks of our Savior's seed (the Word), and how Jesus Christ started and gave life to the New Testament church. Consider the *DNA* of the New Testament church. That DNA defines what the church is, how it reproduces, who its creator is, and why it exists.

Normal DNA consists of two long strands with interconnecting backbones. For this study, let us consider the DNA of a true church to have *three strands*; or three unbreakable cords. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 4:12:

... A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

For a long time I have taught how to identify the critical and essential elements that make up a New Testament church. Using the New Testament as our *genetic code*, we can search out to read what is the church DNA. So, what are these three cords?

First, I can say that holiness and perfect doctrine *is not* a requirement for a church to be a church – consider the Corinthian and Laodicean churches. Now, God wants his church to holy and perfect, but that is a work in process.

We also understand that a pastor is not an essential element, for many churches today have no one filling the pulpit, yet they do not cease from being a church.

We can then say that lacking a New Testament or Bible does not preclude a body from being a church. Many first century churches had no written word. Even today in some places, churches have no Bible, or even someone literate enough to read a Bible. I have seen many of these in Central America.

THE BASICS.

At this point, I admit that anyone can make their own list of what they think are the necessary elements for church to be scriptural: one person could say one thing, and someone else can say another. One person could have only one thing, and another person could have a list of twenty. Hopefully, the reader will agree that my list is most reasonable. The reader will see these three cords are aligned with the three elements of the Great Commission.

Allow me first to identify some New Testament truths:

- 1 Jesus Christ himself built the church between Matthew 16 and Matthew 18. For in these two chapters the word *church* is found, but found nowhere else in the four Gospels. It is a simple to study see when the church was started.
- 2 Jesus built the church during his earthly ministry, and gave authority to it in Matthew 18, confirming what was bound or loosed on earth by the church in judgment, is likewise bound or loosed in heaven. And where two or three are gathered to execute this binding or loosing, Jesus is in the midst. The apostles were its members; they were ordained, sent out, baptized converts, followed Jesus, fished for men, partook of the Lord's Supper, and even had a dishonest treasurer.
- 3 To the church Christ gave what we refer to as the "Great Commission," in Matthew 28:18-20. This was to be fulfilled through the church leadership (at that time, the "eleven"). The Great Commission confirmed that the apostles' work – which work they were already familiar – should continue in the Saviour's physical absence.
- 4 The Lord empowered the church with the gift of the Holy Ghost in Acts 2 (although the Holy Ghost was given to some of the disciples shortly after the resurrection in John 20:22). The church was told to tarry in Jerusalem until the promise would come.
- 5 The Lord added to church in Acts chapter 2. Those that were added were saved *and baptized*.
- 6 We find the Jerusalem church was scattered throughout Judea and Samaria in Acts chapter 8. Disciples went everywhere preaching the word. These disciples led others to the Lord, and many other churches "sprang up" in a sense.
- 7 The Antiochian church sent out Barnabas and Saul, and was also the base for their "missionary journeys." That church, faithful to the Holy Ghost leading, separated the two apostles to the work God called them to. Here, the precedent is set – God calling, church sending.
- 8 In 1 Corinthians 3:10 we read Jesus is the foundation (i.e., the Rock) on which the church is built, and we are to build upon that same foundation. It is the same foundation of the apostles, and Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:20). At this time, the foundation remains unchanged. We are still building on it, even after 2,000 years.
- 9 The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The church "supports" and "holds up" the truth of Jesus Christ, the gospel, and the word of God. God set his truth on this pillar and ground, founded on Jesus Christ himself.
- 10 The church is likened to the kingdom of heaven (read Matthew chapters 16 and 18). And that to Peter was given the keys of this kingdom (Matthew 16:19).
- 11 Paul espoused the church to Christ as a chaste virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2) and taught that Christ is the head of the church as the husband is the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23). The church is called the bride (Revelation 21:9, etc.).

12 The *Creator* of the church himself promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, first; and second, that he will be with the church till the end of the world (Matthew 18, Matthew 28). The church will indeed endure through all adversity. For some who disrespect the “unbroken chain” principle, how do they explain their gaps in light of Jesus’ promises?

SIMPLY PUT.

Now, considering these things, and as I was taught in seminary, a simple definition of the church is this:

A New Testament church is a body of *baptized believers* who have *covenanted* together to carry out the commandments of Jesus Christ.

We were made to memorize this simple definition. Although it is simple, it defines accurately what two thousand years of study and practice has proved. In this paper, we will look at these three cords (believers, baptism, and covenant), and with it show how the perpetuity of the church not only is fact and a promise, but that there *must be* that “unbroken chain” of churches if it is to fulfill the promises and pattern shown in the New Testament.

The church is not simply a body of believers, nor a body of baptized believers: there must also be present the covenant. So allow me to elaborate on these three things – believers, baptism, and covenant.

Believers – *The necessity of the Gospel.*

1 Corinthians 15 defines the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. One must believe (or obey) the gospel to be saved. With heart man believeth, and with the mouth confession is made (Romans 10).

When someone truly believes, it is a work of faith; and the gift of God makes that believer “saved” and a child of God through faith (Ephesians 2). The blood of Jesus Christ is applied to the soul washing that person completely from sin, justifying him in the sight of God (Romans 5:9). The believer is now “born again (John 3). He is part of the family of God. He has the promise of everlasting life (John 3:16).

Without the Gospel, there is no life. Without the Gospel we are yet in our sins. Without the Gospel there is no hope. The Gospel of Salvation is that which we *first teach* to all nations (Matthew 28; Mark 16). Without this Gospel, there is no life in us or in the church. There is no Holy Ghost. There is no Great Commission. There is no salvation. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross is of no effect. Without the Gospel, there is no *purpose* for the New Testament church. And, whoever preaches any other Gospel than what Paul gave us, that person is accursed (Galatians 1).

Without controversy, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a fundamental strand of the New Testament church’s DNA.

Baptism – *The necessity of Authority.*

There was a man sent from God... This is how John chapter 1 describes John the Baptist. To him came the Saviour to be baptized – to fulfill all righteousness. The commandment to baptize believers is fundamental to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus had his disciples do the work of baptizing in John chapter 4. Peter answered the Jews in Acts 2:38:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We Baptists know that it is not the plunging in water that saves, but obedience to the gospel – we are first to say that baptism does not save. But we are also called *Baptists*. We are called such because of our zeal to fulfill the commission our Saviour gave us. We do not waver on this thing.

Now, baptism must be scriptural to be valid. And no true church would accept anything but scriptural baptism. I am not speaking of *believer's immersion*, for this only has two elements – the believer and the immersion. It lacks two more elements to be valid: a scriptural administrator and a scriptural action. One requires the *baptizer* to have been authorized by a New Testament church, the other requires that the candidate be added to a New Testament church.

Just as John himself was sent by God, so any baptizer today must be sent by an authorizing body. And that *authority* comes from the *commandment* – and that commandment was *given to the church* (Matthew 28:18-20).

And just as no true church would ever accept an immersion as *scriptural baptism* if done by Mormons, or some college, or some heretical or lost person; neither should it accept as scriptural baptism any immersion done by anything but a New Testament church. For any immersion done without authority makes it by definition *invalid*.

This “cord” is not easily broken. Search the New Testament and show me any place where a baptizer was not first baptized himself by an authorized baptizer. You will not find it. And though some brethren have quoted *men's writings* to prove any immersion is valid, I shall go by the New Testament only. And what I find there is plain: there is an unbroken chain of baptizers from John onward.

Without this unbroken chain of baptizers there is no valid baptism (no exception, Roger Williams). And without valid baptism there can be no Great Commission. And without the Great Commission we have no church reproduction – and the church ceases to exist. But our Saviour promised to be with us until the end (Matthew 28:18-20), and the work indeed carries on.

Now, this work is carried on through authorized men, sent forth to teach and to baptize. John was sent. Jesus was sent. The twelve were sent. The seventy were sent, Barnabas, and Saul were sent (Acts 13:1-3). Timothy and Titus were sent. Paul said, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Romans 10:15). This “sending” was done symbolically through the laying on of hands by the presbytery. The gift of God was evident in him, and this man was authorized by the church to go forth in obedience to the Great Commission. He, being saved and baptized, and in addition being found faithful as a disciple of Jesus Christ; has proved to be able to preach the true gospel, baptize believers, and teach these believers to observe the commandments of Jesus Christ. He has been “ordained” and sent out according to the New Testament pattern.

As this man is sent forth with authority to preach and baptize, he in effect will organize such baptized believers into bodies who have made a covenant with Jesus Christ. And though we may find a variety of groups of believers who have organized themselves into some kind of body, only those with valid baptism can reproduce valid baptism. For every seed reproduces after itself – and it can only reproduce itself. This is further evidence of that unbroken chain of church perpetuity.

Covenant – *the necessity of making Jesus Christ the Head of the body.*

As the husband is the head of the wife, so Jesus is the Head of the church. This is the divine covenant of marriage. In this covenant the bride promises to love, honor and obey her husband; keeping only to him.

Malachi chapter 2 calls the wife a *companion*. It says she is the wife of a *covenant*, and together, the husband and wife should bring forth *godly seed (children)*. This is God's purpose for marriage.

In the same sense, the church formally receives her Lord and Head, promises to obey him, keeping herself only to him. All her worldly goods she to him endows. She is chaste and faithful to him. She is the receiver of his seed – the word of God. She is a pillar and the ground of this seed of truth. To her it was given, and she reproduces godly seed.

In turn, the Head cares for the wife. He cherishes and nourishes her, washing her by the water of his word. She has his protection, his promises, and his perfect love. He will remain faithful to her until the very end. He guides her, comforts her, blesses her, and gives her purpose. He has prepared a place for her, and promises to come for her to take her to that place – and she says “come.”

What a lovely picture. *What a contrast to the mother of harlots (Revelation 17), what we understand to be the false Romish church!*

Recently (and I mean in the last few hundred years) churches have made written covenants and placed them in their records and on the walls of their buildings; but this is a matter of preference. As weddings are performed in a multitude of ways depending on time and place and people; churches since the first century have made Jesus their Lord and King in various ways – but always one can see the utmost devotion of the church to the King of Kings. She has no other master. She will obey God rather than men. She is not a product of the State. She says she ought to obey God rather than men.

And now, every place on this earth, one is apt to find a body of baptized believers who meet and carry out the commandments of Jesus Christ – a New Testament church. For simply being a group of saved and baptized people congregating (I have seen that at fellowships and youth camps) is insufficient to make that group a New Testament church – there must be a decisive, sober, commitment to the Saviour to obey him and teach to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded.

This is the New Testament church's DNA – it was placed in her by Jesus Christ himself. The church reproduces faithfully what Christ commanded and promised. And for two thousand years, she has survived, flourished, and been victorious in an alien world. Although a stranger and a pilgrim, she remains true to her Husband – she waits patiently for him to catch her away.

CONCLUSION.

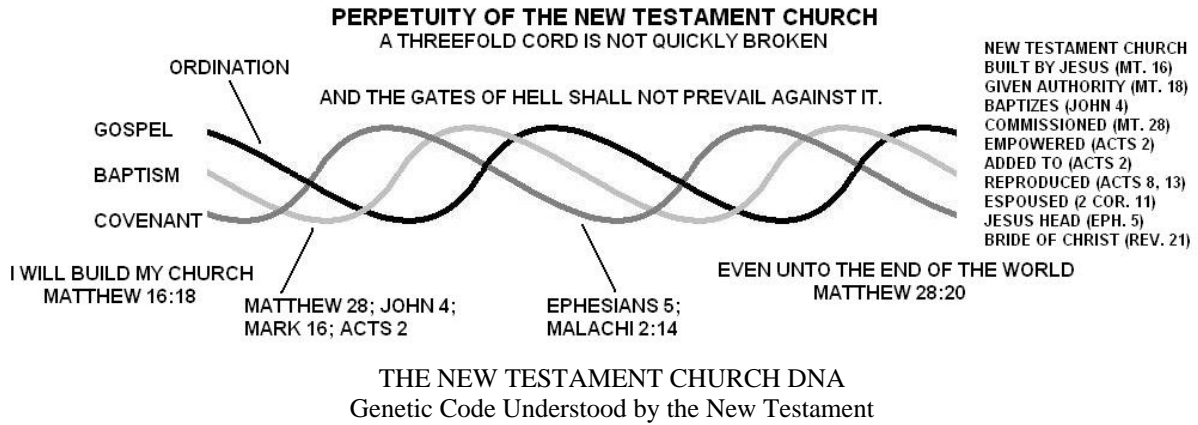
Everything reproduces after its kind. Every living thing has its own seed. The church Jesus started likewise has continued to reproduce itself until the present time. This is the pattern of reproduction was set in place from the beginning – people reproduce people, a kind of fruit reproduces after its kind, horses reproduce horses, dogs reproduce dogs, pelicans reproduce pelicans, etc., etc. Likewise, in spiritual things, good manuscripts reproduce good translations, saved people get others saved, scripturally baptized believers in turn baptize likewise, ordain men in turn ordain others, churches reproduce after their kind, preachers reproduce preachers of like doctrine (2 Timothy 2:2), solid Baptist churches reproduce solid Baptist churches, and liberal-modernist “churches” reproduce the like.

No false church can reproduce otherwise – this is why any group that came into being from the Protestant Reformation is a child of Rome, and one of daughters of the mother. Good families that uphold and defend family values, abhor fornication and adultery, eschew evil; will likely produce families with the same values. In contrast, “families” that have little restraint of the flesh, who encourage or allow fornication, adultery, and drunkenness and the like, who are critical of that which is good; will likely reproduce the same.

Moses gave God's commandment that Israel should not take the name of God in vain. In a sense, God is teaching that the “Father's Name” is to be respected among the people. What we do or don't do is a reflection of who raised us. Personally, I have standards for my family. They *cannot* do certain things, and they are *to do* certain things. Not only is *our* family name at stake, but more importantly the Father's name is at stake.

A common understanding around the house is, “*the Desent's don't do those things.*” Do not take your name (or mine) in vain. We have a good report to maintain.

New Testament churches (usually known as “Baptist” – although that name has been used wrongly by some) bear the name of their Creator. As being “bone of his bone,” the church can easily bring reproach to the Saviour if she behaves herself unseemly. She has a duty to bear “Godly seed” to her Husband. She has a duty to keep herself chaste. Her price is far above rubies to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us who bear the name of our Saviour be mindful. Let us be as virgins waiting for the bridegroom to come. Let us have our lamps burning bright, and our robes shining bright, and our King's in constant sight. Let us consider the righteous, holy, and perfect DNA we have been given by the blood of the Lamb. And, until he comes, be found faithful.



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