

# San Juan Church of Christ

1414 Hawk Parkway, Unit C  
Montrose, CO 81401 | (970) 249-8116

## What Does God's Word Say About...

### History of the church of Christ - Part 2

The apostle Paul prophesied to the elders [bishops] at the church in Ephesus that the apostasy, or falling away from the "original" pattern of the church given to the apostles, would come "from among your own selves," (Acts 20:28-30). The organization God planned for His church is simple. A plurality of men qualified by character and experience, (1 Tim. 3:1-7) were to be chosen by their congregation (Titus 1:5). God's plan did not include a modern "single pastor system." It does not include any individual with authority and responsibility beyond his own congregation. It did not include a "bishop" elevated above the other elders or bishops.

One of the first departures from the New Testament pattern was the development of the monarchical bishop. The departure from scripture began at the Council of Nicene in 325 A.D. when bishops from their respective congregations established canons or rules contrary to God's word. It was not long after the Council of Nicene that bishops saw themselves not as representatives of their own individual congregations, but established themselves as authorities for all of the congregations, a deviation from the New Testament pattern. Over the period of a few hundred years, these monarchical bishops elevated one bishop to rule over all of the congregations, and the emergence of the first unscriptural leader [pope] named Boniface III was given power in 606 A.D.

The Christians at Thessalonica were concerned about the coming "of our Lord," and the "gathering together to Him." Paul answered that this coming of the Lord "will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed," (2 Thess. 1:3). Now notice how Paul explains this "man,": he will "exalt himself above every so-called god, or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God [church], displaying himself as being God," (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Paul wrote "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work," (2 Thess. 2:7) which agrees with what he told the eldership in Ephesus in Acts 20:28-30.

In the 15th century Protestants began as protesters of the Roman Catholic church. Early leaders of the Protestant movement, who were reformed Catholics, set out to reform a church which had become full of abuses and errors. However, many of their teachings came from men rather than the New Testament pattern, and several of these teachings were retained from the Catholic church. Beginning in the 18th century, still more denominations with new doctrines continued to arise with the traditions of men. In the last 50 years at least 3,000 various denominations [divisions] have been established which are contrary to God's word (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Churches of Christ today plead for a return to the organization of the church of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the absolute monarch and sole head of the church (Eph. 1:22). God requires a plurality of elders with equal authority and responsibility in each congregation, with no authority beyond their local congregation and oversee the affairs of the local church, under Jesus, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4).

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:  
[info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org](mailto:info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org)