

THE BELIEFS OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST —PART 2

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to *my lovely wife*, **Mrs. Nyarko**, and also to **Mr. Jean-Marie Koku Hulete**, **Mr. Gabriel Opoku**, **Mr. Gordon Oppong-Agyare** and **Mrs. Beatrice Oppong-Agyare**; their assistance motivated me to dedicate enough time to embark on this godly project.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. identify the beliefs or doctrines of the New Testament Church which need to be adopted by the Church today;
2. understand every single belief of the Christian faith;
3. adopt and practice the doctrine of Christ in our churches.

*The beliefs of the Church discussed in the **first part** of the study.*

1.1 Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church

1.2 The Church was established in Jerusalem, in 33 AD

1.3 The Church is God's kingdom on earth

1.4 The Godhead is the true mystery of God

1.5 The Bible is the [only] inspired word of God

1.6 There is life after death

1.7 Reincarnation is not biblical

1.8 Judgement of God shall begin at the Church

1.9 666 is at work

1.10 Not only the 144,000 souls shall inherit heaven

[**1.11–1.20** below covers the **part 2** of the study].

CHAPTER 1: THE KEY BELIEFS OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST FROM THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter is planned to discuss [more than] hundred beliefs of the Lord's Church biblically. As the *first part* of the study outlined at least *ten beliefs*, so as this second phase of the lesson continues to discuss similar beliefs held by the New Testament Church: The *chapter 2* of the whole study will not be treated in this session, as it will conclude the full lesson in the *10th part*.

Each belief in this chapter is biblically stated and briefly explained to promote sound doctrine in Christ. The present Church is expected to wholly adopt each doctrine discussed to enhance growth and development in Jesus Christ.

1.11 Jesus Christ Is The Messiah; He Fulfilled All The Messianic Prophecies

The **New Testament Church** believes and teaches that *Jesus Christ is the Messiah*, and that, His first advent helped fulfill all the messianic prophecies written in the Bible of Him in relation to His incarnation.

The word **Messiah** is romanized in Hebrew as māšîah (Mashiach) and messias in Greek. Messiah/Messias is twice used in the New Testament of Jesus, in reference to the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ.

The “Messiah” means “anointed one.” It is the equivalent of the New Testament word “Christ” (**Jn 4:29; Acts 2:36**) which also means “anointed.”

Though the kings of Israel were called “anointed” from the mode of their consecration (see 1 Sam 2:10, 35; 12:3, 5), we have no concrete record or evidence of when and where exactly each of these kings was called “the Mashiach”. In other words, not only the kings of Israel were anointed (1 Sam 10:1; 16:1, 12-13; 2 Sam 2:4-5; 5:3; 1 Kings 1:34, 39); the priests of Israel and the [holy things] of the tabernacles were also anointed (Exodus 30:22-38; 37:29; 29:7; Lev 8:1-2, 10-12). But in **John 4:25-26**, Jesus said He was “the Mashiach/Messias”.

In the book of John [the Gospel], the “Messiah” is used in **John 1:41** and **John 4:25**; *the two places in the New Testament*, which word, was a reference to **Jesus Christ** (John 4:26, 28-30). Jesus as the Messiah was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16; Acts 10:38) to carry out the three-fold ministry (i.e. the PPK) of **Prophet** (Deut 18:15, 18-19; Luke 13:33; Acts 3:20-23; Heb 1:2-3), **Priest** (Heb 6:20; 7:26; 8:1-2; 9:11) and **King** (Jn 18:36; Rev 17:14; 19:16; 1 Tim 6:15).

The name **Christ** is from the Greek word *Khristós/Christós* which means “the anointed.” This biblical idea highlights the fact that “Jesus Christ” is also called “Jesus the *Khristós*” (i.e. “Jesus the Messiah” or “Jesus the Anointed”) by Christians, who believe that His crucifixion and resurrection fulfill the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, especially the prophecy outlined in **Isaiah 53** (Wikipedia, n.d.). “Beyond question, this chapter is the heart of the Hebrew prophetic writings” (Baron, p. 4. Cited in Dr. Constable's Notes On Isaiah, 2024 Edition, p. 373). Several expositors have called this chapter the holy of holies of Isaiah. It is also the middle chapter in part two of the book (chs. 40—66). Most of the approximately 80 references to Isaiah in the New Testament come from this chapter (A. Martin, Christ In Isaiah, part 2, p. 12. Cited in Dr. Constable's Notes On Isaiah, 2024 Edition, pp. 372–373).

Many prophecies were given in the Old Testament to help fulfill the Messianic age. In all, *the book of Isaiah*, is therefore, considered to be the messianic book of the Old Testament. It carries the message of “the Christ” who was to come for the salvation of all men, both for the Jews and for the Gentiles. “You will note that Isaiah is quoted (or alluded to) in the Gospels approximately 21 times, 25 times in Paul's letters, 6 times in 1 Peter, 5 times in Acts, 4 times in Revelation, and once in Hebrews” (Ralph F. Wilson, 2024, n.p.) [which sum up to approximately 62 times (most of the texts were combined); thus making Isaiah the most quoted prophet in the New Testament.]

The fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies.

“There were 109 prophecies about Christ’s first coming, and they were literally fulfilled, including where he would be born: Bethlehem Ephratah (Micah 5:2): There are 321 prophecies about Christ’s Second Coming, and we expect those to be literally fulfilled, as well” (Ed Knorr 2020: 29). In all, there are [over] **430** messianic prophecies in the entire canonical scriptures, beginning with **Gen 3:15** and ending with **Rev 22:20**.

Contextually, **Matthew 5:17-18** highlights the fulfillment of all the messianic prophecies regarding Christ’s first advent especially those spoken of [clearly] in the Old Testament Canon of Scripture (Luke 24:44-48; John 1:45; Acts 13:29).

In August 22-24, 2022, **Seth Nyarko** debated the Common Sense Family (CSF) publicly on the messianic prophecies: He debated **Yahudah Kintaana** to affirm the motion on the second day, “*Jesus Christ is the Messiah; He fulfilled all the messianic prophecies.*”

Some of the [popular] prophecies about the Messiah as part of the 109 prophecies about His first coming which Seth Nyarko affirmed have been given with respect to the literal fulfillment of each prophecy;

1. He would be a descendant of Abraham through Isaac (Gen 12:3; 22:12, 18).

- Prophecy fulfilled (Matt 1:1-2, 18-25; Gal 3:16-17).

2. He would be born during the days of Roman rule (Dan 2:44; 7:13-14).

- Prophecy fulfilled;

(i) Born during the reign of Caesar Augustus (27 B.C. - A.D. 14; see Luke 2:1-7).

(ii) Reigns [now] in heaven on His throne (1 Co 15:24; Luke 21:27; Rev 11:15).

3. He would be born of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10; 1 Chron 5:2; Micah 5:2).

- Prophecy fulfilled (Matt 1:2; Heb 7:13-14).

4. He would be of the seedline of David (2 Sam 7:12-17; Isaiah 11:1).

- Prophecy fulfilled (Luke 1:32).

5. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

- Prophecy fulfilled (Matt 2:1-2; Luke 2:4-7).

6. There would be a slaughter of babies surrounding His birth (Jer 31:15).

- Prophecy fulfilled in the period of King Herod (Matt 2:1-2, 16-18).

7. He would be a sojourner in Egypt (Hosea 11:1).

- Prophecy fulfilled (Matt 2:13-15).

8. He would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2).

- Prophecy fulfilled (Matt 4:12-17).

9. He would have a forerunner (Mal 3:1; 4:5-6).

- Prophecy fulfilled in John the Baptist (Luke 1:17; Matt 11:7-10, 14).

10. He would teach by parables (Psalm 78:2) and perform miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6).

- Prophecy fulfilled;

(i) He taught by parables (Matt 13:34-35).

(ii) He performed many miracles (Matt 11:4-5; John 20:30-31; 21:25).

11. He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zech 9:9; Psalm 118:26; Isaiah 62:11).

- Prophecy fulfilled (Matt 21:8-11; Luke 19:36-40).

12. He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of Silver (Zech 11:12-13).

- Prophecy fulfilled through Judas Iscariot (Matt 26:14-16).

NB: 1 shekel of silver could be equivalent to 1.78 or 1.99 pieces of silver.

Working with 1.78, 17 shekels of silver = $1.78 \times 17 = 30.26$ pieces of silver.

This is why Jeremiah mentioned 17 shekels of silver (Jer 32:6-10) which is equivalent to 30 pieces of silver (see Matt 27:3-10).

13. He would be mocked (Psalm 22:6-8), whipped (Isaiah 50:6), crucified with malefactors (Isaiah 53:9-12), given gal to drink (Psalm 69:20-21) and pierced (Zech 12:10).

- Prophecy fulfilled; Christ was...
 - (i) *mocked* by the people and the Chief priests (Matt 27:39-44).
 - (ii) *whipped* [and slapped] (John 19:1; Matt 26:67-68).
 - (iii) *crucified* with the two criminals or evildoers, *the malefactors* (Mark 15:27-28; Luke 22:37; John 19:18).
 - (iv) *given gal to drink* when He was thirsty (Matt 27:33-34, 48).
 - (v) *pierced* after death on the cross (John 19:32-37), **etc.**

In spite of this, the churches of Christ believe that our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Messiah, and the world needs to accept Him for eternity.

1.12 The Church Saves

The **churches of Christ** in the first century believed and taught that “the Church saves”: This has not changed scripturally and should not be changed by the present Church. But, what was their point in this assertion and their origin of faith regarding that theological concept?

The Christians of the first century believed that “the Church is the body of the saved”; in other words, “The Church is the community of all those who have been initially saved by Christ and in Christ alone (Acts 4:32) through immersion baptism (Rom 6:3-5)”. We are *saved by Christ* because He has given us the power to partake in His divine kingdom (John 1:12-13; Col 1:12-14): We are *saved in Christ* because we spiritually constitute His body (1 Co 12:27; Eph 1:22-23). Whosoever is baptized into Christ joins “the community of the saved” (Acts 2:47) to be taught and prepared by the doctrine of Christ (Matt 28:20; compare Rom 6:17) for eternity in heaven (Heb 13:14).

Those baptized into Christ have spiritually received the kingdom [of the Church] according to the Scripture (Heb 12:28; see Rev 21:1-3), but have not literally inherited heaven (2 Co 5:6-9). Receiving the kingdom is an act of salvation and is *temporal*, but being saved eternally is a *permanent* reward given by Christ alone. *Thus, the Church saves by preparing those saved [temporarily] in Christ through immersion baptism for eternity.* But the power of eternity belongs to Christ alone; He alone has the power to save [permanently] or condemn (Mark 16:16).

In this sense, the issue of “the Church saves” links to “salvation concealed in one's life shaped righteously in Christ by the Church”, but the issue of “eternal life” relies on Christ alone. The Church [with the authority of Christ] does the initial job temporarily and Christ finishes it permanently; He is “*the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2).

The Church, according to the Bible, does not have the divine power to give eternal life to anyone; Christ alone has life and gives life (John 1:4; 5:26; 11:25-26; 14:6). The fact that the Church is not and cannot be separated from [the love of] Christ (Rom 8:35-39) does not mean *she* [also] has the power to save eternally; you and I

know we don't have that power regardless of our intimacy with Christ, even as our own salvation shakes (1 Pet 4:18), and we “*work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians 2:12) to faithfully “*commit [our] souls to Christ*” (1 Peter 4:19) to be saved in His Second Coming.

Thus, in terms of judgment and the power to judge, the Church stands aside to be judged by Christ (John 5:22) — and the fate of eternity is assured in Christ's judgement. If the Church is one with Christ in all things, why would *she* be judged by Christ? Does it mean Christ will judge Himself “because the Church is His own body” according to 1 Peter 4:17-18? No! That means our oneness with Him is limited in certain things, because we do not share the same thing with Him in all things; even the Father and the Holy Spirit do not reign now with the same power as Jesus Christ; Christ has been given all power to reign as the Sovereign Lord (Matt 28:18; Phil 2:9-11), but it does not mean the Father or the Holy Spirit is powerless. Does our union with the Lord Jesus Christ exceed what exists between the Godhead?... If judgment and eternal life depend on Christ alone (see John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1) why would the Church be given a position to give eternity to mankind over the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit? This is why we have been cautioned not to judge anyone (see Matt 7:1-2; Rom 2:1-4; 1 Co 4:4-5). Paul with the power of the Holy Spirit asked; “*Who are you to judge another's servant?*” (Romans 14:4).

The Bible has already outlined that when it comes to judgement and power to reign, Christ alone has that and it has not and cannot be given to any church. *The Church by the grace of Christ helps in the salvation of the novice by training (see Matt 28:20), and Christ offers the eternal life to the faithful (see Rev 2:7, 10)*: Christ honors the certificate and reward (2 Tim 4:7-8; see 1 Co 9:25; Phil 3:14; 1 Tim 6:12), and angels of God help in the process (Matt 13:38-39; 25:31-33). This is what the present Church must understand and teach if we claim the same authority as the first century Church scripturally.

Analyzing the issue of Salvation and Eternity

Salvation and eternity/eternal life are two different things in the context of our discussion.

Salvation is a process through which one is being preserved from destruction, danger or great calamity; Acts 2:40 basically fits this, as the Bible calls it “*the great salvation*” (Hebrews 2:3). One is redeemed before being saved (see 1 Peter 1:18-23). **Eternal life** on the other hand, depicts the whole future of the redeemed (Luke 16:9), as clarified biblically (Matt 19:16, 17; John 3:15).

Salvation through baptism is not eternity. We are saved from this perverse generation (Acts 2:40-41), but have not yet received eternity or eternal life. The fact that Acts 2:47 used “saved” does not mean we are automatically saved eternally. Thus, when the person is saved [temporarily] through baptism, he is added up to the Church (Christ’s congregation of the saved) in order to be taught of Christ’s doctrine (Matt 28:20; Rom 6:17) until he is righteously fit to attain eternal life in the Second coming of Christ. In this context, the church saves by preparing the believer with the doctrine of Christ to pull him out of damnation (see Jude 23); the salvation at this stage is offered by Christ and not the Church’s own power. Again, the Church does not have and has not been given the power to save anyone eternally; such depends on Christ alone.

Any congregation that holds the [sound] biblical doctrine displayed above belongs to Christ and not the devil or man.

1.13 The Congregation Is Led By “Men” Alone

The **churches of Christ** believe that *men alone have been called by Jesus Christ to lead His Church, in all congregations*. As with other beliefs of the Church, this doctrine has a scriptural basis but has been widely abused by some Bible students in some cases. The doctrine reflects throughout all testaments of old as far as leadership [in the assembly of the Lord] is concerned.

Analyzing the context of Proverbs 8:4 briefly

Proverbs 8:4 is one of the sensational Bible references in the Old Testament that speak of “men leadership with a divine call”: It reads; “*To you, O men, I call, ²And my voice is to the sons of men*” (Proverbs 8:4, NKJV).

To you, O men, I call: This marks the first statement of Lady Wisdom’s speech figuratively given by God through king Solomon. The Hebrew word for “men/man” (*î·šîm*) used in the context of Proverbs 8:4 is a masculine plural noun that is in opposition to women/woman (Gen 3:12; Matt 19:10).

In most cases the word “man” as in this context is rendered *ish* in Hebrew, like the Latin *vir* and Greek *aner*, which denotes properly a man in opposition to a woman (1 Sam 17:33; Matt 14:21).

The opening speech of Solomon regarding “the excellence of Wisdom” declares men as leaders of the wisdom of God in all generations; men are called to seek first the wisdom of God to lead in all directions of life.

And my voice is to the sons of men: This then generalizes the concept deduced from the context of Proverbs 8:4. The reference here is to the generations of men.

This is where the word “man” is used in the generic sense in reference to the human race (Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:2; 8:21; Deut. 8:3); as it is also applied to women (Josh. 8:25; Eph 4:23-24). Its equivalents are the Latin *homo* and the Greek *anthropos* (Matt 5:13, 16).

However, the second part of Prov 8:4 is not seen as an explanation to the first part; it is a separate statement to address all generations of men.

The message here is clear; God calls men to lead in all things pertaining to His vineyard of knowledge and wisdom.

The issue of Deborah in Judges 4

Judges 4 discusses how **Deborah** the prophetess from the tribe of Ephraim (Judges 4:4-5) and **Barak** from Naphtali united to defeat the Canaanites (vs 12-24), to ensure peace for 40 years (Judges 5:31).

Lapidoth, the husband of Deborah, was believed to be a prophet or judge; he was not the same person referred to as **Barak**, though their names almost have the same meaning (lamps, light radiations); once a judge or prophet, his wife could be called a prophetess and could act as a judge. Deborah's message to Barak for war against king Jabin and commander Sisera was a direct quote of prophecy that was already known by Barak, according to the context of Judges 4:6-7; she reminded Barak to lead the army of Israel against the Canaanites.

Regardless of Deborah's victory with Barak against the Canaanites (Judges 4:12-24) through which the victory song was composed (Judges 5:1-30), one point is clear; "Deborah did not lead any congregation in Israel". The congregations of Israel (see Num 15:15) were led by male Levites chosen by God as priests of Israel as the only people given the power over the Tabernacle of the congregations (Num 1:48-53; Lev 14:19; 1 Chron 23:26-32).

There was not a single record of Deborah's service in the assembly as a leader; she was used by God to help defeat the Canaanites in battle.

The Functions of Leaders in the New Testament Church

Generally, leaders guide the Church with proper management and administration skills, for things to be done decently and in order in the Church (see 1 Co 14:40).

Specifically, the following are the duties of leaders biblically assigned...

- (i)** To oversee the Church (Acts 20:28; compare Jn 21:15-19).

- (ii) To help keep the established Church in holiness without blemish (Eph 5:27) by preaching the word to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:2-3).
- (iii) To help secure the foundation laid by Christ (1 Co 3:10-15), even that which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20-22).
- (iv) To help unite all branches of the Church as one body in Christ (1 Co 12:12-27; Eph 1:18-22; compare Rom 16:16).
- (v) To help keep the Church in the name of the Godhead (Jn 17:11-12; compare Col 2:8-10).
- (vi) They gather or organize the saved and seek the lost (see from the context Matt 12:30; Mrk 9:40; Lk 19:10; Jn 10:10); etc.

The New Testament Concept Of Men Leadership

The New Testament Canon of Scripture does not give authority to women to lead in teachings, sermons, songs, Lord's Supper, offertory, prayers, and some other services in the assembly that confer authority [over men].

The Holy Spirit used **Paul** (1 Corinthians 2:4, 10; 14:37-38) to speak against women leadership in the assembly of Christ *in two of his epistles* to the churches, and **Christ** concluded the discussion in the case of Jezebel the prophetess *in the Apocalypse of John the apostle*: These major references need to be discussed biblically.

(A) The context of 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 against women leadership in the assembly.

It reads; **1 Corinthians 14:34-36**: “*34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. 35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. 36 Or did the word of God*

come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?" [NKJV; one can use versions like KJV and GNB]

Brief interpretation to the “verses” according to 1 Co 14:34-36

Verse 34: This was directed to *the wives of the prophets* in the church of Christ in Achaia. It was later applicable to all the wives of those who lead the assembly of Christ, extending to all women in the churches as well.

"The women must not speak out in a manner that would either disrupt the assembly or usurp the authority of men who led in the area-wide assembly. If they disagreed with the message of their prophetic husbands, they must save the discussion concerning the application, or possibly disagreement, until they were at home" (Roger Dickson 2016: 100).

The ***34th verse*** does not forbid women to speak in any case; it does not say women should not speak at all. For instance, the Bible admonishes us to speak to one another in the midst of the church in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (see Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; compare Heb 2:12), and that involves women in the church as well. Thus, the context is specifically talking about women speaking in authority as leaders in the services of the church especially in teaching. Therefore, the scripture does not forbid women to read Bible to support the assembly led by men.

According to the law of Christ, women (wives) must be submissive to their men (husbands) in their services to God (Eph 5:21-24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1-2), and such must reflect in the services of the assembly.

Verse 35: This teaches that the women in the church should humble to learn from the men in the assembly about what could spark argument, confusion or disorderliness as a result of their utterances. When the text "*let them ask their own husbands at home*" is generally used by the present Church in reference to all women in the churches, then it would mean "*let the women learn from the men in the church*"; because it might be very difficult to exempt the single women if they are found in such manner of speaking or usurping the authority of men who lead in the services of the church. But in the case where the wives of the teachers/leaders

are found in such a manner as described by the Bible, they should ask their husbands at home.

It is shameful for women to speak in church to disrupt the assembly or usurp the authority of the leaders; but, questions or suggestions may be raised in a manner that would not contradict the word of God.

Verse 36: Paul's question here emphasizes on the fact that God had already instituted the truth before the establishment of the church in Corinth. Before the birth of the local assembly of the Achaians, Christ had already laid down the principles of men leadership and orderliness in His Church, through His holy men with the power of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21), and that was known in the world-wide churches as well. Thus, the church needs not to change that as far as men leadership in the assembly is concerned.

(B) The context of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 against women leadership in the assembly.

It reads; **1 Timothy 2:8-15**: “*8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; 9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, 10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. 11 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.” [NKJV; one can use versions like KJV and GNB]*

Brief interpretation to the “verses” according to 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Verse 8: Though “prayer” is specified here, the text commands men in the churches of Christ to offer their holy services to God Almighty in pure minds and hearts.

Christ used Paul to command that men should lead in all spiritual services of the Church, in the assembly.

Verse 9: Paul does not specifically demonize these things. He admonishes women to focus on godly lifestyle to live in righteousness in support of the services of their men in all the assemblies of the Lord (see 1 Pet 3:3-6).

Verse 10: Paul shows the more appropriate way women in the churches should live. The purpose is to help them focus on the things in heaven much more than the perishable ones they see or feel on earth (compare Col 3:1-4).

Verse 11: The text here answers everything about what exactly Paul said to the Achaians concerning the issue of not allowing the women (the wives of the prophets) to speak in the church (see 1 Co 14:34-35). The statement is clear that the women in the church must not exercise any authority over the men who lead in the assembly, or over the whole assembly.

Verse 12: Paul does not personally instruct the church in contrast to God's will and purpose; the command is from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (see 1 Co 14:37-38; 2:4, 10).

Concerning the assemblies of God, the Lord insists that women need not to be given the power to teach the assembly or authority to lead the church in the presence of men. However, women can assist in evangelism (outside the assembly) to support such divine ministry, as in the case of Jesus Christ (see Luke 8:1-3) and Paul and Peter (1 Co 9:5).

In the context of **1 Timothy 2:12**, women are not restricted to read the Scripture when instructed by the leader (teacher/preacher) to assist in the midst of the church. But, appointing or electing a “lady secretary” remains questionable: To lead in announcement session and/or to authorize a letter in the name of the church actually goes against the context of 1 Timothy 2:12.

Verse 13: This reminds the churches of orderliness (1 Co 14:40) and the divine authority of men over women in God's communities since creation. The Adamic

power still lives in men, and women should submit to that, even in all the assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 14: This test reveals that men are naturally strong in thoughts and are naturally leaders; “the head of woman is man” (1 Co 11:3). The weakness of women here in the natural sense (1 Pet 5:7) is the second literal reason Paul gave to support God's command in addition to the first one stated in the 13th verse.

Verse 15: The word “she” here is not in reference to “Eve” as it is coupled with the pronoun “they” in the same verse. The reference in the context is to all women in the church.

The statement “she will be saved in childbearing” does not talk about “giving birth” in the literal sense: It rather stresses on the fact that women should also bear “spiritual fruit” in order to be saved eternally in their worship to God like men who endure in righteousness unto the end of time (see Gal 5:22-26; compare John 25:1-10).

(C) The context of Revelation 2:20-23 against women leadership in the assembly.

It reads; **Revelation 2:20-23**: “*20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” [NKJV; one can use versions like KJV and GNB]*

Summarizing the context of Rev 2:20-23

The context of **Rev 2:20-23** discusses Christ's message of warning to the church in the city of Thyatira against the evil practices of Jezebel and her followers

(“children”).

The church in Thyatira was the fourth congregation addressed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. Christ's [direct] message according to **Rev 2:20-28** was categorized into three(3); **(1)** A message to rebuke Jezebel against misconduct in the church (vs 20-21), **(2)** a message of warning against Jezebel and her followers, as a call for repentance (vs 22-23), and **(3)** a message of hope and security for those who sanctified their selves to avoid the venom of Jezebel and her bad behavior in the church (vs 24-28).

However, Christ rebuked the church of her misconducts which might make her fall in the foreseen persecution and tribulation of the saints to be launched by the devil through the Roman kingdom (Rev 3:10).

This letter to the Lord's Church in Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29) is relevant to all churches of our time.

The message suits the nature of leadership in the Lord's Church and how He expects the Church to completely consecrate herself from evil practice in order to live according to the proportion of faith measured to every Christian (Rom 12:3-8).

The charges against Jezebel

Christ had four(4) main charges against the Jezebel of Thyatira, namely;

1. She called herself a prophetess, which self-imposed ministry was against by the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 2:20¹);
2. She taught the church (Rev 2:20²), as a leader (compare 1 Tim 2:8-15; 1 Co 14:34-36);
3. She seduced the church to commit fornication (that is, a spiritual fornication aimed to worship pagan gods...Rev 2:20³);
4. She seduced the church to eat things sacrificed unto idols (Rev 2:20⁴ ; compare 1 Co 8:1-13; 2 Co 6:14-18; Acts 17:22-30).

Brief interpretation to the “verses” according to Revelation 2:20-23

Verse 20: Christ lists His charges against Jezebel [and her followers]; four major charges were given. The most dangerous charge was that she was leading the church in teaching. Christ is against any act or platform that seems to confer authority or power on women over men in all His assemblies: The message here confirms His displeasure against the misconduct in the case of 1 Co 14:34-36 and 1 Tim 2:8-15.

Verse 21: Grace period of repentance (2 Co 6:1-2) was given to Jezebel by Christ, but she failed to repent of her sins.

Verse 22: Christ outlines His punishment against Jezebel and all her followers who failed to repent of their sins, through the great tribulation of the saints in Asia Minor.

Verse 23: Jezebel and her followers are finally given over to the debased mind of the wicked (see Rom 1:28) to perish. Such a sad end of the unjust among the churches might deter the rest of the saints to go by the principles of Christ, to help them attain eternity in Christ.

1.14 Christians Are Not Obliged To Pay Tithes

Tithing is one of the most sensational teachings in Christianity: **The first century Church** believed and taught that *Christians are not under any scriptural obligation to pay tithes*, as compared to how God the Father commanded Israel to tithe (Lev 27:30-34).

The Bible, the Old Testament Canon of Scripture, divides tithing into **four major categories**; **(1)** Self tithe (yearly)...(Deut 14:22-26); **(2)** Tithes to the Levites (three years)...(Deut 14:27; 12:12, 19; Num 18:21-24; Josh 13:14, 33; Num 35:1-8); **(3)** Tithes to foreigners, orphans, and widows (three years)...(Deut 14:28-29); and **(4)** Tithes from the Levites to God Almighty (Num 18:25-32). Each of these categories was a law stipulated for the people of Israel, but the New Testament Church has no such laws for Christians.

The following are the **seven(7) major reasons why Christians should not pay tithes**, scripturally;

(a) Christians are to give all the time and not yearly: The Hebrew word *ma'aser* used for “tithe” simply means “a tenth part” or “one-tenth ($\frac{1}{10}$)”. A similar meaning is given by the Ancient Greek word transliterated as *dekate* which means “a tenth part” or “one-tenth of”.

Aside the **seventh year release** commanded by God to be performed by the Israelites (Exo 23:10-11; Deut 15:1-11; Lev 25:1-8; Deut 28:12), the first division of tithe was given yearly to benefit the giver (an Israelite, from any of the eleven tribes of Israel aside the Levites), and also, the second, third and fourth divisions of the tithes were performed after every three years —as referenced above.

About the Christian principle of GIVING, Christ has commanded all believers to give willingly (2 Co 9:6-9, 13-14) according to their abilities (1 Co 16:1-2), even in their poverty (Mark 12:41-44; 2 Co 8:1-4), cheerfully (Matt 10:8; Luke 6:38; 12:33; 2 Co 9:7), humbly (Matt 6:1-4), and with purpose or positive intention (Acts 11:27-30).

We are to give all the time —on a regular basis (1 Co 16:1-3) when the needs arise (Matt 5:42; 1 Co 16:1-2; Eph 4:28).

The New Testament Church does not downplay the power of the Old laws of tithe (compare Rom 7:7; 3:27): This divine community teaches that Christians have a new Master (Jesus Christ) and a new Law (1 Co 9:21; Rom 8:1-2; see Jn 14:15), and that, the old law and the old dispensation have all ended with the death of Christ on the cross (Col 2:14-15; Rom 10:4); this Christian concept completely defines GIVING —it is the freely transfer of one's possession to someone or people, be it money, material things or his own self.

(b) *The Levitical priesthood is no more:* The Old Testament trend of the Levitical priesthood came to an end when Jesus took up the position of the “high priest” (Hebrews 10:19-22; 8:1-2, 6; 6:20; 7:23-25) after His holy sacrifice (Heb 10:11-14; 13:20).

The Levites, however, were one of the key beneficiaries of the tithes, from the Old Testament perspective. God chose only the Levites (the male descendants of Levi) as [temporal] priests for Israel (Exo 28:1-3; 29:27-35, 9-11; Lev 8:1-3, 12-13). They were the only people given the power over the Tabernacle of the congregations (Num 1:48-53; 18:1-15; Lev 14:19; 1 Chron 23:26-32).

Not only the divine office of the Lord Jesus Christ exceeds that of the Levites of the Old Testament: His “power and line of priesthood” goes beyond the office of Melchizedek as well (Hebrews 7).

Christ is the High Priest (Heb 7:23, 26) and every Christian is a priest spiritually (1 Pet 2:9-10; Rev 1:5-6). In the Old Testament, priests received the tithes in every three years (Deut 14:27) from which they ought to give “tithe of their tithes” to God Almighty (Num 18:26). Under no circumstance did a Levite pay tithes to other Levites or any Israelite. If that is the case, why would a Christian (spiritual priest in Christ) pay tithes to his fellow *brothers of the same faith?*

Nevertheless, Christians do not inherit the treasures of Abraham by law or principle of tithing as in Genesis 14:18-20, but by faith in God for divine sonship (see James 2:23; Galatians 3:7-14, 18, 23-29).

How God's Ministers were/are taken care of, according to the Bible.

If the Bible teaches that the era of tithing has ended with the end of the Old Testament, how does the welfare of God's ministers in the New Testament connects to that of the Old Covenant? The following provides how God takes care of His ministers (if the tithes are no more):

- 1.** There was a proportion of giving to share with the Levites of the Old Testament (2 Chron 31:4-10).
- 2.** The Old Testament records how certain individuals devoted their selves to feed the ministers who taught them God's knowledge and understanding (Jer 3:15; see 2 Kings 4:8-10).
- 3.** In the New Testament, Christians are encouraged to share their possessions with the gospel Ministers (Gal 6:6): The preacher/teacher of the gospel must be respected by the Church regardless of the supports (1 Tim 5:17-18; Heb 13:17; 1 Thes 5:12-13).
- 4.** The minister of the Church must be paid, to have something manageable to feed himself and others (Deut 25:4; Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Co 9:9-11, 13-14, 18; see 2 Co 11:7-8).
- 5.** It is against divine order to ignore your duty as a Christian with the intention of disregarding the welfare of God's household which includes the preacher/teacher (1 Tim 5:8; Gal 6:10; Heb 13:7).
- 6.** It is the divine duty of every believer in Christ to get something to feed God's ministers (3 John 5-8; Phil 4:16-18), even to support them with any gift from above (Rom 12:8; James 1:17).

(c) *The New Testament Church is not Israel, therefore, Christians do not qualify to give tithes:* Bible believers of the first century understood that the Church has a distinct pattern of faith that is absolutely different from Israel. Though some laws and prophecies are similar comparing the Old and New Covenants of the Bible, the Church of the Lord (Acts 20:28) is different from Israel: The sonship of Israel was

according to the flesh (Hosea 11:1; see 1 Co 10:18) but that of the New Testament Church is spiritual (see John 1:11-13).

The statements “Israel after the flesh” (1 Co 10:18) and “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) do not contextually and hermeneutically mean the New Testament Church has replaced or fulfilled Israel. Israel is different from the Church we behold today: “...*He takes away the first that He may establish the second*” (Hebrews 10:9); the **first** was established according to the old pattern of Israel, and the **second** has been established according to the new pattern of the Church laid by Christ Himself (1 Co 3:11). If the pattern of Israel has been changed by Christ, all the other laws including the laws of tithing have been nailed to the cross (Col 2:14; see Heb 7:11-12).

(d) Money was used for only “the self tithe”: In the first division of the tithe, money was allowed to be used based on a condition, and that favored the *giver* yearly but not the *receiver*. It is written; “**24 But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the Lord your God has blessed you, 25 then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. 26 And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household**” (Deuteronomy 14:24-26, NKJV).

It is very unfortunate some Bible believers have turned **Deut 14:24-26** upside down to use money to pay their pastors as their tithes offered to God. Meanwhile, that money (if the tithe was to take effect in Christianity) ought to be used by the giver to feed himself instead. Under no circumstance was a Talent or Mina or Shekel (money used in the Old Testament) paid to a Levite as a proportion of tithes, according to the Bible; God emphasized on *farm produce* to feed His ministers (Deut 14:22-23; Mal 3:7-12) and not to enrich them with money.

We should not have a second thought that “all the people of Old were into farming and that was why they were asked to tithe out of their farm produce”: That is false. Some were mechanics, physicians/doctors, carpenters, engineers, etc. aside farming.

Still, God stressed on the farm produce; “*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house...*” (Malachi 3:10).

The Church with such understanding in Scripture according to the pattern of Christ believe that the law of tithe is no more.

(e) The New Testament Church gives willingly and not according to a percentage:

Pertaining to the concept of tithing, the Old Testament Church (Israel) was commanded to offer one-tenth of all their income [from their farm produce] (Deut 14:22-29), but the New Testament Church (the Church of Christ) has been commanded to give liberally/willingly (see 2 Co 9:6-15). The one-tenth of their income could be given as 10% out of 100%: The Church today has no definite pattern of giving concerning the exact percentage to give, except what is outlined in the Scripture;

- “Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38)
- “... Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper ...” (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- “... Let each one give as he purposes in his heart ...” (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- “... Whatever a man sows that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7)
- “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8)
- “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

The context of **Matt 5:20** does not command Christians to tithe or give anything beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees. It is written, “*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20, NKJV).

According to the context of Matt 5:17-19, the very portion that relates to the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees, they used to “*bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers*” (Matthew 23:4). This is why the *19th verse of Matthew 5* stressed on the fact that they were expected to read and obey the jots and tittles of the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses, Genesis through to Deuteronomy) within which [some of] the messianic prophecies spoken of in vs 17-18 were recorded: If

they had read and understood, they would embrace the divine task of the Messiah. Jesus cautioned them in Matthew 23:23; “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone*” (Matthew 23:23, NKJV). Even in their attempt to tithe anything, they erred in God's presence.

Thus, the context of **Matt 5:20** does not mean Christians are commanded to pay tithes beyond the ability of the scribes and Pharisees: They lacked the ability to give according to the biblical principle of tithing outlined in the Old Covenant.

(f) The blessings in tithes are limited to eternity: The Church does not teach that the law of tithe in the Old Testament was evil (Rom 7:7); the Church teaches that Christians, the ministers of the new covenant (2 Co 3:6), are not under any obligation in the New Testament to pay tithes.

However, the Old Testament outlines some blessings involved in the payment of tithes, but none of those blessings includes an eternal promise [to heaven]. What it means is that all such blessings are limited to eternity, and none offers Christians the chance of inheriting heaven based on the principle of tithe.

Like any other statute of God given to Israel, the law of tithe was given purposely to (1) offer a moment of celebration to Israel to mark their salvation from the Egyptian captivity (Deut 26:1-11), (2) feed the Levites, the foreigners among Israel, the orphans and widows in all their communities (Deut 26:12-15), and to (3) create an atmosphere of happiness and peace in every Israel community (Deut 26:16-19). However, Malachi the prophet spoke of some key blessings of the tithes.

In **Malachi 3:7-12**, the tithe was purposely to (1) open the windows of blessings to the Israelites (vs 10), (2) invite God's glory to rebuke the devourers of Israel (vs 11), (3) increase the givers' productivity in farming (vs 11), and to (4) make Israel/Palestine a delightful land (vs 12). But, none of these blessings contextually attributes to the Christian faith regarding their faith in judgment for eternity in Christ (Matt 25:31-46).

(g) “*Tithe*” is not a Christian doctrine: Tithing is not commanded by Christ or the Holy Spirit through the Apostles of Christ to be paid by Christians today. The doctrine of tithe is alien to the Church because there is no command given to Christians about it to be paid: This makes it sinful to tithe, as it goes against the biblical principle that says “do not add or remove” (Rev 22:18-19; compare Deut 4:2) — *“Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar”* (Proverbs 30:6).

Christians obey commandments given by the New Testament Canon of Scripture only (from which tithe is not stipulated), using the message of the Old Testament Canon of Scripture as a scheme of life according to works and not by faith or doctrine (Rom 15:4; 1 Co 10:11; Heb 9:9; James 5:10-11).

1.15 Musical Instruments Are Not Part Of The New Testament System Of Worship

Regardless of any diverse view on the use of musical instruments in worship, the **New Testament Church** holds a firm scriptural assertion that helps eliminate the idea of adding any musical instrument to the human voice to produce beat or musical note while singing in the midst of the church.

The Church of the first century believed and taught the following scriptural principles regarding songs:

1. Hymns are sang during and after church service (**Matthew 26:29-30**); “...And when they had **sung a hymn**, they went out into the mount of Olives” (vs 30).
2. Believers sing **praises** in the midst of the Church (**Hebrews 2:12**); “**11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee**” (**Hebrews 2:11-12**).
3. The church offers a **sacrifice of praise** to God, without any musical instrument (**Hebrews 13:15**); “**14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. 15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased**” (**Hebrews 13:14-16**).
4. The saints offered **songs of praises** that influenced the angels of God to come to their rescue (**Acts 16:25-34**); “**25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed**” (**Acts 16:25-26**).
5. The Church preached Christ to unbelievers through **songs** (**Romans 15:9**); “**And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause, I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name**” (**Romans 15:9**).

6. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are used to strengthen believers' faith in Christ (**Colossians 3:16**); "*15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*" (**Colossians 3:15-16**).

7. Believers in Christ sing psalms to control their conditions of life (**James 5:13**); "*Is any among you afflicted ? let him pray. Is any merry ? let him sing psalms*" (**James 5:13**).

8. Christians filled with the Spirit have one-on-one music interaction, with one another (**Ephesians 5:19**); "*18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (**Ephesians 5:18-20**).

9. The human mind and spirit should be engaged in holy activities regarding spiritual songs (**1 Co 14:15**), in order to block any evil song from destroying the soul (**Ecclesiastes 7:5**); "*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also*" (**1 Corinthians 14:15**).

Characteristics of Psalmists in the Church

- Psalmists compose songs e.g. Solomon, who wrote (over) 1,005 songs (see **1 Kings 4:32**); the authors of the book of Psalms, which include David (73 psalms), Moses (Ps 90), Solomon (Ps 72 & 127), Asaph (12 psalms), Heman (Ps 88), Ethan (Ps 89), Hezekiah (10 psalms), the sons of Korah (11 psalms), and the unknown remaining writers of the other 39 psalms; etc.
- They teach songs (see **Deut 31:28-30; 32:1-47**; compare the context of **1 Co 14:26**).

- They encourage others to sing songs that suit the desires and principles of God, from their spirits and souls (see Psalm 33:1-8; 105:1-6; 150; compare 1 Co 14:15).
- They have pleasure in singing songs that glorify God (Lk 1:45-56).
- They do not pay attention to “the song of fools” (Eccl 7:5; compare Isaiah 23:16; 24:16).

In the church, musical or mechanical instruments are not permitted by God to be used by the congregation, as He rebuked the Israelites in Amos 5:23; 6:5; psalms, hymns, praises, spiritual songs are scripturally permitted without the use of any musical instrument: Treacherous songs of wickedness and iniquity (Isaiah 24:16) and full of harlotry (Isaiah 23:15-16) should not be entertained by the Church.

1.16 The Rapture Of The Great Tribulation Is A False Doctrine

The **churches of Christ** believe that *the faithful shall not be raptured by God either before, during, or after the Great Tribulation prior to the Second Coming of Christ.* The Church teaches that “the faithful shall be taken up in glory into heaven after the final judgement of the entire world by Jesus Christ (see Matt 25:34; John 14:1-3; 1 Thes 4:16-18).”

The doctrine of **rapture** teaches that “the righteous shall be unexpectedly taken up by God (to spend 1000 years in heaven) before the final judgement of mankind. In most cases, it is simply ‘a 1000 years trip to heaven after being faithful to God on earth, before the final judgement of mankind.’ Some also believe that the Rapture shall be a form of complete judgment in the second coming of Christ, as the faithful shall meet Him in the ‘air’” (Seth Nyarko 2023a: 19).

The word “rapture” is not found anywhere in the scriptures; it is not a biblical word according to the original manuscripts. It is a word created by some Bible students or some millennialists from biblical phrases like *“be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”* (1 Thess 4:17), and the idea of “being taken away” of the persecuted while working (see Matt 24:40-41) [which event is likened unto how the Romans captured the Jews in Jerusalem with their invading army] ... (Seth Nyarko, The Great Revelation, Vol. 1, p. 19).

Tribulation is “a predestined event of great trouble or suffering (Rev 2:10-11)” (Seth Nyarko 2023a: 17). From the biblical perspective, God's Church according to the dispensation of time, is destined for it (1 Thes 3:3-4). However, the Church does not teach there is a rapture destined for the Great Tribulation.

In spite of this, Christians need to understand the context of the major “Great Tribulation” verses recorded in the Bible:

(I) Daniel 9:27; ***“In the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”***: This does not plainly mention the term “Great Tribulation”. But it speaks of the “3½ years of tribulation” which was the first phase of the “7 years agreement” ushered by the powerful ruler of the invading army, Titus of Rome.

Daniel 9:27 also depicts the Jewish-Roman war in 66-73 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in 70 AD. The test, however, discusses the **Great Tribulation** of the remnant Jews discussed in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21:5-36, and it summarizes and/or concludes the mystery of the 70 weeks of Daniel (i.e. 490 years) explained by chief angel Gabriel (see Dan 9:20-27).

The context of **Daniel 9:27** “introduces the 7 years of termination and redemption: 3½ years of tribulation and 3½ years of peace and complete redemption. The Roman rule had the chance to persecute the remnant Jews within this same ‘7 years’ and the Lord afterwards redeemed His community completely through the New Testament Church. The clear picture of this event is seen in Daniel 12 and in Revelation (ch 13 - 19)” (Seth Nyarko 2023b: 58).

(II) Matthew 24:15, 21; “abomination of desolation ... there shall be great tribulation”: This is in line with the “70 weeks” prophecy in **Daniel 9:24-27**; 12:1.

The abomination of desolation was caused by the Roman army through the Jewish revolt in 66 CE, and that introduced the great tribulation of the remnant Jews in 70 CE that affected the existing church of Christ in Jerusalem.

(III) Revelation 2:22; “I will cast her...and all those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation”: This was part of Christ’s message recorded in the epistles of the seven churches of Christ in Asia Minor to address the Thyatira congregation (see Rev 2:18-29).

According to the context of **Rev 2:22**, Christ did not wickedly establish the great tribulation against His Church. The tribulation was about to happen in 70 AD, and Christ threatened to give Jezebel ‘the prophetess’ and her followers in the Thyatira church over to the debased mind of Titus in the foreseen Jewish revolt and destruction.

(IV) Revelation 7:14; “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation”: This is part of the Elder’s answer given to John concerning his question on the great multitude seen in Revelation 7:9 (see Rev 7:13), after the vision of the complete set of God’s sealed generations (the 144,000 souls) in verse 4-8.

In verse 9 of Rev 7, the great multitude were gathered from all nations. With respect to the context of the great multitude, the great tribulation would be a general tribulation to be experienced by all Christians across the globe. The great multitude were the overcomers of the great tribulation destined to be experienced by all Christians from different parts of the world, in such era of the Church: This could be traced from the start of Christianity to the end of the world with the Second Coming of Christ.

However, the New Testament Church teaches that rapture is not coupled with the Great Tribulation of the saints: The Great Tribulation has no date or pattern; Christians only assume they can be persecuted anytime, anywhere. *The rapture before the final judgement of the world by Christ (John 5:22; Acts 17:30-31) coupled with any great tribulation is a false doctrine.*

1.17 The Church Is Encircled By Tribulations

The **churches of Christ** believe that *series of tribulations encircle the New Testament Church*: The Church may face tribulations at any point in time, and that is not certain on the side of Christians in terms of when and how such will occur.

Eschatologically, the Church has faced series of tribulations in the past (see Rev 2:10-11), and may face similar in the present and/or in the future (see 1 Thes 3:2-4).

“The leading doctrines that have sprouted through tribulational periods attempt to investigate the 1,260 days (Rev 11:3; 12:6) or the 42 months (Rev 11:2; 13:5) or the 1,290 days (Dan 12:11) or Three and half (3½) years, the 1,335 days (Dan 12:12), the (calculated) 70th Week of Daniel (Dan 9:24, 27), the 1000 years Millennium (Rev 20:4, 6) and the Rapture (compare 1 Thess 4:14-18), and the AD 70 Kingism or Theory” (Seth Nyarko, *The Great Revelation*, Vol. 1, p. 17). However, the tribulation of the present Church is not coupled with the doctrine of 666 (Rev 13; 14:9-12), the Armageddon (Rev 16:16), the Millennialism (Rev 20:1-7), the Rapture or the 144,000 souls (Rev 7:4-8): Tribulation is coupled with Persecution (a spiritual and physical campaign or attack made with an attempt to end a race carrying a belief that poses and identified threat to Satan's power or existing kingdom).

“Persecution is a form of temptation from the devil to pull down the Christian faith (Mrk 10:29-30; Gal 4:29; 2 Tim 3:11-12). It is generated through hatred (Jn 15:19-20) for the sake of Christ (2 Co 12:9-10), for righteousness’ sake (Matt 5:10-12)” (Seth Nyarko 2023a: 17). The Church does not believe in *pre-tribulationalism* (rapture of the Church before [the Great] tribulation), *mid-tribulationalism* (rapture of the Church after 3½ years’ experience of the [future] tribulation, associated with the 70 weeks of Daniel recorded in Dan 9:24-27), or *post-tribulationalism* (rapture of the Church after [the Great] tribulation) ... *Read more on these subjects from THE GREAT REVELATION, VOL. 1, PP. 18-19.*

1.18 The Destruction Of Jerusalem And The Consummation Of The National Israel Occurred In 70 AD

The **New Testament Church** believes and teaches that *the national Israel ended before God [physically] in the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem and the temple*. This study is given in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21:5-36 regarding the Olivet Discourse.

The belief reveals that God spiritually judged Israel, in Jerusalem, through the invading army of Titus of Rome. The Bible reveals that the lost kingdom of Israel was not restored by God for the Israelites (see Acts 1:4-8). But the Church was established in power (Mark 9:1) and glory (Eph 5:27) to reign with Christ, calling Israel and the Gentiles into repentance (Acts 17:30-31).

The Church teaches that the fact that Israel was consummated in 70 AD does not mean all biblical prophecies ended in that same age; covenant eschatologists, AD 70 Kingites (adherents of Max R. King's doctrine), and full preterists assert that all biblical prophecies have ended, even in 70 AD with the fall of Israel and Jerusalem and its temple.

However, the Church does not disregard the fact that certain parts of the prophecy concerning the “Olivet Discourse” have something to offer Christians today, using the *third principle of “prophetic telescoping”*.

“The prophecy of Christ in Matt 24, Mrk 13 and Lk 21:5-36 splits into three(3) major sections: Some tackle the past with respect to the life of the Jews; some tackle the present life of the present Church; and other parts predict events of God's final judgement pertaining to the Jews which very predictions tackle our future in terms of the final judgement of mankind in the Second Coming of Christ ... The Olivet Discourse discusses Christ's special message to God's community on Mount Olive (see Luke 21:37-38). The message centered on three key areas of God's own plan and purpose; (1) judgment, (2) termination or destruction, and (3) the end of time. All these three key messages discussed by Christ on Mount Olive were recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21:5-36” (Seth Nyarko, *The Bible And Prophetic Telescoping*, pp. 25, 26).

*[To learn more on the **Olivet Discourse**, kindly read the full lesson from the study titled “THE BIBLE AND PROPHETIC TELESCOPING” (pp. 24-29) written by Seth Nyarko.]*

1.19 The Armageddon War Is Apocalyptic

The **churches of Christ** believe that *the Armageddon war described in Rev 16:12-16 is apocalyptic*, in the sense that it apocalyptically reveals the spiritual battle between God and Satan (that is, between good and evil) spiritually.

The Church does not attribute the Armageddon battle to any [future] nuclear war between nations of this world which may or may not affect the existing Church.

Dispensationalists believe that the battle of Armageddon is destined for the future of the Church to be fulfilled literally. But the belief of the Church is rooted firmly in the doctrine of Christ that attributes the battle to the concept of apocalypticism, teaching that, it was fought spiritually between God and His Church and Satan and the wicked: This doctrine is affirmed by partial preterists and full preterists who practice the “left wing” of preterism (i.e. preterism of the book of Revelation) in the mainstream of biblical eschatology.

1.20 The 1,000 Years Doctrine Is Prophetic And Apocalyptic

The **New Testament Church** teaches that *“1,000 years reign” in Revelation 20:1-6 is both prophetic and apocalyptic*, and it does not believe in any 1,000 years adventure or event in the literal sense.

The summary of Revelation 20

Rev 20:1: The angelic being (believed to be archangel Michael) descends from heaven with divine authority (key, chain) to bind Satan, after the full installation of the gospel of Christ (compare Rev 12:7-12).



“The angel binds the great red dragon, the devil”

Rev 20:2: Satan is bound by the power of the gospel of Christ; such depicts a complete period to demonstrate the power of the kingdom of Christ, which resulted from the power of the cross (Col 2:14).

Rev 20:3: Satan is imprisoned completely, in the sense that, he is partially restricted from overcoming the kingdom of Christ.

Rev 20:4: Justice is given to the faithful but martyred saints, to completely reign with Christ.

Rev 20:5: Baptism is the first resurrection. Those who miss such symbolic event are condemned to death completely (Mark 16:16).

Rev 20:6: Those baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ are overcomers of this world of darkness. They are blessed with all divine favors (James 1:17; compare Jn 3:27) in the kingdom of Christ. Such a great opportunity given from above delivers one from the power of death into the eternal glory of Christ (1 Co 15:55-58) as priests and kings (Rev 1:5; 1 Pet 2:9-10).

Rev 20:7-9: Satan is permitted to work after his defeat in the battle against Christ and the gospel. He comes back to use the descendants of men to wickedly persecute the Church on earth since he lost such a spiritual battle to God Almighty and the New Testament Church (see Rev 12).

The army of the devil raised against the Church, apocalyptically revealed as “Gog and Magog” is permanently defeated by God through the Church, to mark their end in the eternal fire (see Rev 20:8-9; compare Matt 25:41, 46).

Rev 20:10: The devil and his angels together with his earthly kingdoms (the beast) and false prophets are cast into the lake of fire (hell). The wicked would suffer with the devil destined for the same eternal punishment. This prophecy is destined for the future, the end of time (1 Pet 4:7).

Rev 20:11-15: Christ judges both the living and the dead, in His Second Coming (see Matt 25:31-46). The righteous are rewarded eternally with heaven, and the wicked are rewarded eternally with hell.

The 1,000 years doctrine is apocalyptic in the sense that God used numbers (particularly the Hebrew Gematria), colors, cryptic images and symbols to communicate His word to the seven churches in Asia Minor, about the subject. Thus, the present Church needs to view the 1,000 years reign as such, rejecting all literal theories supported by dispensationalism: **The 1,000 years doctrine is still regarded prophetically** in the sense that the subject reveals how God will deal with the righteous and the wicked, to end the posterity of evil; the Second Coming of Christ shall mark the end of the full concept of **Revelation 20**.

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