

HISTORY OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

By Marc W. Gibson

The beginning of the church of Jesus Christ is recorded in Acts 2. Peter preached the gospel of Jesus on the day of Pentecost; three thousand gladly received the word and were baptized; and "The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47) The coming of God's kingdom, His church, was prophesied beforehand (Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44; Amos 9:11,12). When Jesus came, He announced that the kingdom was at hand and that He would build His church (Mark 1:15; Matthew 16:18). The book of Acts records that church's early history as the gospel spread from Jerusalem into Judea, then to Samaria, and eventually to the uttermost parts of the known world (Acts 1:8; Colossians 1:23). We do not have a divinely inspired historical record of the Lord's church after the first century. However, in subsequent centuries, various authors produced many historical writings that enable us to track the origin of false teachings and apostasies that gave rise to Roman Catholicism. A sixteenth-century Reformation Movement gave rise to various Protestant denominations (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist, et. al.) that exist today. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, several individuals were desirous of restoring the ancient order of the New-Testament church; this resulted in what we call the Restoration Movement. We are indebted to them for their efforts to encourage believers to return to New-Testament authority and to follow it as their only faith and guide.

We exist today as people who strive to follow the ancient order of the New-Testament church and to teach and practice only what its Head, Jesus Christ, authorized. Changes can, and will, occur. The institutional issues that divided brethren in the 1950s and 60s brought division among churches in this area and others. Current issues relating to liberalism, fellowship, and unity in diversity are now creating tension and division among brethren. Satan never abandons his efforts to trouble the Lord's church. Let us determine to remain faithful as a congregation of God's people. ***