The Church in Four Stages
Eph. 3:21

Introduction:
A. The popular concepts of “the church” are vague and varied.
   1. Anything from building to ecclesiastical hierarchy.
   2. A denomination or all denominations.
   3. A definite group or a vague abstract (cf. Church, state, home)
B. The proper concept of “the church” can only be learned from the Bible.
   1. Bible is a sufficient guide in religion (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Pet. 1:3).
   2. Bible not to be tampered with (Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 John 9).
C. We want to look at the church in four stages.

Discussion:
I. The Planning Stage.
   A. Planned to bring all together in one before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-10).
   B. Brought all together in one body -- the church (Eph. 2:16; 1:22, 23)
   C. Church is according God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9-11)

II. The Preparatory Stage.
   A. Old Testament types, providence and prophecy (cf. Isa. 2:2-3; Dan. 2:44).
   B. The personal ministry of Christ.
      1. He and John preached that the kingdom was at hand (Mt. 3:1-3; 4:17).
      2. He promised to build the church (Matt. 16:18, 19).
      3. He paid the price for the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).

III. The Perfected Stage.
   A. Established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
      1. Before this day spoken of in future, after it spoken in present.
      2. After that day people were added to the church (Acts 2:47).
   B. Spoken of in three senses: Universal (Eph. 1:22, 23), Local (1 Cor. 1:2) and assembly (1 Cor. 11:18).
   C. Had same doctrine (Apostles Doctrine -- Acts 2:42) and practice everywhere.
      1. Same thing taught everywhere (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17).
      2. Same organization local organization everywhere (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5).
   D. Warned against a major departure or falling away (Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3).

IV. The Perverted Stage.
   A. The rise of Catholicism (606 AD).
   B. The development of denominationalism.
      1. Martin Luther (Germany) and the Lutheran church (1517).
      3. John Calvin (in Geneva) and John Knox (in Scotland) and the Presbyterian Church (1560)
      4. John Smyth (Holland) and the Baptist church (1607).
      5. John and Charles Wesley (England) and the Methodist Church (1729).
      6. William Booth (London) and the Salvation Army (1878).
      7. Joe Smith (New York) and the Mormons (1830).
      8. Holiness groups from Methodists from 1890 on.

Conclusion:
A. We must go back of the perverted stage to the perfected stage of the New Testament
B. If we preach the same gospel that the apostles preached, it will produce the same church.