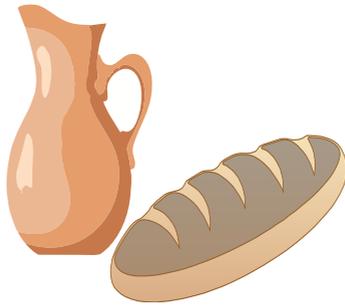


Church at Home



from the Ekklesia Research Group

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Church at Home Introduction

As we approach, what many call the last days, I find it timely for me to revise the study I made regarding the *ekklesia* church. We are experiencing an unprecedented power grab from governments all over the world under the guise of a worldwide pandemic. Most churches in the West will have to adapt in the way they meet due to governmental overreach. There has never been a more critical moment than now for the church to return to God's design, which will survive any form of persecution. I pray that this study will help the church to seriously consider going back to their root of what church used to be, if they are to flourish in the times in which we find ourselves.

The material found in this series of teachings is compiled by the Ekklesia Research Group. Ekklesia Research Group is a name I have given to represent all of those brothers and sisters who have helped me to better understand what the *ekklesia* church is all about. This series of teachings is also a work in progress. By this I acknowledge that I have NOT arrived with the ultimate truth or revelation about the church that Christ is building. I do however state that this is a thorough and honest search for that church. This is not only based on my personal journey, and that of the fellowship that I am part of, but also a combination of a multitude of brothers and sisters all over the world who have been on this journey for many years.

Whatever truths I received from God, is by His grace and for that reason I hold to the principle that freely we received and so freely we give. Therefore, none of the information and material or part thereof found in these teachings is to be used to make profit. Please feel free to copy and share this series with as many people as you feel led to do so, free of charge. The only financial contribution that may be asked is to recuperate personal expenses such as the media that is used to distribute this material on.

All the information is compiled for educational purposes and may be used only for this reason. This material is not meant to be followed as if it is the Bible. It is meant to be used only as a resource in your search for the church that Christ is building. You and the fellowship you associate with should take the time to wait upon the Lord to discern whether what is written or spoken in here is His will and do that which He has revealed that you should do. On the other hand, you should not have the attitude to just do what seems good in your own eyes. If what is written or spoken of in this series is proven to be correct and Scriptural, you need to be open to the Lord to do all the things He has commanded us to do.

Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (King James Version - KJV)

Finally, please take note that all Bible quotations are taken from the King James Version abbreviated as: KJV, unless specified otherwise. All texts are copied from: e-Sword version: 13.0.0. Texts that are formatted in bold and/or underlined, are done so by me for emphasis to highlight certain points in the text.

Chapter 1: The Ekklesia Gathering

1.1: The Kingdom of God

Why is the church that we read from the Bible, look so radically different from today's church? Is it merely the normal evolution of an organization, or could it be that today's church actually moved away from God's plan of what church supposed to have been? To answer this we need to ask what was the purpose of church? To answer that question we need to look at, what was Jesus' mission on Earth in the first place. Christ's mission is pretty evident through the Gospel that Christ preached. For instance we read in:

*Mat 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of **the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

We also read in: (KJV)

*Mar 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching **the gospel of the kingdom** of God,*

*Mar 1:15 And saying, **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.** (KJV)*

*Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, **The kingdom of heaven is at hand.** (KJV)*

The apostle also preached the Kingdom of God:

*Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the **kingdom of God**, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (KJV)*

*Act 19:8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning **the kingdom of God.** (KJV)*

*Act 28:23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified **the kingdom of God**, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. (KJV)*

The apostles also taught about the Kingdom through their letters to the churches:

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into **the kingdom of his dear Son**: (KJV)

1Th 2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you **unto his kingdom** and glory. (KJV)

2Ti 4:18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me **unto his heavenly kingdom**: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (KJV)

2Pe 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly **into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**. (KJV)

In actual fact there are over 140 verses in the New Testament alone that speak about the kingdom of God. When Jesus asked His disciples who people said He was; His disciples said that the people say He might have been one of the prophets of old, or John the baptizer who was raised from the dead. Then Jesus directed this question to them:

Mat 16:15 He saith unto them, *But whom say ye that I am?*

Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art **the Christ**, the Son of the living God.

Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church [ekklesia]**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the **kingdom of heaven**: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (KJV)

The church is being built on the revelation of Jesus the Son of God being the *Christ*. Yet what does it mean that Jesus is the Christ? Christ comes from the Greek word "Christos" which is the Hebrew equivalent for the "Messiah" which means "the Anointed One"¹. In the Old Testament a person would be anointed to function as either priest or as king over Israel. Being called *The Anointed One - the Messiah* or the *Christ* refers to the prophetic expectations of the One that would be the King over Israel, who would establish God's kingdom on earth from the line of David. So the church being built on the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, means the church is built on the very revelation that Jesus is the anointed

King and Priest of God's kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom is about the awaited One of God— the one who would rule and establish God's righteousness and judgment on earth. We read about this in:

*Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the **government** shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

*Isa 9:7 Of the increase **of his government** and peace there shall be no end, upon the **throne of David, and upon his kingdom**, to order it, and to establish it **with judgment and with justice** from henceforth **even for ever**. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (KJV)*

The everlasting kingdom would come from the tribe of Judah - from the loins of David; as David declared in:

*1Ch 28:4 Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father **to be king over Israel for ever**: for **he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler**; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all Israel: (KJV)*

What is amazing to see is that the proclamation of the kingdom of God started in the city of Jerusalem the city of David. Jerusalem is the starting point from which the kingdom of Christ would advance to over the rest of the world, which we can read about in:

*Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the **kingdom to Israel**?*

*Act 1:7 And he said unto them, **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.***

*Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in **Jerusalem**, and **in all Judaea**, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (KJV)*

God's everlasting kingdom was furthermore prophesied in:

*Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but **it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand **for ever**. (KJV)*

Further on Daniel prophesies in:

Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

*Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a **kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his **kingdom** that which shall not be destroyed. (KJV)*

This is then confirmed by John in:

*Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and **of his Christ**; and **he shall reign for ever and ever**. (KJV)*

Even Christ's birth speaks of the kingdom of God from the wise men's perspective in:

Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

*Mat 2:2 Saying, **Where is he that is born King of the Jews?** for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. (KJV)*

What has this all got to do with the purpose of church? To understand the purpose of church we must first grasp the fact that Christianity was never meant to be a religion, but a kingdom. This means that the purpose of church is about the kingdom of God and not about some new religion. We ask you to prayerfully consider seriously what is going to be taught from this point on, because we are going to unmask the last 1700 years of institutional church traditions. This is not something to approach light-heartedly, since the consequences of what one believes the church actually is, does have a tremendous influence on our effectiveness in God's kingdom.

1. W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, W.E. Vine Copyright Ltd., Bath, England and Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN (Bath, England & Nashville, 1984, 1996.) "Christ" e-Sword 13.0.0

1.2: Ekklesia

In this section we deal with the question how does the church meeting represent a kingdom as opposed to a religion? In answering this, we need to look at the actual biblical meaning of the word “church”. For now we can say that most Christians do understand that church does not mean a building but an actual assembly of believers. Yet church was not just any kind of assembly. To fully grasp the church of the Bible as a *kingdom* gathering, we would need to look at its Greek roots and also at the variety of assemblies with their emphasis in the New Testament.

Should you want to look at some of these Greek words for yourself, please make use of Greek dictionaries that explain the meanings of the words as they were understood in biblical times, like the Greek Lexicon or Vines or similar scholarly Greek dictionaries. The Strong’s dictionary, for instance, only translates words into their current English meaning and is not meant to be used to interpret the original meaning of the words of the text.

The first word that we are going to look at that describes an *assembly* is the word: *synagogue*. The word: *synagogue* comes from the Greek word “*synago*” which entails an assembling of people brought together from those who were scattered.¹ After the temple of Solomon was destroyed and the Jews were scattered among the nations; the Jews came together in small groups where they continued to be taught by the Law of Moses and the instructions of the prophets. The *synagogue* gathering helped them to not forsake their heritage as a nation, even though they were scattered all over the world, without a temple. To the Jews, the *synagogue* was a kind of religious school, similar to a Sunday school or Bible classes. It was never seen by the Jews as a temple or place of worship at that time. We do want to remark that some modern Westernized Jews have incorporated some of the Westernized church practices in their gatherings, which were not present in bible times.

Keep in mind though that *synago* only meant bringing together scattered people or things. For that reason the word *synago* was sometimes used when it referred to bringing the church together. Yet the word *synago* never referred to the actual church gathering. In other words *synago* was never used to mean church, but only that the church was brought together or assembled as seen in:

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together [synago]²: in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (KJV)

Jas 2:2 For if there come unto your assembly [synagögn]² a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; (KJV)

There are other Greek words that also refer to an assembly, but are not as commonly known. One of them is the Greek word “plethos” which refers to a *general gathering of people for no particular purpose* as such. It just referred to a common gathering of people for any type of gathering.³ An example of Scripture of this type of assembly is found in:

Act 23:7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude [plethos]³ was divided. (KJV)

Another is the Greek word “soostrofay” literally meaning *a twisting together*⁴ generally referring to a crowd or a riot for instance as used in:

Act 19:40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse [soostrofay].⁴ (KJV)

The next Greek word is “panegurous”. This word is more interesting in that it was used to describe an assembly that was *spectator orientated* in nature.⁵ This word was used to describe the Greek Olympics gathering, or **religious gatherings**. It was used to indicate religious gatherings, because most of the people who gathered were spectators to the ritual performances of the priests up front. Attendants might participate in prayer or bring something forward to sacrifice, but for the majority of the time they were spectators at a religious show. This word was used in a prophetic and spiritual sense of the church in:

Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Heb 12:23 To the general assembly [panegurous]⁵ and church [ekkllesia]² of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (KJV)

You would think that looking at today's church, the word “church” came from this Greek word: *panegurous*. For instance, if we go into most church gatherings today, we enter a spectator-oriented religious gathering, where we hardly participate except for maybe singing songs and giving money. Unfortunately, neither of these Greek words for gatherings was ever used to refer to mean the church or the church meeting in the Bible.

The actual Greek word for church is: *ekklesia*. It is a combination of two words “ek” which means “out of” and the “klesia” which means “called”. Literally, it can be translated as “called out” or “elect”. Yet the word *ekklesia* meant much more than an assembly of the elected of Christ. The word *ekklesia* actually indicated **a judicial meeting**.⁶ Both the Greeks and the Romans used the Greek word *ekklesia* to refer to a meeting where people were called out to discuss and make decisions concerning the affairs of state. The judicial meetings were attended for the sake of the stability of the state and the advancement of the **current kingdom**.

The *ekklesia* was the principal assembly of the democracy of ancient Athens during its Golden Age between 480–404 BC. In 594 BC, it was the popular assembly, open to all male citizens over the age of 19, meaning that all classes of citizens in Athens were able to participate. The *ekklesia* opened the doors for all citizens, regardless of class, to nominate and vote for magistrates - indirectly voting for the Areopagus, which was like a “high court of appeal”. The *ekklesia* had the final decision on legislation, war and peace, military strategy, electing army generals and other officials and had the right to call magistrates to account after their year of office.⁷

In the 5th century BC their numbers reached about 43,000 people. However, only those wealthy enough to spend much of their time away from home were able to participate, until Pericles' reforms in early 451-2 BC allowing payment for jurors. Originally these meetings were held once every month, but later on they met three or four times per month. The agenda for the *ekklesia* was generally established by the servants of the king, the popular council. Votes were taken by a show of hands. A quorum of 6,000 was sometimes required to do business.⁷

Something interesting and quite humorous to note on the side-line, is that a gang of slaves, called Scythians, carrying ropes dipped in red ochre named “miltos”, would travel through the city on the days the *ekklesia* was to meet, and would lash those citizens not in attendance with these *miltos*. With garments stained, shamed citizens could legally not carry out any business until they visited the meeting grounds of the *ekklesia*.⁷

So it is evident from Greek culture that the word *ekklesia* was never used by the Greeks to indicate a religious or informal gathering. This was true under the Roman Empire as well. This meaning of the *ekklesia* is clearly seen in an incident found in Acts 19. From verses twenty-four up to verse thirty one we read of a silversmith name Demetrius who was greatly offended by the new beliefs Paul

brought to Asia, which entailed turning away from idol worship towards faith in Christ. It had drastic financial implications for Demetrius and other silversmiths who made these idols for profit. Demetrius got a whole mob together at the theatre to make a decision about what they were going to do.

Let us read from Scripture what happened from this point on, from:

Act 19:32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the **assembly [ekklesia]**² was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

Act 19:33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

Act 19:34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

Act 19:35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?

Act 19:36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

Act 19:37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

Act 19:38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

Act 19:39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful **assembly [ekklesia]**².

Act 19:40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

Act 19:41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed **the assembly [ekklesia]**². (KJV)

Here we find the Greek word *ekklesia* being used three times to indicate the type of assembly the silversmith Demetrius called for. It is also why the city clerk questioned the lawfulness of this particular *ekklesia* gathering, as it became a *soostrofay*, which as we saw earlier on, means "riot". Would you say that this *ekklesia* meeting was intended to be a judicial meeting or a religious meeting in this instance? It's quite obvious that it was a *judicial* meeting,

because their intention was to decide what they were going to do with Paul and the influence he had on the idol worship industry of that city. It was only when they were shouting praises to their idol named Diana that the secretary came to bring **order** to the *ekklesia* gathering. If only we had such a city clerk to come and create order in many of our modern day churches... ok bad joke 😊.

1. *Vine's "Essemble"* e-Sword 13.0.0
2. Paul R. McReynolds, *Word Study Greek-English New Testament* Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, Wheaton, Illinois 1990.
3. *Vine's "Essembly"* e-Sword 13.0.0
4. *Vine's "Gathering"* e-Sword 13.0.0
5. *Vine's "Essembly"* e-Sword 13.0.0
6. *Vine's "Essembly"* e-Sword 13.0.0
7. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ecclesia-ancient-Greek-assembly>, 16 May 2021;
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_\(ancient_Greece\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_(ancient_Greece)), 16 May 2021.

1.3: Interactive Meeting

Does the Bible really indicate a *judicial meeting* when it refers to an *ekklesia* church gathering? The problem we have when reading Scripture is that we already have a pre-conceived idea about church, understanding it to be a religious gathering at a religious building; so we read that perspective into Scripture. Let me challenge you to take a step of faith now, by taking off the tinted glasses of man-made tradition and read the Scripture purely on what is actually written, and your eyes might open to a church you never knew was actually taught in Scripture.

Let us start with Jesus' teaching concerning church in:

Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

Mat 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Mat 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mat 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (KJV)

Is there any indication that Christ is referring to church as a worship service here? No, because it is clear that Christ is speaking of a type of council or judicial meeting where decisions are to be made concerning an unrepentant brother. Take note that here, Jesus is talking about the whole church putting someone out of the church, and there is no mention of this being the role of church leaders, as is practised in many traditional churches. The fact that the church may bind or loosen anything on earth with the result to having it bound or loosed in heaven is evidence that the church being spoken of refers to a judicial meeting concerning the kingdom of God. This is very much the same as the *ekklesia* of ancient Athens.

In fact, the correcting of brothers in a church meeting is not uncommon in Scripture at all! Paul writes in:

1Co 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1Co 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (KJV)

Is Paul talking about a worship service or a judicial meeting when he instructed the Corinthian church as a whole about what to do with an unrepentant brother? Keep in mind this was Paul's instruction to the whole church and not just to the leaders of the church.

Please don't misunderstand me here. I am not saying that church is a secular meeting. The biblical church is very clearly a spiritual meeting. Christ is in our midst, heading the meeting of royal priests. We are coming together to discuss and make decisions concerning the affairs of His kingdom. It is therefore a spiritual judicial meeting – very different from the “worship service” that we are accustomed to.

So far, does it seem to you that church should be an interactive meeting where everyone can participate, or does it still seem right to have the traditional three point monologue sermon? Well, let us go on and explore the Scriptures even further. The author of Hebrews writes in:

Heb 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (KJV)

This passage does not say that we are not to forsake the assembly so that we can listen to one man's opinion. We are to **exhort one another**.

Even when it comes to singing, we read in the Bible that it was done “to one another” in an *ekklesia* gathering. For instance we read in:

Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves [each other] in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (KJV)

To whom are the songs directed to when we make melody in our heart to the Lord? The answer is - to **each another**. Paul's letter to the Colossians confirms this in:

*Col 3:16 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. (KJV)*

Again, what was the purpose of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, as we sing to God with thankfulness in our hearts? It was for the purpose of teaching and admonishing **one another**.

Remember the *ekklesia* gathering is a spiritual judicial gathering where the focus is on stirring **one another** to love and do good works. It is where we make decisions concerning the kingdom of God in our lives as the body of Christ. So it is of no surprise that psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs were sung to **one another** to teach and admonish **one another** to stir up love and do good works among each other. The songs spoken of here are not meant for a worship sessions where we need someone on stage to perform. Surely any person may sing songs of praise to God to encourage and teach the church as one would by teaching, prophecy or a word of knowledge.

Paul's letter to the Corinthian church is most probably the clearest indication of all believers taking part in the meeting. For instance we read in:

*1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, **every one** of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (KJV)*

According to Paul, when we come together, who is to contribute to the meeting?

- A) Only the one who has a theological diploma or degree?
- B) Those whom the Pastor allows.
- C) Each of us may contribute to the gathering according to what God gives.

We will need a lot of creative interpretation in order to make any sense of this passage it in the traditional church gathering? Let us read further from:

1Co 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

1Co 14:30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

1Co 14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

1Co 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. (KJV)

The word prophet in Greek “prophetes” refers to someone speaking a word from God.¹ So according to this passage, who is to speak a word from God?

- A) The pastor
- B) Those who the church has appointed
- C) Two or three prophets – or spokespersons of God.

We read that two or three people may speak God’s word. Who is then to judge whether these words spoken are from God?

- A) The pastor
- B) The elders
- C) The whole church

Can you picture a church meeting where everyone is involved in judging the word; where it is not only an appointed pastor that plays police? But wait; here is another question. What needs to happen if someone who sits by has something to add to what the first three prophesying are speaking about?

- A) He has to stay quiet because you are not to interrupt the pastor when he is speaking.
- B) You need to ask the pastors’ permission to say something to the church.
- C) The first two or three need to keep quiet and give heed to the one who has something to add, for we all may prophesy one by one.

Let us repeat the passage in:

1Co 14:30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

1Co 14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. (KJV)

The Bible teaches us that the meeting is to be interactive, where there needs to be more than one person giving the “Word of God”. In other words **the whole church may take part in the gathering**. This is only possible in a judicial *ekklesia* meeting. It is clear that this judicial *ekklesia* meeting is about much more than just dealing with unrepentant brothers or sisters. It is about the affairs of God’s

kingdom in our lives.

The closest comparison today to the biblical understanding of an *ekklesia* church is a city council. Picture having a city council, where every time they meet, they have a single appointed person who expounds on his interpretation of the council's policy, rules and procedures' manual. Now this appointed person might even give a brilliant motivational speech on the fact that they are the chosen council members of the city. However, the council meeting never gets to be about dealing with issues on hand such as which roads needs to be improved, what to do about the crime in the town, or what funds need to be allocated for schools. Even though the council members feel they were motivated and gained knowledge on the policy, rules and procedures manual, their meetings do not fulfil the reason why they were chosen to be the town council.

The council also may have meetings where everyone gets to have a say and even have a discussion on their views and interpretations concerning the policy, rules and procedures manual. The appointed person might insist that they follow his interpretational study notes. This meeting does not differ that much from a book club? The town council is still not fulfilling the reason why they were chosen to be members of the city council. In the same way the church meeting should not be a religious book club, nor a motivational gathering held from the appointed person's view of the Bible. The *ekklesia* is the elect of God who come together to discuss and make decisions concerning the affairs of God's Kingdom in their lives and the areas they effect. As the *ekklesia*, they have the authority to bind and loose on earth, that will then be bound and loosed in heaven.

1.4: Equipping the Saints

If the *ekklesia* meeting is to be interactive; where then does the monologue sermon that we are so used to in the Sunday service fit in? The monologue sermon in an *ekklesia* meeting was unheard of in the first three hundred years of the church's existence. Yet, with the church being institutionalised in 325AD by Constantine, and with the church being given religious buildings, the meetings became spectator orientated religious shows, run by ordained clergy. ¹ The sermon that we are used to in the institutional church was made popular by the man with the name of **John Chrysostom** in about 386 AD. ² He was nicknamed the man with the golden mouth, because of the Aristotelian art of rhetoric which he acquired before his conversion to Christianity.

Some would argue that the monologue rhetoric in church can be found back in Scripture. Their proof text is found in:

*Act 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul **preached unto them [dialogomi]** ³, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued **his speech [logos]** ⁴ until midnight. (KJV)*

Keep in mind when reading this passage, that this passage was translated from Greek by those who had a traditional church background. You see, the phrase "spoke to them" in this passage is the Greek word "dialogomi". It is where we get our English word "**dialogue**" from. To the Greeks it had a much stronger meaning that indicated "**heated discussion or debate**". ³ It is true that Paul did lead the discussion but it was a discussion none the less. The word "message" is from the well-known Greek word "logos" which indicates a "word" that depicts "reason or thought". ⁴

The translators could not imagine that there could be discourse in the type of church meeting that they had become accustomed to. They therefore translated *debates and reasoning* as *speaking his message*. But think about it; Paul had to leave the next day and the church had a lot to sort out before he left. It is unreasonable to think that he addressed these issues through a sermon. As in all *ekklesia* judicial meetings, these issues were *discussed*. Logic also dictates to us it's unlikely that a monologue sermon would last till midnight, but discussions can easily make hours pass quickly. Discussion in a church meeting over certain issues was not as uncommon in an *ekklesia* judicial meeting as one would think. For instance we read in:

Act 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

*Act 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas **had no small dissension and disputation with them**, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. (KJV)*

Do these accounts of discussions and even disputes resemble anything we are used to in our traditional church services of today? Imagine that there was actual dissension – interactive dialogue, because of wrong doctrine being taught. This is only possible in an *ekklesia* judicial meeting. This kind of church is really beyond our imagination.

Here is another interesting question to consider: If it was not possible that there were dialogues in a church meeting, why would Paul bother giving Timothy instructions concerning dialogues that end up in useless arguments? We can read for instance in:

*2Ti 2:14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they **strive not about words to no profit**, but to the subverting of the hearers. (KJV)*

This whole aspect of disputes in the church needs to be explained further, but that we will get to at a later stage. The point that I am making here is that in a judicial *ekklesia* meeting there was open dialogue and not a monologue sermon from one member, while the rest of the congregation had to sit in pews looking at the backs of each other's heads and just accept all that was being preached behind the pulpit. Even when Paul preached the gospel to those outside the church gathering he would reason with them as demonstrated in the following example:

*Act 19:8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, **disputing and persuading** the things concerning the kingdom of God.*

*Act 19:9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, **disputing daily** in the school of one Tyrannus. (KJV)*

Keep in mind that neither the synagogue nor the school of Tyrannus, was a

Christian *ekklesia* meeting. These were only places where Paul went to preach the gospel to non-Christian Jews. Nevertheless, Paul's way of preaching in these scenarios was not a monologue sermon. Instead he **disputes** with those he proclaimed the gospel to.

This would lead us to the question of how the "ministry", as some call it, would function in a judicial meeting. For instance, what do we do with Paul's writing in:

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

*Eph 4:12 For the **perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (KJV)*

We already had a look at this passage in the previous chapter. Permit me to repeat the point I made in the previous chapter. According to Paul, what is the purpose of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers?

Read the passage carefully and you will see that it was actually intended that the **saints are to do the work of ministry**. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are only there to show or **equip** the saints, give them the tools, so that they can **minister to one another**.

Do you think one can be equipped to minister purely by listening to a monologue sermon week after week? The answer is obviously NO. Equipping is to be compared to an apprenticeship. When an apprentice learns a trade, he learns by the teacher's example and through questioning the teacher concerning the trade. Then, at a point the teacher would let the student practice the trade while he looks and assists where necessary. Finally, when the student seems to be able to function in the trade, the teacher would move on and only would come back when further assistance is needed by the student.

A perfect example of equipping the saints is Jesus with His disciples. Jesus might have preached to the crowds who were not in His circle of disciples, but He spent quality time equipping the twelve disciples. He discussed with them the issues of God's kingdom. He shared His life with them, eating, and living with them. He taught them by example how to deal with everyday situations. He first showed them by example how to preach the kingdom of God and then gave them the opportunity to do it themselves. Then after three years he left them, with the Holy Spirit to empower them. Look what Peter wrote to the elders in:

1Pe 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

*1Pe 5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, **but being ensamples to the flock.***

1Pe 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (KJV)

How are shepherds to look after the flock? By being examples, not lording over them! Being a pastor is not about giving motivational speeches every week, but about equipping the saints in order for them to take over the work of ministry. Equipping can only be done through close relationship. Let us now read the whole passage of Ephesians 4:11 again, but right up to verse 16.

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (KJV)

According to this passage of Scripture, in what way will the Body of Christ grow? When **every joint supplies**, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share** in edifying of itself in love! Equipping the saints is getting the saints to a place where they are joined together to supply and edify each other with the gift that God has given them. This is about being part of the Body of Christ and not a religious organization.

Are you able to minister to the church according to the grace that has been given to you by God? Why do you think might the reason be for your answer?

Your answer most probably has to do with what is understood by equipping the church to minister. We read in:

Heb 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Heb 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. (KJV)

1. Francis Opoku, *Constantine and Christianity: The Formation of Church/State Relations in the Roman Empire*. (Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, 2015), 25.

2. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-John-Chrysostom>, 16 May 2021;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Chrysostom, 16 May 2021.

3. Paul R. McReynolds, *Word Study*.

4. Vine's "dialogue" e-Sword 13.0.0

5. Vine's "word" e-Sword 13.0.0

1.5: The Priesthood of all Believers

One of Luther's grievances against the institutional church of his time was that the church neglected the reality of the priesthood of all believers. Luther believed that all believers were called to minister to one another, yet the institutional church was designed to function as a religious gathering and therefore had no room for everyone to interactively participate as priests. ¹

The expectation of the average church attendee on a Sunday morning is to get dressed, go to church, sit in pews, listen to motivational speaking, sing some songs that were planned beforehand, give money, and perhaps drink a cup of tea or shake the pastor's hand at the end of the service. Yet, this weekly religious practice called the worship service is one of the most detrimental practices to the church's spiritual growth.

The "worship service", as it is known by many, is so intertwined with the mainstream church that it is almost impossible to think of church without it. It is how most Christians and the rest of the world defines Christianity. Yet this *worship service* seems to be the very thing that prevents us from functioning as the church that Christ is building.

Still, people will fight with every fibre of their being to try and sustain this *holy cow*, even though it is nowhere to be found in Scripture. Not only is it not found in Scripture, but is in actual fact contrary to the description of church in Scripture. It is contrary to Scripture because it is based on the idea that Jesus came to establish a new religion, where, as we have seen, Jesus in fact came to establish a heavenly kingdom.

The *ekklesia* is about the elect coming together to deal with issues about God's kingdom in their lives and on earth. In this meeting it is not just one person giving his three point sermon, or a band; choir, or worship leader performing the pre-programmed songs. It is about saints that share their lives together serving one another as priest through the life and Spirit of God that was breath onto the church. Peter writes in:

*1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: (KJV)*

A "royal priesthood" means a priesthood that belongs to the king. Our priesthood functionality is kingdom oriented; yet as priests we are responsible

to minister to one another about the affairs and praises of our King.

In a secular judicial meeting there are the board members with a chairman discussing the affairs of a company or a governmental state region. With the church, Christ, through His Spirit, is the chairman heading the *ekklesia* of God's kingdom on earth, and all the members contribute according to the ability Christ has given them. Look what Peter writes further in:

1Pe 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1Pe 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (KJV)

Does Peter's instruction to minister to one another with the gifts we've received give any indication of a one man or band show on a stage? Absolutely not! Peter's reference is plural people doing the ministering to one another. Paul writes the same thing in:

Rom 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Rom 12:7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Rom 12:8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. (KJV)

Is Paul talking about one person or more than one person doing the ministry to the church? There is an absolute focus on the plural in this passage, which makes sense in the context of the *ekklesia* being an interactive judicial kingdom meeting as opposed to a religious spectator-oriented meeting. In the *ekklesia* meeting everyone takes part according to the ability and function that Jesus has given them through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Head or chairman of this meeting. Why is this? Well, because He is the King of God's kingdom.

This kingdom is at war with the kingdom of darkness. To fully grasp this, we need to have a look at the Hebrew equivalent of *ekklesia* which is "qahal". The Hebrew word *qahal* has various emphasises. One of those references for instance has to do with a nation being called together by a herald or crier for to go to

war. ² If one thinks about it, the gospel of Christ is about; calling people together into God's kingdom. We are at war with satan, but we have the confidence that the *ekklesia* that Christ is building, the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the Septuagint - the translators would translate *qahal* as *ekklesia* in Greek. For instance:

Psa 22:22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation [qahal – ekklesia] ³ will I praise thee. (KJV)

Assembly in this passage is the Hebrew word: *qahal* and as you can see was translated in Greek *ekklesia* in the Septuagint. Some theologians believe that the gospel according to Mathew is the only book that could have been written in Hebrew, where the rest of the New Testament was written in Greek. ⁴ It is therefore assumed by some scholars that the Greek word *ekklesia* was originally the Hebrew equivalent: *qahal* when the gospel of Mathew was later translated into Greek from the following passage:

*Mat 16:15 He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?***

Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

*Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.***

*Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church [ekklesia/qahal]**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (KJV)*

In certain occasions the word *qahal* meant an assembly gathered to plan or **execute campaigns of war**. From a Christian perspective, every saint is called to be a royal priest to function in a judicial meeting that would execute God's kingdom against the kingdom of darkness. Jesus speaks further of this in:

Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (KJV)

Being called to be part of the *ekklesia* is not only our privilege but also our responsibility. God has made us Christ's church the executive office of His

kingdom on earth. Yet this goes much further than our meetings. The *ekklesia* kingdom meeting is a function of God's kingdom in us. The form of our meetings is only a shell that contains the fellowship of our true life in Christ. The form might either have a positive or negative influence on how we function in God's kingdom with Christ's life in us, but it does not guarantee it. Jesus said the following in:

Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (KJV)

The kingdom of God starts **within us**. Christ's rule has to start within our hearts. We have now come to the end of chapter three. If this is all new to you, you might feel overwhelmed by all of this. For some it might feel like their whole world, that is all they have been accustomed to, has been pulled out from underneath them.

Keep in mind, though, that there is a reason why you have got your hands on this material. God wants to prepare us for the crucial times that lie ahead of us. He wants us to grow up and stop playing church. We don't have time to waste away any longer by being religiously entertained. We are the royal priests elected by God to function in the kingdom of His Son.

Church can no longer be a place where we go to get blessed by the paid professionals. The church of God's kingdom is where we are to *be* the blessing as opposed to getting blessed all the time. Our faith needs to be exercised as opposed to us just being fed all the time and growing to be spiritual slobs.

You might have many unanswered questions at this point. We encourage you to continue this series of teaching on *A Church at Home*.

1. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Luther>, 16 May 2021; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther, 16 May 2021.

2. Vine's Old Testament "Essembly" e-Sword 13.0.0

3. James Strong, S.T.D., LL.D., Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, (1890; public domain), e-Sword 13.0.0.

4. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Godspel-According-to-Matthew>, 16 May 2021;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Gospel_hypothesis, 16 May 2021.

Chapter 2: Ministers of the Church

2.1: A Kingdom

Have you ever been asked by a Christian brother or sister that you have met for the first time: "... who is your covering?" It is a spiritual way of asking you to name the church organisation to which you belong and perhaps to whom you pay your tithes to. It comes from a particular ideology that one needs to belong to some institution in order for one to be spiritually protected.

Yet this ideology is in fact a façade, because in reality; belonging to an institution does not place us under an actual covering. Be honest, how many Christians are really accountable to anyone, even though they function within the church program? Many Christians only belong to some kind of church institute while it serves their need to be religiously entertained, or to be recognized for the so-called ministry, or has a great kids program. If that purpose is not accomplished in a particular church institution, they would simply move on to another institution that fits their blend of Christianity. How is this being accountable to anyone? Secondly did our Lord really meant to be under an organisation's covering?

Before we look into this issue of church covering and the role of the so-called leaders of the church, we would like to look at a situation that occurred in Old Testament times to help us understand something that is going on in church practice today. Paul writes concerning the Old Testament Scriptures, in:

Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (KJV)

The Old Testament serve as examples for us to illustrate what happens when people deviate from God's plan and what happens when people follow God's plan. So, even though Judaism was a state religion and Christianity is supposed to be a spiritual kingdom, there are instances when Christians can learn from the Old Testament. Let us carefully read the following passage in 1 Samuel to discern God's will concerning how His people are to be led:

1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have

rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

1Sa 8:8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

1Sa 8:9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

1Sa 8:10 And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. (KJV)

Right up to the time of Samuel, God always sent men to be judges over Israel to deal with issues as they arose. Because of this, everyone in Israel was aware it was God that was their King and their Ruler. The judges God sent were only instruments of God and servants of the people. They hardly ever acted as lords over the nation. Yet Israel in the time of Samuel wanted a king that could govern them as a nation. So let us now continue to read from:

1Sa 8:11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

1Sa 8:12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

1Sa 8:13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

1Sa 8:14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

1Sa 8:15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

1Sa 8:16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

1Sa 8:17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

1Sa 8:18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. (KJV)

What was God's warning to Israel in desiring a man to be king over them? The king would require the people to serve his purpose in his kingdom. Secondly, he would demand the people's best resources and then even tax them ten percent of their income. Is there not an eerie familiarity in this warning when we consider what so-called pastors require from the church today? Despite this

warning from God, what was Israel's response?

1Sa 8:19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

1Sa 8:20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. (KJV)

Israel wanted to be like the other nations who had a king of flesh and blood in charge over them when they fought their enemies. In other words, they were willing to pay to have a man, rather than God, to look after them as a nation.

So what has this got to do with church? To answer this we need to have a look at some historical church events again. When the apostle John, the last of the twelve, died around 100 AD,¹ the desire of the church grew more and more to be like the religions that were run by men whom they could see, rather than being content to be a kingdom under an invisible King and Saviour. In the beginning of the second century, elders such as Ignatius of Antioch,² Cyprian³ and Tertullian,⁴ introduced the hierarchy structure in the church. The terminology of "clergy" and "laity" came about to separate the church into two groups: those who were in charge and those who were to follow. As time went on, the overseers of the church started to claim more and more authority over the church.

Then something drastic happened, to the delight of those who hunger for control and power. Around 313 AD, Constantine supposedly became the first Christian Roman Emperor. Constantine wanted Christianity to become an official state religion, and so devised a way for Christianity to become institutionalized. But in order for Christianity to be institutionalized, it had to develop an institutional infrastructure, such as a unified doctrine of beliefs.⁵

So, around 325 AD Constantine called the famous council of Nicea to try to establish doctrinal unity especially over the deity of Christ. By institutionalizing Christianity, Constantine could give state benefits in the form of official religious buildings and subsidies for the clergy, who would have some kind of priestly function and authority, as was practiced by the heathen religions.⁵

Even though many Christians today hail this council meeting as the greatest doctrinal breakthrough, it inevitably became our greatest spiritual downfall. You see, after the counsel of Nicea, doctrine was not taught and understood anymore through the revelation of the Spirit but accomplished by brute force;

dictated by an institution. So here the church, that was supposed to be governed by another dimension in the Spirit, was now brought down to this world of man-made rule. From this point on, servants of the church were not called by the Spirit of God, but were appointed by an institution.

Man took control over the church and became an institution. The saints who allowed it to happen became spiritually dull and carnal and wanted someone they could see to govern them more than Christ whom they could not see. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in the New Testament were to serve a similar role to the Judges, Prophets and elders of the Old Testament. Their role was only to lead God's people under the rulership of their God. Yet there came a time when those who were to serve the church took on themselves the role of kings and Levitical priests over the church. Those functioning as elders took the name "bishops" as a title, in order to be exalted as lords of the church. Today we might call them pastors but they have the same role and power over the church as was given them in the time of Constantine.

Just think about what a so-called pastor requires in human resources to accomplish his so-called "God given vision" for the church. Is it not eerie how pastors, like Israel's kings, claim ten percent of people's income and human resources to sustain their man-made kingdoms that they call the church? Yet many Christians will rather pay to have a man govern the church than have an invisible Saviour be the Head of the church.

Let us for a moment just return to Israel's history to consider some other lessons written there for the church today. It was not too long after Israel appointed kings to rule over them instead of God Himself, that they encountered their spiritual downfall. Israel's first king, King Saul, was ruled by pride and jealousy, which caused rebellion towards God. Israel's second king, King David, even though the best king they ever had, caused the murder of one of his best servants in order to have his wife. The third king, King Solomon was so overtaken by the wisdom and lust of this world, that he fell prey to idolatry.

By the fourth king, King Rehoboam, things really got bad. Through poor management decisions such as increased taxation, Israel was split into two kingdoms. The new king of the north, King Jeroboam, made two idols and with them two more places of worship other than Jerusalem. He did this so that the people in his kingdom would not go to the southern kingdom to worship God in Jerusalem and so doing keep control of his kingdom. This account can be read in one Kings chapter twelve.

Now guess what happened after Constantine institutionalised Christianity and appointed elders to be bishops over the places of worship for the church? By the third council in 431 AD, the Council of Ephesus,⁶ and the fourth council, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, the church got divided into three denominations,⁷ namely: The Assyrian Church of the East; the Oriental Orthodoxy; and of course the Roman Catholic Church. The power struggle led to the creation of more places of worship and so idol worship entered the church gradually over the years. Even with the rise of the Protestant church in the 16th century the “institution of man's control” continued to prevail and so more and more denominations came about with more and more places of worship.

1. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-John-the-Apostle>, 16 May 2021;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Apostle, 16 May 2021.

2. Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Philadelphians, trans. not given., 5.4.0. (ANF 1:0) e-Sword 13.0.0

3. Cyprian, Epistle 62-66, trans. Rev. Ernest Wallis, Ph.D., 65.1.0. (ANF 5:0) e-Sword 13.0.0

4. Tertullian, On Monogamy, trans. Rev. S. Thelwal., 6.12.1. (ANF 4:0) e-Sword 13.0.0

5. Jourels I., Constantine and Christianity: The Formation of Church/State Relations in the Roman Empire. (Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, 2015), 25.

6. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 5.55.7 (5.5) e-Sword 13.0.0

7. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 5.54.13 (5.5) e-Sword 13.0.0

2.2: Head of the Church

Let us ask the questions that we guess you are thinking about: If there is supposed to be **no** institution, who will run the church? Surely we need some kind of leader? How can a church function without a leader of some sort? Israel had the same philosophy when they desired a man to be king over them as opposed to having God over them as king. Look what Paul writes in:

Eph 1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Eph 1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (KJV)

Who is the Head of the church? Christ Himself of course. Why do we even want mere men to be the head of the church if Christ is in our midst? Some would say, well they do have Christ as their “head” but one still need leaders to be in charge. Does the Bible really teach that leaders need to be in charge over the church? In the business world there is a huge difference between a leader and a manager. To give a breath summary, a manager needs to be in control of all aspects of the organisation, where a leader only needs to inspire people into actions towards a direction. In the same way a church leader’s task is only to inspire the church in the direction of Christ, but is not called to manage and control the church. Peter writes in:

1Pe 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

1Pe 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

1Pe 5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

1Pe 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (KJV)

Elders are to serve by example and lead the flock to the actual Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Elders don’t lord over the flock. Lording over the church means to run, control or have positional authority over the church as a manager would. Peter teaches us that Christ is Lord over the church and so only Christ is to run and have authority over the church. Peter’s teaching is based on what Jesus taught in:

Mat 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

Mat 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

Mat 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Mat 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (KJV)

Luk 22:24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

Luk 22:25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

Luk 22:26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

Luk 22:27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. (KJV)

In God's kingdom those who want to lead is supposed to be the church's servant. A servant is actually a slave which is the complete opposite of someone who would run or control the church. The next thing Jesus speaks of is a benefactor. A benefactor is one who benefits from those who he or she is in charge over, whether he/she is benefiting financially or reaching his or her own career goals. None of these things are appropriate for those who want to serve the church.

Another aspect of lording or exercising positional authority over others is when one makes decisions on behalf of others or takes charge over others. Let me read to you an example of an elder who was lording and taking positional authority over the church in:

3Jn 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

3Jn 1:10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

3Jn 1:11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. (KJV)

What evil did John talk about that Diotrephes did? Diotrephes took pre-eminence in the church. He decided whom he would welcome and whom he would not welcome in the church. Does your pastor exercise pre-eminence in the church, for instance deciding who is and who is not allowed to minister in the church, or who is and is not welcome in the church?

Some of you might object to this line of questioning, and respond that the apostles exercised authority. It is true that they exercised authority, but the question is: What kind of authority did they actually exercise? Paul writes in:

1Co 4:19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

1Co 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. (KJV)

Later Paul writes the following in:

2Co 10:8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: (KJV)

Is Paul's authority exercised from a position he received from a man-made institution? No, the authority he received was from Christ and it is seen by the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. Authority that is demonstrated by the power of the Holy Spirit is quite different from institutional authority. We see an example of this in:

Act 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

Act 5:2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Act 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Act 5:4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Act 5:5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

Act 5:6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and

buried him.

Act 5:7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

Act 5:8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

Act 5:9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

Act 5:10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. (KJV)

In this example do we see Peter using institutional authority? For instance, did Peter slay Ananias and his wife with his own hands? No, he just spoke the word that the Holy Spirit gave him to speak. It was God who judged Ananias and his wife. Did Peter receive this kind of authority because he had some theological degree or was appointed by some denominational institution? Of course not, Christ appointed him and this was confirmed by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. We read further in:

Act 5:13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. (KJV)

With this kind of authority men just don't dare appoint themselves, they wait upon the Lord to appoint them. So what is the difference between institutional authority and authority that is from the Lord? Paul writes in:

1Co 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

1Co 2:5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (KJV)

And then in:

2Co 10:18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Institutional authority in many cases is based on human organisation and wisdom, whereas authority from God is through the demonstration of the Spirit of God. When we talk about the power of God, we are not referring to the

foolish behaviour that is linked to the New-Age spiritual performances that are occurring in many so-called churches. Authority that is from God is neither demonstrated as a performance on a stage nor in words of men's wisdom but in the acts of God confirming His instruction. Let me illustrate this with the following fictional analogy:

A king sends out a messenger – one of his SERVANTS – to go to one of his Generals that are on the battlefield with an instruction. The instruction had to do with strengthening the left flank that is in a vulnerable area of the battle. In this scenario the General has positional authority, and the messenger or servant has command authority. In other words the servant does not have positional authority over the General. If the servant even tried to claim to have a position over the General, he would be in danger of being executed for his arrogance. Yet the General will heed to the servants commands from the king, because it comes from the king and not because of some kind of position that the messenger has. The apostles as well as all other ministers given to the church, have command authority like the SERVANT and not positional authority like the General.

Take the time to meditate on the differences before dealing with the next section.

2.3: Biblical Authority

There are some Scriptures that are often used by the institutional church to justify institutional authority. One of the most often used is found in:

Heb 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.(KJV)

Surely when you read words like ‘rule over you’ you should sense that this is in contradiction with Jesus’ instruction in Matthew twenty versus twenty five to twenty eight and Luke twenty two verse twenty five, that we are to serve and not to rule over each other. Obviously there is no contradiction in Scripture, so it can only be an incorrect translation of Scriptures. So let us have a look at the original text.

The Greek word for a ruler to show governmental or institutional authority, such as used in Romans thirteen, is the Greek word “arxontes”.¹ On the other hand the author of Hebrews does not use this Greek word to depict institutional authority but uses the Greek word “hygoumenoio” which, according to the Greek-Lexicon, means to ‘guide’.² It carries the idea of influencing others to follow a recommended course of action, for instance, in the way a guide helps tourists through unfamiliar territory of the country. A tour guide does not rule over the tourists but guides them with good instructions.

The Greek word for “obey” in Hebrews thirteen verse seventeen is: “peithesthe”, and literally means “to submit to reason”.³ This is the same word used in Acts twenty seven verse twenty one, when Paul told the captain of the ship that they ought to have *taken heed* of his warnings not to sail to Crete. It is obvious that Paul had no positional authority over the prison guards and the captain as he was their prisoner. The word *peithesthe*, in other words, gives the idea that we are to submit to the persuasive reasoning of the one who gives instructions and has nothing to do with positional authority. So we are to take heed of the instructions of those who are looking after our spiritual well-being, like we would with a tour-guide in dangerous and unfamiliar terrain and not because he has a *position* over us.

The next word in this passage which needs clarification is the word “submissive”, which is translated from the Greek word “hupeikete”, which literally means “to yield”.⁴ Think about it; should we yield to a man-made institutional authority or rather yield to the instructions a fellow servant gives from the Lord?

Common sense dictates to us that we do not yield to a man but to God. In other words we yield to the instructions of a servant only if the instructions are from the Lord and not because the person is appointed by some man-made institution. Think of the example given in the previous section where the servant gives the general instructions that comes from the king. The general yields to the instruction, not because of the position of the servant, but because the instructions are from the king.

It is with this understanding of submission that Peter writes that we are not only to submit to elders, but in actual fact we all should submit to one another, in the Lord:

*1Pe 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, **all** of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. (KJV)*

Paul writes the same in:

Eph 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (KJV)

So, in actual fact, we all need to submit to one another as we all belong to the body of Christ. There is no reference of Scripture that we are to submit to an institution. Here is an important challenge to those who are seen as shepherds or pastors of the church. Are you able to submit to the brothers and sisters in the fellowship you are part of? Or do you think that as a pastor you are above the counsel of the church fellowship?

Another passage that is often misquoted to show institutional authority is where Paul instructs Titus in the following:

*Tit 2:15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke **with all authority**. Let no man despise thee. (KJV)*

With what kind of authority is Paul talking about to Titus? Authority that is from the word of God or from an institutional position Titus received? Well, “these things” that Titus was to speak, referred to what Paul had received from God, with the authority it carried coming from God our King. So the authority is from the word of God and not in some kind of institutional position conferred on Titus. Yet, then there are passages like:

1Ti 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. (KJV)

Here the word “rule” is the Greek word “*proistemi*” which literally means those who stand before, which means “those who lead or attend to things”.⁵ So the passage actually means: “Let the elders that **attend** to things well, be counted worthy...”

Man is power hungry and is more interested in building their own kingdoms in the form of their ministering career as opposed to building the kingdom of God. Listen to what the Lord spoke through the prophet Ezekiel to the shepherds and the sheep of Israel in:

Eze 34:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Eze 34:2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

Eze 34:3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

Eze 34:4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

Eze 34:5 And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

Eze 34:6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Eze 34:7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Eze 34:8 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

Eze 34:9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Eze 34:10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. (KJV)

What was wrong with the shepherds of Israel? They were more interested in

their own financial gain than in the well-being of those whom they were to shepherd. What was God's warning to the shepherds of Israel? That He would take away the flock from them and that they would not be able to make their living from them anymore.

Do you not think it is possible that God will deal with the church today in the same way? Well, as we draw closer to Christ's return, Ezekiel's prophecy is going to become a reality in the church as it was in Israel. The obsession by pastors in the church for positional authority has also led us to an unbiblical use of titles. Jesus instructed the following in:

Mat 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

Mat 23:9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

Mat 23:10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

Mat 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Mat 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (KJV)

Having titles is the opposite of being a servant. Even the title of "deacon" has a sense of irony. The word *deacon* comes from the Greek word "diakonos" and literally means "servant" or "slave".⁶ It was never meant to be used as an institutional office. Let us challenge you to do something quite eye-opening. Find all the passages that talk about so-called deacons and change the word *deacon* to *servant* or *slave*. Then read those passages again with those changes and you will be amazed how this change brings a clearer understanding of those passages. I will do one passage for you:

1Ti 3:8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

1Ti 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

1Ti 3:10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

1Ti 3:11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

1Ti 3:12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

1Ti 3:13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to

themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. (KJV)

What are these servants or slaves that the Bible is talking about? Servants are any group of people that are selected by the church to administer a certain task, such as distributing funds to the needs of the saints or to provide ministries to the church. These servants may minister as evangelists, teachers, prophets, and even apostles. All of them are deacons or correctly translated: servants. In some passages the word deacon is even translated “minister” such as:

Col 4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: (KJV)

By using the phrase *fellow servant*, Paul is identifying with Tychicus who is the same as he is; a servant in the Lord. Here the words *fellow servant* is the Greek word “*sundoulos*” which means a co-slave.⁷ Imagine being a slave in ministering to the church?

1. Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, N. B. P. (Cape, 1993), 478

2. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 465

3. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 467

4. Vine' s New Testament “Submit” e-Sword 13.0.0

5. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 465

6. Vine' s New Testament “Servant” e-Sword 13.0.0

7. Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, e-Sword 13.0.0.

2.4: Pastors

This leads us to the well-known title of “pastor”. Would you be surprised to know that the word *pastor* as a noun is only found ONCE in the New Testament, and that is in this often quoted passage in:

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (KJV)

Nowhere else in the whole of the New Testament do we ever read about: *pastors*. You would think there would be a lot more said about pastors in the New Testament when we see how much value we place on them in our modern institutional church. There are two other passages though that do talk about who were to pastor or shepherd the church, where the word pastor or shepherd is used as a verb. The one we have read often before which is:

1Pe 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

1Pe 5:2 Feed [Pastor]¹ the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; (KJV)

Again, in Acts 20, we read that Paul addressed the elders and gave them some instructions before he departed from them for the last time. We are reading from:

Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers[bishops], to feed [pastor] the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (KJV)

So who was responsible to shepherd the flock? Right through the New Testament we only read of elders who are to oversee and shepherd or pastor the church. If you recall from Part One of this series, in explaining tithing and offerings, we quoted from:

1Ti 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. (KJV)

Once again; who is to receive a double honour for their labour?

1. The Pastor
2. The Head Elder
3. The elders who labour well in preaching the gospel and teaching.

It refers to elders and not pastors. Why do you think that is? The answer is actually simple. Elders were synonymised to or functions as: *pastors* or *shepherds* and therefore were used interchangeably. For instance we read in:

Tit 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: (KJV)

In reading this passage, did you note whether Paul instructed Timothy to ordain **pastors** or **elders** in the church? The only thing that Paul found was lacking was to appoint elders and not pastors in every city. Once again we read in:

Act 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

Act 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Act 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. (KJV)

In your opinion, why do we read of elders that were appointed and never about pastors being appointed? We read about evangelists, prophets, teachers and apostles, in the rest of the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts, but we do not read about pastors, why is that? Every serious Bible scholar will tell you that there were no separate offices of elders, overseers and pastors, as is practiced in the institutional church today. The elders were the pastors and overseers of the church. The institutional church that is run by a pastor who has a board of elders underneath him and a board of deacons underneath them is completely foreign in Scripture.

Even the word overseer, which is sometimes translated bishop, was only used to indicate a function of the elders. There were no “bishops” as a title of an office overseeing the church as is practiced in some institutional churches today. The plain truth is that elders did both the pastoring and overseeing or *bishoping*² of the church. Today’s over-emphasis on pastors has led to one man leading the

show, while building his own little kingdom. The church of Christ was never built or run by just one person or the selected few. When Paul was addressing divisions in the church, Paul wrote the following to the Corinthian church in:

1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

1Co 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

1Co 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

1Co 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. (KJV)

According to Paul, is the church only ministered to by one type of minister? No, it is necessary that there are different types of servants with different abilities that God uses for the well-being of the whole church. Do you think it is a well-balanced church with just one pastor being responsible for the entire ministry of the church? Do you think there might be something spiritually wrong with the church if so-called ministers from different fellowships cannot work together in serving Christ's church in that city or town? We read about not just one but five gifts given to equip the church so its members can minister to one another.

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (KJV)

Often these five gifts are seen as those who have the responsibility to do all the spiritual feeding of the church. Paul writes that these five gifts to the church are to equip the church, in order for the church to do ministry. So the work of ministry is the responsibility of the whole church where the apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastor and teach should equip the church so that the church can do the ministry. In other words these five gifting's to the church is not there to feed the church but rather to teach the church how to fish or how to bake the bread in order for the church to feed each other. Let us read the same text, but this time we will read it to you with a more literal wording, as the original Ephesian church would have understood it in their native Greek tongue:

"...And He gave some to be "commissioners of Christ", and some to be "God's spokesmen", and some to be "messengers of the gospel", and some to be "shepherds" and "instructors"..."³

The word apostle comes from the Greek word “apostolos” which literally means a “sent one”, which refers to a delegate, commissioner or an ambassador. ⁴ The first generation apostles were sent out by Christ himself to make disciples of the whole world. The second generation apostles have the same mission but are sent out by the body of Christ, which is the church. Disciples are made as churches are planted. When a church was planted, the apostles would move on to plant churches somewhere else.

The term “prophet” comes from the Greek word “prophaytace” which literally means one who speaks forth. ⁵ It is someone who would speak the words of God or who spoke under the inspiration of God. Prophets would go from church to church and redirect the church to Christ if the church had strayed away from the truth. They would also give words of encouragement from the Lord to the churches that were suffering.

The term *evangelist* comes from the Greek word “euangelistace” which literally meant a messenger. ⁶ Evangelists would preach the gospel of the Kingdom to people. They would assist the apostles to grow the churches numerically by proclaiming the gospel further afield, which helped the apostles to take more time to make disciples thereby establishing churches. They would also function as messengers between the churches where necessary.

The “pastors”, or in Greek “poimen”, which we already discussed, literally means *shepherds*. ⁷ They would come only later on in the picture. Elders, as we have seen already, were the pastors or shepherds of the church. Elders were recognized and appointed only after some time when a city-church grew to a couple of fellowships.

Who then appointed the elders/overseers/pastors over the church?

1. The denomination
2. The church institution
3. The Holy Spirit

We'll let us read in:

Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (KJV)

It is the Holy Spirit that makes some disciples to be elders of the church. When

the Holy Spirit has made some to be elders in order to shepherd and oversee the church, the church would recognize these men and the apostles would then be able to appoint or give them official recognition.

The responsibilities of the elders were to correct wrong teachings and to teach the church to discern error. The elders therefore also had to function as teachers in the church. Yet the gift of teaching was not necessarily exclusively owned by the pastors, as many in the church could have the gift of teaching.

The word *teacher* is the Greek word, “didaskalos” which meant “instructor”.⁸ We will look at this at a later stage how this ministry of teaching actually functions practically in the church. The church that Christ builds has to have all of these gifts to function correctly. The church does not need all of them at the same time, but all of these gifts would be evident at times in a healthy church. No one person would have all of these gifting. Where there is only one pastor running the show it would eventually quench the gifts in the church and create a passive and unbalanced church with a very unhealthy spiritual diet.

1.Insertion is mine for clarity.

2.Wording is mine for clarity.

3.Translation is mine.

4.Vine' s New Testament “Apostle” e-Sword 13.0.0

5.Vine' s New Testament “Prophet” e-Sword 13.0.0

6.Vine' s New Testament “Evangelists” e-Sword 13.0.0

7.Vine' s New Testament “Pastor” e-Sword 13.0.0

8.Vine' s New Testament “Teacher” e-Sword 13.0.0

2.5: Run by Brethren

Can you imagine a church that is not run by any one person? Something else that goes beyond our imagination is the fact that most Bible scholars agree that most of the churches that we read about in the Bible functioned without elders for between three to seven years in their infancy. Why was it that the church of *Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Crete*, had no elders for such a long period of time? Why did Paul only after a couple of years have passed, only then would go back to every city or send Titus to every city to appoint elders? Here is a hint. Paul writes to Timothy concerning the requirements of an overseer in:

1Ti 3:6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

1Ti 3:7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (KJV)

Christians have to be Christians for a while, for them not to be a novice anymore, and to have had time to build up a good testimony. So it is obvious that the churches needed to function for a while so that those who were called to be elders would first be closely observed to see whether they were able to oversee the church. Paul writes following in:

1Co 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. (KJV)

2Co 10:18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. (KJV)

1Ti 3:10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon [servants]⁴, being found blameless. (KJV)

Who are to serve the church as elders?

1. They who have a Bible college degree and is a good public speaker.
2. They who have been approved by the Spirit, and tested by the brothers, especially when there are factions among the brothers.

You see that if we are to follow the Bible to see who qualifies to be an elder then we would need a couple of years before we appoint elders in the church; instead of just appoint Bible College graduates. The question then that might come up in each person's minds is who would run the church in the mean time? Would

you be surprised to learn that the church was never run by apostles and elders in the first place? Now I know this might be hard for you to accept and the reason is because the institutional church in general does not have the faith to be led by Christ Himself. It sounds too mystical. Furthermore, how is the church supposed to have faith that Christ is able to run the church without a human mediator if the church has never seen it happen before?

Elders, apostles and prophets were to instruct and guide the church in the ways of the Lord, as with the judges, prophets and elders of the Old Testament. Their ultimate goal is to disciple the church to be able to hear the voice of the Lord for themselves. They are not to make decisions for or on behalf of the church in the first place. The church as a body has to discern the voice of the Lord and as a body make decisions. The church fellowship makes decisions as a whole under the leading of the Holy Spirit and not under the dictates of one person or of a few elect.

The church which is a spiritual entity is not supposed to have human government. That which is built in the Spirit has to be governed by the Spirit. Human government over spiritual matters makes followers vulnerable to sectarian influences and leaders. Sectarian influences over the institutional church today are spreading like wild fire as the followers have no ability to discern. Instead they are being trained to hear a man on a stage as opposed to hearing the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not talking about a democracy either. The church is not a democracy but an autocracy, because Jesus is the Lord and King of the church. So it is not about voting, but about the body of Christ sensing the Spirit's leading into the will of our King and Saviour, Jesus the Christ. This is quite evident in Scripture, for instance, in Acts chapter six where the apostles knew that they needed help to distribute the food among those who are in need.

Act 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (KJV)

Here is an interesting point to be made. Have you notice that it was not the apostle who appointed the servants of the church? It was the whole church who were to seek out seven men among themselves, and the apostle only gave instructions as to what kind of men these ought to be. Here is a clear example of how the Holy Spirit led the church, in:

*Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the **Holy Ghost said**, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

Act 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Act 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (KJV)

In Acts 15 we read of a furious dispute between Paul and men who came from Judea. Who decided what needed to happen to resolve this dispute?

Act 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Act 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

*Act 15:3 **And being brought on their way by the church**, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. (KJV)*

Well, again it was the whole church, and not some church board that sent Paul and Barnabas and certain others to resolve the matter in Jerusalem.

What did the church do next when they could not come to an agreement about the disputes over certain wrong teachings? They asked that some would go to Jerusalem where the dispute originated and sort it out there. We need to understand that in biblical times there was no head organization in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the origin of this particular dispute. So it had to be resolved in the Jerusalem *ekklesia*.

When the dispute was resolved among the elders in Jerusalem, who decided which leading men in Jerusalem would go back with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to report back the consensus they had reached in the Spirit?

*Act 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, **with the whole church**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: (KJV)*

Again, it was not just the apostles and elders but the whole church that was involved in decision making. What was the reason given in Acts sixteen why Paul took Timothy with him to do the work of an apostle? Well we read in:

*Act 16:2 Which was well reported of **by the brethren** that were at Lystra and Iconium. (KJV)*

Who gave a letter of recommendation for Apollos? We read the answer to this question in:

*Act 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, **the brethren wrote**, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: (KJV)*

In both cases we see that it was either by the witness of the brothers or their letters of recommendation by the brethren. It does not talk of an institution or some church board. Is this not interesting?

When it comes to church discipline, according to Jesus in Matthew 18 versus 15-17, who decides whether an unrepentant brother should be put out of church?

*Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the church**: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (KJV)*

Pastors or elders are not even mentioned by Christ. The **whole** church is to be involved to help the person see reason, but if the person is still unrepentant it would be the whole church who would separate the unrepentant brother from the church fellowship. It was never just up to one person or a so-called church board to decide these things.

Now, talking about church discipline; whom did Paul instruct in 1 Corinthians, chapter five to deliver the unrepentant brother to satan for the destruction of the flesh? Believe it or not, Paul addressed the whole fellowship without making mention of any leaders of any kind, as we see in:

*1Co 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **when ye are gathered together**, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

1Co 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (KJV)

The elders' leadership was only needed when false doctrines were being taught or if some false brothers caused division. They were then called into the particular fellowship of the city church or town to instruct in proper doctrine and to help make judgments concerning those who were causing division or error. But if the church followed the leading of the Holy Spirit there was no need for any intervention of the elders. When the fellowships followed the leading of the Holy Spirit the elders who were present at the time would participate as anyone else would. If the church functions fine, visitors to the fellowship would not even know who the elders were. All they would see is a family of believers all subjected to their Shepherd, Lord and King: Jesus Christ.

This leads us to the next subject matter and that is how would a church meeting function if elders/pastors were not to run the church, but only give leading guidance. For that matter how would a church function for the first couple of years where there are not even any elders or full time pastors appointed yet? In the following chapters we will deal with these questions.

1. Bracket insertion is mine.

Chapter 3: Meeting in Homes

3.1: From Commercial to Free-range

So we have dealt with leadership and the *ekklesia* gathering. This leads us to the next point, which is where would such as church gather if it does not tithe; have no official organisation; and have no person in control to manage it all? Let me answer this with an analogy that someone once used to compare the difference between the institutional church and the church that one reads about in the Bible. The analogy was comparing the difference between commercialised sheep farming and free-range sheep farming.

Commercialised sheep are generally cramped into a number of rows of cages in large expensive hangers. There is not a lot of space for the sheep to move and many times the sheep are forced to sleep, eat and relieve themselves in the same cramped-up space. The sheep are all fed the same formulated diet. The sheep are bred this way for it has the greatest yield of profit and but unfortunately it does not produce quality and healthy sheep with a strong immune system. The problem is that because of the way they are bred, there has to be strict control of who has access to the sheep, because if a virus should enter this environment, many sheep will catch it quickly and die easily because their immune systems was not able to develop and become resistant to viruses.

Free-range sheep are free to grace the fields. They have time to be nourished by their mother and feed from the different pastures. With this kind of diet and exercise, the quality of their meat is much better than those of the commercialized sheep. For this reason, their immune systems are also much stronger and can resist viruses and disease much better.

Christ intended that the saints should be free-range sheep and not commercialized sheep. The institutionalized church has big buildings to breed in, where strict control is kept over the sheep, and where they have a very limited diet specially formulated for that denomination. The moment error creeps in, the members of the church who do not know how to discern the truth from error for the themselves, being totally dependent of whatever is told them behind the pulpit, are then contaminated by error when it is preached behind the pulpit and so doing, many “sheep” are lost.

A second comparison is the difference between schools and families. Generally a school’s goal is to impart academic knowledge to the learners so that they might have the skills to build careers. The success of a school is generally measured by the numbers enrolled in the school and obviously the numbers of students who

achieve academic excellence. The success of the school is sometimes also measured by the social class of its students, even though schools would not admit to this openly. The success and prestige of the school is portrayed by their elaborate and expensive buildings and ground facilities.

Whereas the institutional church functions like a school, the biblical church in contrasts functions like a family. Families are small organic units that have as their goal the development of character and the maturity of their members. Families do impart knowledge but do not have that as their core goal. The success of a family is not seen in numbers or the gain of intellectual knowledge, but on how the children behave, their character development and whether they will grow up to be responsible adults able to start their own healthy intact families.

A family is something you are part of, in contrast to a school that you attend. The same is true with church. Church is something you are part of and not something you go to. The moment you are born-again you are part of that family of saints called the church. You don't have to attend a church to be part of it; you are part of it in the same way a child is born into a family. It is up to us how we function in this family called the church and household of God.

Some would say: Why make an issue about the format of church if the institutional church is getting people "saved"? That might be the case, but let me put it this way: orphanages look after children by giving them a place to sleep, food, education, and trying to create a safe environment. This is all good, but should we then conclude that there is therefore no reason to get a family to adopt these children? Of course not, because a family gives children much more than an orphanage could ever give them. The only reason there are orphanages is because the families are not functioning the way they should. Yet logic should dictate that it should never just settle to have all children be brought up in orphanages. Should we not rather at least strive to get all children in a healthy and save family units?

So what went wrong that the church became institutionalised and commercialised? It has to do with something that happened about 1700 years ago. We already saw that around 313 AD an emperor of Rome, named Constantine, declared tolerance towards the Christian faith that was under severe persecution from his predecessors. Constantine apparently became the first Christian emperor of Rome.¹ Yet he got baptized and made a confession of his faith only on his death bed, in around 337 AD. By then he had already made many changes to the way Christians practice their faith. Not knowing anything

about the church that Christ builds, Constantine institutionalised Christianity to make it an official **state RELIGION**. This was necessary as he could not hold on to a faith that preaches another kingdom other than his empire.

One of the things he did, to make Christianity an accepted religion, was to build the first Christian places of worship. The design was based on a well-known Roman structure called a **basilica**. These basilicas became the headquarters of so-called bishops. Even though the distinction between the clergy and laity had been made earlier on, by Cyprian of Carthage,² the *clergy system* now became official with the title *bishop* being given to those who were at the head of the basilicas. So, instead of denoting a service or function in the church, *bishop* became a title to mean a religious official. With this the clergy created their own kind of spectator oriented religious gathering became the norm.

Many of these basilicas were named after the first century apostles, for instance, St. Peter's and St. Paul's, and other respected saints.³ This practice was a custom borrowed from the pagans who named their temples after their pagan gods. By so doing, the basilicas were seen as houses of worship. It was at this point that the *ekklesia* body in a city became divided according to the basilicas they attended.

One could argue that when Constantine institutionalised Christianity and presented it with places of worship - a massive conversion to the so-called Christian religion took place. In today's terms it could have even been seen as a revival. Yet, sadly, the Christian religion that the people converted to in the time of Constantine was for the most part not the Christian kingdom of the Bible. A lot of pagan rituals especially that of sun worship were incorporated in the Christian faith.

What is remarkable to note is that before Constantine came into the picture, *ekklesia* meetings were predominantly held in homes for the first 300 years after Christ. Christianity was unique, among the religions of that time, in that it did not have a temple, or a holy place for worship. One needs to understand that for a "religion" not to have a place of worship was unheard of in that time and culture. Every religion of that time had to have some place of worship as a means to identify them from the other religions as well as having a focus point for converts.

Some would point out that there are one or two archaeological findings of church buildings of sorts that date between 100 and 300 years after Christ. Yet, in actual fact, all that the findings could present were houses with some

decorative artefacts, where the inner walls had been broken out to host more people in a gathering. There was nothing in the findings that could substantiate an actual *place of worship*.

Another argument that is given as a reason for Christians having had no places of worship was that Christians had to meet underground because of persecution. The problem with this argument is that Christians were not persecuted everywhere in those 300 years. Also this does not seem to be the reasons that the church fathers gave. Let us read what some Church Fathers of that time had to say about religious buildings.

In the manuscript of *Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs* around 160 AD we read: "*Rustieus, the perfect, said, 'Where do you assemble?' Justine Martyr replied, 'Where each one chooses and is able. Do you imagine that we all meet in the very same place?'*"⁴.

Clement of Alexandria around 195 AD writes: "**The Word prohibiting all sacrifices and the building of temples**, indicates that the Almighty is not contained in anything."⁵.

Mark Minucius Felix in *Octavius* 200 AD: "*You mistakenly think we conceal what we worship **since we have no temples or altars**. Yet how can anyone make an image of God? Man himself is the image of God. How can anyone build a temple to Him, when the whole world can't contain Him? Even I, a mere human, travel far and wide. So how can anyone shut up the majesty of so great a Person within one small building? **Isn't it better for Him to be dedicated in our minds and consecrated in our innermost hearts - rather than in a building?***"⁶.

Mark Minucius Felix about 200 AD: "*We assemble together with the same quietness with which we live as individuals.*" A pagan antagonist commented "**They [the Christians] despise the temples as dead houses...** *They laugh at sacred things.*"⁷.

Origen (248 AD): "**We refuse to build lifeless temples** to the Giver of all life...[he continues further on]. *Of all the temples spoken of in the sense, the best and most excellent was the pure and holy body of our Savior Jesus Christ... he said to them, 'destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again. This He said of the temple of the body...*[he continues further on] *When they reproach us for not deeming it necessary to worship the divine Being by raising lifeless temples, we set before them our temples.*"⁹. [This was in reference to their bodies].

You must understand that if the church then would have had temples like all the other religions they would not have been under constant persecution by the Roman Empire. This very stand of not having a temple put their lives in danger. Why would the early Christians do this to themselves? What was the big deal of deliberately not building places of worship? The Church Fathers all agreed that their faith experience was far removed from religious buildings. They understood something about worshipping God that the institutional church seems to have forgotten.

1. Francis Opoku, *Constantine and Christianity:(Ilorin Journal of RS)*, 25, 28.
2. Cyprian, *Epistle 62-66*, trans. Rev. Ernest Wallis, Ph.D., 65.1.0. (ANF 5:0), e-Sword 13.0.0
3. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 4.26.9. (1.5), e-Sword 13.0.0
4. Justin Martyr, *The Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs*, trans. Rev. M. Dods, M.A. 2.1.0. (ANF 1:0), e-Sword 13.0.0
5. Clement of Alexandria, *Book 5, The Stromata*, trans. Rev. William Wilson, 6.1.0. (ANF 2:0), e-Sword 13.0.0
6. Minucius Felix – *The Octavius*, trans. Rev. Rober Ernest Wallis, Ph.D., 32.2.0. (ANF 4:0) e-Sword 13.0.0
7. Minucius Felix – *The Octavius*, trans. Rev. Rober Ernest Wallis, Ph.D., 8.3.0. (ANF 4:0) e-Sword 13.0.0
8. Origen – *Against Celsus, Book 8*, trans. Rev. Frederick Crombie, D.D., 19.1.0. (ANF 4:0) e-Sword 13.0.0

3.2: The Place of Worship

So what did Clement mean by saying: “the Word prohibiting the building of temples and making sacrifices?” Let us start with a very well-known account in the Gospel of John, where Christ was having a profound conversation with a Samaritan woman by the well. Let us read from:

Joh 4:19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Joh 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

*Joh 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, **Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.***

*Joh 4:22 **Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.***

*Joh 4:23 **But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.***

*Joh 4:24 **God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.** (KJV)*

How many places of worship were mentioned in this conversation between Christ and the Samaritan women? First of all, we read that the Samaritans worshiped God on the Mountain. Secondly, the Jews worshiped God in Jerusalem. Thirdly, Christ introduced a new way of worship and that is worshipping God in Spirit and in truth with no reference to a particular place. This is in contrast to the Jews' and the Samaritans' way of worship.

What is interesting to note, is that when the Samaritan woman's sins were revealed by Christ, she changed the subject away from her sin to the issue of **where** to worship God. Isn't it just typical of how many of us will change the topic to worship God when we are confronted with our sin? For instance have you ever heard people tell you: “Well you can worship God your way, and I will worship God my way”? **Is it not ironic how our ways or places of worship are parallel to the way we justify our lifestyles?**

Consider this though: can we truly say it is worship, when it is about our personal taste in how we worship? Should worship not be about God as appose to about our preferences? If worship then is about God and not about us, should our worship not also be about how God wants to be worshiped more than how it makes us feel?

I can sense that some people might get uneasy with this statement and say: who am I to judge what is God's way of true worship? This is a good point as I have no authority to say what the right way of worshipping God is. Yet Christ has the authority to set the standard of worship, would you not agree?

So, let us get back to Christ's conversation with the Samaritan women. What is the difference between the new way of worship that Christ is introducing and the other two ways of worship? First of all, Christ's way of worship, as seen in the text, has nothing to do with being at a particular place of worship. It is a new dimension of worship. It is worship in the Spirit on the foundation of truth. Yet to understand the actual weight of this difference we need to look at the context of the conversation Jesus had with the Samaritan women. The context is found in the background to the cultures of the Samaritans and the Jews.

As you might know the Samaritans are an offshoot of Abraham's descendants.¹ Mount Gerizim according to the Samaritan traditions is where Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to God. It is also the place where Abraham encountered Melchizedek after his victory in freeing Lot.² So, for the Samaritans, this mountain is where they should worship God. Yet, look at Jesus' response to the Samaritan woman in:

Joh 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. (KJV)

According to Jesus, before Him, where was the right place to worship God? It was **not** on the mountain where the Samaritans worshiped, but it was where the Jews were worshipping in Jerusalem. Yet what was Jesus talking about here? Why was He saying that the Samaritans don't know what they were worshipping but the Jews do? What happened to this whole idea that Samaritans can worship God their way and Jews can worship God in their way?

The place of worship was very important to God. This place of worship was not some man-made Jewish tradition but a serious command from God. Look at God's commandments to Israel as they were going to enter the promise land, in:

Deu 12:1 These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

*Deu 12:2 Ye shall utterly **destroy all the places**, wherein the nations which ye*

shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

Deu 12:3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

Deu 12:4 Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. (KJV)

Let me ask a question from this passage: besides worshiping other gods, what else were the Jews not to duplicate from the heathen nations? **They were not to worship in the manner as well as in all the different places that the other nations worship.** This is interesting because the Samaritans worshiped God on a mountain similar to the heathen nations. Let us now read further from:

Deu 12:5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

Deu 12:6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

Deu 12:7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. (KJV)

Allow me to interject another question from this passage: where would Israel have to worship God? At the place of God's choosing, where He would place His name and where He makes His dwelling place. This would be in Jerusalem, as we read in:

1Ki 11:36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. (KJV)

So let us continue to read from:

Deu 12:8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

Deu 12:9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.

Deu 12:10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD

your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

***Deu 12:11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there;** thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:*

***Deu 12:12** And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.*

Deu 12:13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:

***Deu 12:14** But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee. (KJV)*

One more question concerning this passage. What was Israel not to do with their worship? They were not to worship God **according to what seems good in their own eyes**. This is called idolatry. Believe it or not, it is still idolatry to worship God in a way that seems good in our own eyes. The temple that was built in Jerusalem was to demonstrate God's desire to dwell among His people. Yet the temple was also designed to demonstrate man being separated from God through their sins. It was a picture of our predicament of sin and God's salvation plan, and that we can only enter His presence on His terms. Yet the temple in Jerusalem was only a shadow of things to come. The author of Hebrews writes in:

***Heb 8:5** Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.* (KJV)*

The church that Christ builds is NOT some copy of the Old Testament worship, but was the very substance of which the Old Testament worship was only a shadow. Let us read further on, this time from:

***Heb 10:1** For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. (KJV)*

It is on this basis that the early church fathers refuse to build temples and places

of worship. The early church fathers understood that worshiping God is not about worshiping Him in a way that seems good in our own eyes. In the next section we will explore what is meant by worshiping God in Spirit and in truth.

1. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Samaritan>, 16 May 2021
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Gerizim, 16 May 2021.

3.3: A Spiritual House

One of the main reasons that the institutional church teaches tithing is for the upkeep of religious buildings. Yet, as stated before, through Christ we have a different way to approaching God. We no longer need to worship Him in a temple built with cold stones as the Israelites did in the Old Testament. We read this in:

Heb 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Heb 10:20 By a **new and living way**, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, **that is to say, his flesh**;

Heb 10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;

Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (KJV)

So in this new covenant, how do we enter God's presence?

1. Through the sacrifices of animals.
2. Through praise and worship.
3. By going to a holy place of worship
4. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in His flesh.

We enter God's presence through Jesus Christ in His flesh. Look what Stephen said to the Pharisees in:

Act 7:47 But Solomon built him an house.

Act 7:48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

Act 7:49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

Act 7:50 Hath not my hand made all these things? (KJV)

Paul said the same thing in:

Act 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Act 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; (KJV)

What then has changed concerning the place of worship or House of God, from the Old Testament to that of the New Testament, according to these passages? In the New Covenant God is **not** to be worshiped in so-called houses of God that are made by human hands. We can only worship God in a place that is made by divine hands so that we can worship God in Spirit and in truth.

Yet; does this mean that God has changed from the Old to the New Covenant? NO, not at all! You see, the Old Testament was only meant to be a shadow until the time came when man was to be reconciled to God through Christ. God wanted to be worshiped in only one way, of which the Old Testament would only be a shadow of that way. The New Testament way of worship, like the Old Testament of worship, still gives us only one way to worship God. In the Old Testament, God required that all who were under the law, were to worship Him only in Jerusalem, the starting point of His Kingdom on Earth. In the New Testament, God requires all who are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ to worship Him in Spirit and truth, in a divinely made temple of God. What is the divinely made temple or house of God then? Paul writes in:

*1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, **which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth. (KJV)*

Paul is referring to the house of God as the church. It is interesting to note that the origins of the English word for church comes from the Old English language *cirice*, derived from West Germanic *kirika*, which in turn comes from the Greek *kuriakē*. The word "*kuriakē*", is the possessive form of *kurios* which means: "lord", so the word "*kuriake*" can literally be translated "of the Lord". Historians believe that this was most likely a shortening of *kuriakē oikia* which means "house of the Lord".¹ Paul writes in:

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

*Eph 2:21 In whom all the building **fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord**;*

*Eph 2:22 In whom ye also are **buildd together for an habitation of God***

through the Spirit. (KJV)

From this passage can we say that the divine house or dwelling of God is a physical place? No, the house or dwelling of God is the church which is the saints consecrated through the body of Christ. Does this then mean that the house of God could be individual Christians? No! Even though God does dwell in us personally, Paul was talking here about the saints of God who are built together to form a dwelling place of God. Peter says it like this in:

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Do you see that as individual Christian's we are living stones, but placed together we are built up as the spiritual house of God? In order to build the temple in the Old Testament the stones were ground together until they fitted each other nicely. This is what Peter was talking about here. We saints of God are ground together so that we fit together to make up this glorious living temple for God. This grounding together, so that we fit together, can sometimes be a painful experience as we learn to sacrifice of ourselves to accommodate each other in love. The author of Hebrews writes it like this in:

Heb 3:6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. (KJV)

So according to Scripture, the house of God which is being built by divine hands is actually the fellowship of the saints day to day. Each one of us is a living stone that makes up this divine house of God. The moment you got born-again by the Spirit of God you have become a living stone that is being built into the house of God.

The God of all creation, who through the ages demonstrated His longing to dwell among His people, has now made a way to deal with sin in order for Him to be among His people. He dwells among us more closely than was ever imagined. He dwells in the fellowship of the church. This church, is not a building made by human hands where people need to go to, but it is built with living stones like you and me. Do you see how magnificent this is: that our holy and perfect God, Creator of all things dwells within us, the fellowship of the saints?

So who is the divine builder of this spiritual house of God which is the church of God? Jesus said in:

Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (KJV)

Here is something interesting to take note of. As most people know, Jesus grew up as a carpenter in the same trade as his earthly caregiver or father figure - Joseph. We don't think this was a coincidence. In actual fact the Greek word for carpenter, "texton", not only implies working with wood but also with stones and even possibly metal, in constructing buildings. The word "texton" actually we often used to mean 'builder' as appose to merely a 'carpenter'.² In His earthly vessel Christ was a builder by trade, now through the Spirit He is building the most glorious, divine, spiritual, house of God – a house beyond imagination!

In the Old Testament there were strict instructions as to how the temple was to be built. The Jews were not allowed to stray from these instructions, as we can see in:

Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. (KJV)

The Old Testament worship, commandments, and the tabernacle, as said before, was only a shadow of what was to come. Yet the reality of this shadow is what Christ is building now. There is only one true House of God and it is not made by human hands. When people build their own places of worship by copying elements of Old Testament worship and blending this with their own ideas or worse still, with pagan practices, it is idolatry, no matter how you look at it. When man tries to build a house for God, he builds in vain. Only Christ has the legal right to build a house for God. As the Psalmist writes in:

Psa 127:1 A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. (KJV)

1. Rev John McClintock, D.D., & James Strong, S.T.D. *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, (1895), "church" e-Sword, 11.2.0

2.Vine's New Testament "Carpenter" e-Sword 13.0.0

3.4: True Worship

So how ought we to worship in this spiritual house of God, built with living stones purchased by Christ with His blood? For that matter, what is the purpose of gifted worship leaders? You might not like the answer to this question, but please hear me out, because you will experience an aspect of worship that is beyond imagination. The reality is, there is no such thing as a worship leader in the Bible. In the Old Testament the Levites who were dedicated singers in the temple, were called, well, believe it or not, “singers” as we read in:

*1Ch 15:16 And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the **singers** with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. (KJV)*

If there are no worship leaders, what then is the purpose of singing if not to worship God? Well, as we said in Chapter 2 of this series of teachings, singing was for the purpose of **edifying each other**, as with any other act of service such as prophecy, or teachings, as we can read from:

*Eph 5:19 **Speaking to yourselves** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (KJV)*

*Col 3:16 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. (KJV)*

According to these passages, what was the purpose of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as we sing to God with thankfulness in our hearts? It was for the purpose of teaching and admonishing **one another**. The New Testament never speaks of worshiping God through singing. We may praise God through singing, but that is not the actual worship of God in Spirit and truth that Christ was talking about. Looking at the Old Testament we read that Israel did praise God with songs, but it was also not considered to be the actual worship of God. For instance Amos writes what worship was **not** in:

*Amo 5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, **and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.***

Amo 5:22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

*Amo 5:23 **Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear***

the melody of thy viols [string instruments].^{1.}

Amo 5:24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (KJV)

Israel would demonstrate worship with their offerings of sacrifices. They then praised God with their songs. Yet neither the demonstration of worship through offerings of sacrifice, nor through songs of praise was worship to God without a life of righteousness and justice. Jesus said in:

Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (KJV)

What is worshipping God in Spirit and in truth? Worship literally meant lying prostrated on the ground. It was a sign of laying down one's life. The Old Testament people would sacrifice animals for their sins but they would also bring offerings and sacrifices with which to worship God. The offering that was sacrificed was a symbol of laying down their lives and all that was dear to them. **That is why when the Jews went to the temple to worship it was always with something to offer up as sacrifice.** True worship, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, always **has to do with sacrifice.** Yet God is not interested in just sacrificing whatever and however we like. Sacrifice that does not come from a heart of adoration means you are actually serving yourself and not God. This is evident by Samuel's rebuke in:

1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (KJV)

Obedience is the heart of worship. So how is this serving with adoration and sacrifice played out in the New Testament? Look what Paul writes about giving sacrifices in the New Testament in:

*Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your***

reasonable service. (KJV)

Which of these is our act of service or worship to God in the New Testament?

1. To sing beautiful and emotional songs
2. To present our bodies as holy vessels of service to God

Let us repeat Peter's words in:

1Pe 2:5 *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, **to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*** (KJV)

What type of sacrifices do we give unto God in the New Testament? As seen from Scripture we ought to give spiritual sacrifices. Spiritual sacrifices of worship start when we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. It is when we live a life pleasing to God. Spiritual worship is when we let our lives be led by the Spirit of God day by day. It is where we do not follow the dictates of our flesh, but sacrifice our bodies to the dictates of the Spirit. It is where our hearts are truthfully surrendered to God's will above our own. There is no reason for a place of worship for those who worship God in Spirit and truth.

So, if one could have something like a worship leader, it won't be someone who sings and plays music eloquently on a stage, but it would be someone who daily demonstrates, by example, how to lay down their life for Christ. Paul writes in:

1Co 6:19 *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, **and ye are not your own?***

1Co 6:20 *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* (KJV)

Now that we don't belong to ourselves but to Christ, so our worship ought not to be about how it makes us feel but how it accomplishes Christ's will. The New Testament teaches that we need to lay down our lives for God's purpose, which of course is a sacrifice. It is where we say: Not my will, but Your will be done, Lord God.

Idolatry means worshiping other gods. What according to God is the same as witchcraft and idolatry? **Rebellion and stubbornness!** When we insist that we can worship God our own way as opposed to God's way then it is the same as rebellion and stubbornness. We repeat, true worship is obedience to God. By

laying down our will for Christ's will we are then truly worshiping Him.

Now, do you think that these man-made religious buildings, called places of worship or churches, are something that Christ would want? You might say; your church building is not a place of worship and only a place where the saints gather. So you might think that in this case God is neither for nor against religious buildings as long as you don't make an idol of it. That is a good point, but one need to evaluate the legitimacy of this ideology with the reality of what is happening in church today. Ask the traditional church goer what is worshiping God in Spirit and in truth. Then we need to evaluate how much money is spent on the "church building" in comparison to how much is spend on looking after the saints that have genuine needs. We should also evaluate whether the church buildings give people a sense of unity with other Christians that goes to other places of worship or rather division?

As we already saw, when Constantine made Christianity an official state religion in 325AD and gave it religious buildings the church was divided under the control of various elders. Since then, the church has been divided with walls of cold stone; religious buildings. Each religious building has a man or organization that will do everything to keep control of their assets and their little kingdom of followers. We read in:

Isa 66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

*Isa 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is **poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.** (KJV)*

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that the saints that go to places of worship are not sincere in their worshiping of God. Anyone born of the Spirit of God and who is obeying God, to the extent that they understand God's will, is worshiping God in Spirit and in truth. What I am saying is that the worship service in itself is not the true worship that Jesus is talking about. Many saints of God are true worshipers of God, but then ignorantly go to religious buildings that divide the church that Christ is building. This creates an individualistic religion as opposed to a true household of God. Paul writes in:

1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and

ground of the truth. (KJV)

According to Paul, what is the pillar and ground of truth? The pillar and ground of truth is not found in a denomination or in someone's flavour of Christianity. The pillar and ground of truth is the house of God, which is the church of the living God. That is why we need to know how we ought to conduct ourselves in the house of God. The cold stone walls of religious buildings have made us participate in a religion without having to truly function as living stones daily connected in each other's lives.

1. Insertion is mine for clarity.

3.5: Where we Meet

When Constantine made Christianity an official state religion, the Christians lost their privilege of being the royal priests in God's kingdom. The church gathering was reduced to Christians sitting in pews listening to the opinion of one man standing behind the pulpit. The church became a religious gathering one attends instead of a family that minister to ONE ANOTHER. So where would a family come together and minister to one another if it is not in places of worship? Well, let us have look in Scripture:

*Act 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, **entering into every house**, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison. (KJV)*

What places did Paul enter to drag the Christians off to prison? He had to enter every house.

*Act 16:40 And they went out of the prison, and **entered into the house of Lydia**: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed. (KJV)*

So where did the apostles see the brethren when they came out of prison? They saw the brethren in the house of Lydia.

*Rom 16:5 Likewise greet **the church that is in their house**. Salute my wellbeloved Epænetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. (KJV)*

Where was the church held that Paul greeted? In the house of Priscilla and Aquila

*1Co 16:19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, **with the church that is in their house**. (KJV)*

Once again where is the church that Aquila and Priscilla are part of? The church is in their house.

*Col 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, **and the church which is in his house**. (KJV)*

Where is the church of the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas? The church is in his house.

Phm 1:2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, **and to the church in thy house:** (KJV)

Where is the church to which this letter is addressed to? Once again in their house.

Do any of these passages refer to a religious building when referring to the church? No, they only speak of the church in people's homes. The church functioned as a family and not as a religious organization. As a family the church held their meetings in homes.

Yet there are those who try to justify the need to have a place of worship by quoting the following passages:

Act 2:46 *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,* (KJV)

Act 3:1 *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.* (KJV)

Act 5:19 *But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,*

Act 5:20 *Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.* (KJV)

Using these passages to justify a place of worship is not very good application or interpretation of Scriptures. Let us ask some basic questions to illustrate this. For instance; which Christians are talked about in Acts two who were in one accord in the temple? It was the Jewish Christians. Were they having a *ekklesia* meeting? Nothing in this passage indicates an *ekklesia* meeting. What we do read though, was that they had daily fellowship in each other's homes.

Again of what nationality were the apostles in Acts chapter three; when they went to the temple to pray? They were Jews by nationality. Again we see that the apostles went to pray in the temple, without any indication of an *ekklesia* meeting.

To whom did the apostles preach in Acts five at the temple? The apostles preached to the unconverted Jews. Even this passage does not talk of an

ekklesia meeting.

Not one of these passages ever talks of Christians having their own places of worship. Remember as Jews, the Jewish Christians went to the temple, to be a testimony to the other Jews who would go to the temple in accordance with the Old Testament Law. The temple did not belong to the Christians but belonged to the Jews. Christians; whether Jews or Gentiles never owned their own places of worship. In other words **the Jewish Christians as Jews would go to the temple to practise the Jewish religion according to the law of God, but as Christians they went from home to home to establish Christ's kingdom through daily exhortation and predominantly weekly ekklesia meetings.**

Why would the Jewish Christians then still go to the temple? This is how Paul puts it in:

1Co 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

*1Co 9:20 **And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews;** to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (KJV)

As Jews, the apostles had a responsibility toward the Jewish nation to bring the gospel to them first. What better way than to do it from the central place of the Jewish religion. For the same reason Paul would preach to the gentiles at places where he would have the greatest effect, as we can see in:

Act 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Act 17:17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. (KJV)

Act 19:8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Act 19:9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. (KJV)

In these examples, does it mention anything about the *ekklesia* church or are these examples of Paul preaching to unconverted Jews? An *ekklesia* meeting was a judicial meeting for Christians. Paul was preaching the kingdom of God to unconverted Jews in the synagogue and the school of Tyrannus. As seen, Paul also preached in the market places as Peter did at the temple. None of these places give any indication that the Christians ever had their own places of worship.

The fact of the matter is that we will never read in the Bible of churches, whether of Jews or Gentiles, gathering money for a building fund or talking about a church building project? Why is this? Well it was NOT because the church was persecuted and therefore had to meet underground as some would advocated. The real reason was; the church of the Bible understood that they were the temple of God and that their gatherings were to be interactive and not a worship service.

It is interesting to note, is that one of the reasons the church was persecuted in the first place by the Romans was because Christians claimed a different kingdom. If Christianity only claimed a new religion it would not have been a problem for the Roman government, as they could just as well be added to all the other religions under the Roman Empire. Yet the very nature of the *ekklesia* being a kingdom meeting of the Christians under the authority of another King, named Jesus Christ, created unrest among the Roman Empire citizens.

It therefore stands to reason that for Constantine to make Christianity an accepted **religion** it had to change Christian practice from *ekklesia* kingdom meetings to a religious meeting. So the meetings moved from homes to places of worship. As we already discussed, through Constantine Christians lost their true identity of being royal priests in God's kingdom on Earth, and suffered being divided by the cold walls of religion. Yet Christ is calling us to become the household - the family of God.

*Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, **and of the household of God;** (KJV)*

Does this mean it is wrong for Christians to have gatherings in building instead of a home? Well it depends on the type of gatherings. If one would claim this type

of gathering is “a place of worship” or “worship service”, it would borderline on idolatry. It would also be ignorant to think that the meeting in a building will stay true to a biblical *ekklesia* meeting. Scripturally the only use a building ever served as a religious gathering would be to preach the gospel to the lost. However this type of gatherings cannot take the place of a true church gathering, where all could participate in an *ekklesia* format. Therefore the best use for a religious type of building is to preach the gospel to the lost, who are still religious, in countries where the church is not underground. Yet the true church gathering is better served in homes.

Chapter 4: Money Matters

4.1: An Agricultural Feast

It might be good idea to deal with the issue of money at this stage, especially on the topic of tithing. Tithing might not be that important when it comes to real church life, but it has a huge and dramatic impact in understanding church life and our modern institutional church culture. The practice of tithing to the church is so intertwined with our church experience that most would never question its origin or its biblical validity. However, would you take some time with me to consider some scriptures that you might not have looked at before? I believe that the manner in which the church deals with money tells us a lot about its core spiritual values. For instance, Paul writes in:

1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (KJV)

A passage that deals with tithing quite thoroughly is found in:

Deu 14:22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

*Deu 14:23 And thou shalt **eat** before the LORD thy God,... [Let me repeat that] ...And thou shalt **eat** before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. (KJV)*

From this passage we understand that the Israelites:

- A: Gave their tithes to the church
- B: Gave their tithes to the pastor
- C: Ate their own tithes

Imagine that; the tithers ate their own tithes before the Lord! You may say: “Well, that is then; today you can’t eat your money.” Let us read further from verse twenty four up to twenty six and see what God commands the Israelites concerning money when it comes to tithing:

Deu 14:24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

*Deu 14:25 Then shalt thou **turn it into money**, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:*

*Deu 14:26 And thou shalt **bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after**, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, (KJV)*

- Q: So what did the Israelites do when they stayed too far from the place where they were commanded to eat their tithes?
- A: They exchanged their tithes for money so it would be easy to travel to the place where God commanded them. Once they arrived they were to buy whatever their hearts desired for food and drink and then FEAST before the Lord.

In other words, tithing was a FEAST to celebrate God's blessings on Israel's **agriculture**. It was not money that was given for church buildings, programmes and salaries. A question that you might be asking at this point is: were the Levites and the priests not supposed to live from the tithes? Well, let us read further:

Deu 14:27 And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.

*Deu 14:28 At the **end of three years** thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine **increase the same year**, and shalt lay it up within thy gates:*

*Deu 14:29 And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) **and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow**, which are within thy gates, **shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied**; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest. (KJV)*

So from this passage; which of the tithes were not eaten by the tither, but were set aside to be given away? Was it their monthly tithes, perhaps annual tithes, or was it the tithes of the third year?

This passage of Scripture clearly shows us that the tithes of the first two years were eaten before the Lord by the tithers themselves. **It was only the third year's tithe that was given away.**

The third year's tithes were not only given to the Levites, but were distributed among the strangers, the orphans and the widows and only a portion of the third year's tithes went to the Levites. Can you believe it? Even though a major

portion of the *third* year's tithe went to the Levites, some of the tithes also needed to go to the orphans, stranger and widows. In other words the tithes on the third year went to all who were not in a position to provide for themselves. This same instructions is repeated in:

Deu 26:12 When thou hast made an end of tithing all the **tithes of thine increase the third year**, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the **Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow**, that they may **eat within thy gates, and be filled**;

Deu 26:13 Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the **Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow**, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them: (KJV)

The next question we need to look at is how did the Priests receive tithes? We read in:

Num 18:25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Num 18:26 Thus **speak unto the Levites, and say unto them**, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a **tenth part of the tithe**.

Num 18:27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

Num 18:28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to **Aaron the priest**. (KJV)

Who was then responsible to tithe to the Lord, for the priests to enjoy?

- A) The church members
- B) The Israelites
- C) The Levites

It was only the Levites and not the rest of Israel who were to give tithes to the priests. That meant that every three years when the Levites received a portion of the tithes from the rest of Israel, they would in turn give a tenth of the tithes they received to Aaron and his descendants — the priests of Israel. Keep this point in mind for a little bit later on in this study when we will look at when Abraham apparently paid tithes.

To avoid any confusion let me briefly explain the difference between the Priests and the Levites. You might recall that God commanded, in Exodus chapter thirteen, that the firstfruit of all of Israel, whether it be agriculture or the firstborn sons of Israel, were to be dedicated to God. This they had to do because God delivered them from the Egyptians using the tenth plague by killing the firstborn from all of Egypt; of man and livestock. That meant that all the first-fruit whether it was agricultural or the first-born sons were dedicated to the service and support at the temple of God.

Then, in Numbers chapter three verses forty to fifty-one, God commanded that instead of all the tribes of Israel having to give up their firstborn sons to do service for God, one of the tribes of Israel, the Levites, would substitute for the firstborn sons of the rest of Israel. The Levites then, in place of the firstborn of all of Israel, had to serve God in the tabernacle and later on at the temple in Jerusalem.

Aaron, Moses' brother, who was also from the tribe of Levi, was chosen by God to be the first priest for Israel. So, from that time on, Aaron's descendants would form the priesthood. The rest of the Levites were then in service to Aaron's descendants – the priests. For that reason, the Levitical tribe had to pay a tenth of the tithes they received from the other tribes in the third year, and give it to the priests of Israel. Again keep this in mind when we will be looking at when Abraham apparently paid tithes.

This leads us to the next very important question: Who then, was responsible to bring tithes in to the storehouse of God, and for that matter, what was the storehouse of God? Jerusalem was the city where God had placed His name, as we read in one Kings eleven verse thirty-six, and so it was there where Israel was to celebrate the feasts of tithing. It was also in Jerusalem where the house of God, or the temple of God, was built. The temple of God had storerooms all around the temple. These were called the storehouse. Understanding this let us read from:

*Neh 10:36 Also the **firstborn** of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the **firstlings** of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:*

*Neh 10:37 And that we should bring the **firstfruits** of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; **and the tithes of our ground unto the***

Levites, that the same Levites might have the **tithes in all the cities of our tillage**. [farm land]¹. (KJV)

Before we read on, can you see the difference to what needs to be done with the firstfruit compared to the tithes? Israel brought their firstfruit to the house of God, but **brought their tithes to the Levites**.

Now for a very important question: who were the tithers among the Israelites? **It was only the farm lands that tithed**. One needs to realize that tithing was an agricultural thing. There is NO reference in Scripture that business people, traders or common labourers had to tithe. Now keep in mind that Israel brought their tithes to the Levites as appose to the storehouse of God as they did with their first fruit as we read the following passage in:

Neh 10:38 **And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.** (KJV)

Here is the big question. Who is responsible to bring the tithes to the storehouse of God if it was not the Israelites? The Levites and not the rest of the Israelites tithed to the storehouse of God. The Israelites were only responsible to bring the firstfruit offering to the house of God.

This understanding to actual biblical tithing will form the bases for the next section that deals about the curse of tithing in the New Testament.

1. Insertion is mine for clarity.

4.2: Tithing a Curse

After the first section you might ask: so, what is the big deal if we take some poetic license in interpreting Scripture concerning tithing? Well, the effect is more far-reaching than you might think. In this chapter, we will see from Scripture the actual spiritual consequences of teaching and practicing tithing.

Let us first recap; in the previous section we learned that:

1. That tithing was an **agricultural feast**, which was only practiced by the farmers.
2. That the tithers ate their own tithes on the first and second years as a feast.
3. That only the thirds year's tithes were dedicated to be given and distributed to the Levites, orphans, strangers and the widows.
4. That Levites were responsible to give a tenth of the tithe they received from Israel and dedicated it to the Priests and the storehouse of God
5. That the Israelites only gave their firstfruits to the storehouse of God and not their tithes.

Now from this understanding let us look at a passage of Scripture that is so often used incorrectly to get Christians to tithe to a church institution. It is found in:

*Mal 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? **In tithes and offerings.***

*Mal 3:9 **Ye are cursed with a curse:** for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. (KJV)*

Before we read on, let's interject something here. How many times has it been said to you that you have robbed God, when you do not pay tithes to the church? Yet ironically, by incorrect interpreting this passage many have placed themselves under a curse by tithing to the church. You might say "WHAT! How do we place ourselves under a curse when we give tithes to the church?" We will see just now, but let us first continue from:

*Mal 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be **meat** in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

*Mal 3:11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy **the fruits of your ground;** neither shall your vine cast her **fruit before the time in the field,** saith the LORD of hosts.*

Mal 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts. (KJV)

In forming a proper interpretation of this passage let me ask you a couple of questions:

Q: Does this passage in Malachi refer to MONEY or FOOD when speaking of tithing?

A: Food of course, because it was to demonstrate God's blessing **agriculturally**.

Q: Who would have brought tithes to the storehouse of God from the Law of God?

A: The Levites placed a tenth of the tithes they received from Israel in the storehouse of God.

Q: What did the other tribes of Israel put in the storehouse of God?

A: They brought the firstfruit offerings and not their actual tithes to the storehouse of God.

Q: What was the purpose of the firstfruit offerings of Israel and the tithes of the Levites in the storehouse of God?

A: So that there might be FOOD in God's house.

Knowing this, how was God being robbed, as explained in Malachi three verse eight? The passage does not deal with money, but agricultural produce. As food demonstrates God's provision agriculturally, Israel was robbing God of His HONOUR as the Provider of Israel. The more food there was in the storehouse of God, the more people could notice how God had blessed His people.

Malachi chapter three does not speak about Christians giving a ten percent of their income to the church. By interpreting it that way would bring us under the curse of the Law. Let me explain this by reading what Paul writes in:

*Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that **continueth not in all things** which are **written** in the book of the **law** to do them. (KJV)*

According to Paul, if we want to practice the Law, such as the law of tithing, but don't tithe according to *all* that is **written** in the Law, what will happen to us? It might be hard to accept but we will be cursed. Let me rephrase this; if we say

we have to follow the law of God such as tithing, but don't tithe exactly according to God's commands we place ourselves under the curse of the Law.

In other words, if we bring tithes to the church where as God commanded that tithing is a feast in Jerusalem before God, we are cursed. If we say we should tithe, but do not give our tithes to the orphans, strangers, widows and Levites in the third year, then we are cursed. If we say we should tithe, but don't have Levites among us that would take a tenth of the tithes and place it in the temple in Jerusalem, which does not exist anymore, we place ourselves under a curse. I am not trying to be condescending, but only trying you to understand the seriousness of what Paul wrote to the Galatians. With every Law of God comes a curse if we don't fulfil it to the **letter** as it is **written** in:

*Mal 3:9a **Ye are cursed with a curse...** (KJV)*

Paul continues with his instructions three verses further and writes in:

*Gal 3:13 **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:** (KJV)*

Do you see that when we try to follow the law of tithing, it is kind of a slap in Christ's face —since He has redeemed us from the works of the law through His death on Calvary?

If it is true that we place ourselves under a curse when we tithe to the church, why do some people claim that God blessed them when they tithed? Well; if we have an honest look at the church in general we would see that there are more people in financial distress who tithe faithfully, than those who are supposedly financially blessed by their tithing. Yet there are equal numbers of saints who prosper financially who do not tithe. God lets the rain and the sun fall on the righteous as well as the unrighteous, as we read in:

*Mat 5:45 **That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.** (KJV)*

Secondly the curse we place ourselves under does not have to do with financial wealth, but with our spiritual standing with God. Just because one prospers financially, is no guarantee that one stands right with God. Yet spiritual blessing comes from God's grace and not because we keep up some twisted version of God's law. But we are cursed spiritually if we put ourselves under the Law from

which Christ has redeemed us.

My intention is not to make you feel condemned. I myself also used to hold on to the unbiblical practice of tithing to the church. What is important now is that when we hear the truth we need to make the decision to repent from man-made traditions that makes God's Word of no effect. In one of Jesus confrontations with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees Jesus spoke these words against them:

Mat 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Mat 15:4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

Mat 15:5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

Mat 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Mat 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

Mat 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

Mat 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (KJV)

How was God not honoured by what the Pharisees and Scribes taught? They taught that giving to a religious institution – supposedly to God – comes above taking care of one's family. This same corrupted value system that the Pharisees and Scribes taught is ruling the institutional church today. It is frequently taught in the institutional church, that we first have to give our tithe to the church, and only then give what we have spare to meet the needs of our family in Christ.

Ask yourself this: what is important to God: supporting a religious institution or looking after ones' family in the Lord? On what bases does God bless us and on what bases do we place ourselves under a curse? The answer to this will become even clearer as you continue this study of: "A Church without Tithing".

4.3: A Spiritual Principle

Even if one presence such clear Scripture evidence that tithing to the church is unbiblical, you will still find some pundits of tithing who would still scratch in the dust for some kind of justification for this cursed practice. They will claim that tithing is a spiritual principle that was practised outside the Law of Moses. Let us look at some of the proof texts that are used as proof for tithing as a spiritual principle. The first passage that they would use is:

Heb 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

*Heb 7:2 To whom also Abraham **gave a tenth part of all**; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;*

Heb 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

*Heb 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham **gave the tenth of the spoils**.*

*Heb 7:5 And verily **they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood**, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:*

Heb 7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

Heb 7:7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

Heb 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

*Heb 7:9 And as I may so say, **Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham**.*

Heb 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. (KJV)

Many use this passage to try and explain that Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek *before* Moses gave the Law of tithing. Their argument is that even if we are not under the law, we still have to pay tithes because tithing was practiced before the Law of Moses. The problem with their argument is that it is not consistently rationalised to the end. For instance, we see that there were other Old Testament practices such as blood offerings and circumcision that were also practiced by Abraham before the Law of Moses. If we say that it is not

necessary to circumcise, as Paul clearly teach throughout many of his letters to the churches, then we definitely should not tithe either.

Furthermore, when reading Genesis 14 we see that Abraham gave 10% of the spoil he got from freeing Lot and the rest of Sodom. He distributed the remainder of the spoils to his servants and gave the rest of Sodom's belongings back to them. He took none of the spoils for himself. We read this in:

Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

Gen 14:19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

*Gen 14:20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. **And he gave him tithes of all.***

Gen 14:21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

Gen 14:22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

*Gen 14:23 That **I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:***

Gen 14:24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion. ." (KJV)

Nowhere else in Scripture do we ever read that Abraham paid tithes from his actual earnings. Furthermore, the author of Hebrew, was not trying to get us to start tithing, but was trying to demonstrate the superior covenant we have with Christ, of whom Melchizedek was only a shadow. Remember I said keep the point in mind that when the Levites received tithes from Israel they were then to give a tithe from what they received to Aaron and his descendants who were the priests of Israel. The Levites were always responsible to give tithes to the priest according to the covenant of Moses' Law:

Num 18:25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

*Num 18:26 Thus **speak unto the Levites, and say unto them,** When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a **tenth part of the tithe.***

Num 18:27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

*Num 18:28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering **to Aaron the priest**.* (KJV)

The author of Hebrews is therefore saying that Levites (not all of Israel), through Abraham, gave tithes to the **priest**: Melchizedek before the law of Moses; indicating the superiority of the covenant of faith. Keep in mind though the Levites always gave tithes to a PRIEST, whether it be through Abrahams loins to Melchizedek or directly to Aaron and his dependence. When looking at the concept of tithing as a spiritual principle we need to understand something about spiritual principles. If a principle of tithing is to be followed in this regard, we need to be consistent with the fact that Levites gave tithes to a priest and the **priest did not pay tithes**. I repeat the priests did not pay tithes. On that point let us read the following:

*1Pe 2:5 **Ye also**, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an **holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* (KJV)

*1Pe 2:9 **But ye** are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:* (KJV)

Peter does not call Christians: Israelites or even Levites, but actual royal and holy priests. Why is this of any significance? Well we saw that the priests in the Old Testament received tithes from the Levites, but never had to pay tithes. If in fact, priests were to receive tithes and not pay tithes from Scripture, should not that principle, if any, apply to us who are called royal priests? So, if tithing was a spiritual principle, we should conclude that non-Christians are to pay Christians tithes every third year. In practice this is obviously not going to happen, but for argument's sake that is the only principle that one can draw from Scripture.

The second example for tithing outside the Law of Moses is when Jacob promises to give a tenth of what God would blessed Him with. We read about this in:

Gen 28:20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

Gen 28:21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

Gen 28:22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee. (KJV)

After reading this passage, you will see that there is no indication that God instructed Jacob to tithe. Jacob, out of his own choice, made a promise to God to give a tenth, and only from that with which God had blessed him. Because of this promise God held Jacob to his promise by commanding his descendants, the Israelites, to practice the feast of tithing. What is important to note is that even this passage there is no indication or instruction for us to pay a tenth of our salary to a church institution.

The next attempt to justify tithing is that Jesus spoke of tithing in the follow three passages:

Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (KJV)

Luk 11:42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (KJV)

Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. (KJV)

Once again after reading these passages we don't see any indication that Jesus instructs Christians to pay tithes to the church. What we do see is that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees who as farmers would give a tenth of their agricultural increase. In all three examples Jesus was addressing them because they neglected to keep the more important instructions of the Law of Moses, while feeling justified by only practicing tithing. This is a very bad example for justifying the practice of tithing. As seen already that if we want to practice tithing while neglecting any of the Law of Moses we place ourselves under a curse, and from Jesus' point of view we are plain hypocrites.

The bottom line is this that **you won't see any example from Scripture of Christians tithing in the New Testament**. Tithing to the church is a man-made tradition, formed on bad interpretation of Scriptures, a couple of hundred years after the first apostles. The historical background also gives us some context how the practice of tithing came about.

The first historical documents that give any mention of tithing to a church institution were by the third century leader, Cyprian of Carthage. Cyprian put forward the idea in around the year 250AD, that as the Levites were supported by the tithe, so also the Christian workers were to be supported by tithes. It was also him that wanted to make a clear distinction between the clergy and laity, where the clergy was seen to function in some kind of Levitical or priestly function and the laity would bring ten percent of their secular earning to them. This is the first document that the concept of tithing as a spiritual principle got introduced to the church. ¹

Cyprian was a very good narrator and a lawyer before his conversion to the Christian faith. Even though he was young in the faith, he became an elder in a short period of time because of his prestige and eloquence of speech. Due to his background as a lawyer and narrator, he believed that one needed to be paid for one's expertise. At this stage tithing was NOT a mainstream thought at all in the church. ²

Tithing only became a mainstream thought around 567 AD at the council of Tours, and, was again pushed forward on the agenda at the council of Macon in 585 AD. ³ It was only in 787 AD under Pope Adrian 1 that tithing finally became an official church practice. ³ Why then only? Well, the financial support from the Roman Empire to the institutional church was drying up, and, as with any institution of man, the church needed money to function. So, with a bit of Scriptural gymnastics the practice of tithing to the church was born.

How the church became institutionalised will be dealt with at a later stage. For now, just understand that the concept of tithing as a spiritual principle did not originate from Scripture but from an institution of man that needed to be funded. In the next section we will explore what the Bible actually teaches concerning New Testament giving.

1. Cyprian, Epistle 62-66, trans. Rev. Ernest Wallis, Ph.D., 65.1.43. (ANF 5:0), e-Sword 13.0.0

2. Pontius the Deacon, *The Life and Passion of Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr*. trans. Rev. Ernest Wallis, Ph.D. (ANF 5:0). e-Sword 13.0.0

3. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIV, 1912, s.v. "tithe." Internet resource: <http://www.tithing-russkelly.com/id15.html>. 15 May. 2021.

4.4: Biblical Giving

So how did Christians practice giving in the New Testament if it was not tithing? Let us start this section with a very well-known passage found in:

Act 2:44 And all that believed were together, **and had all things common;**

Act 2:45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Act 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (KJV)

Do you see today's church having favour with all people? Of course not! How will a church that comes across like a money making business, have any favour among the people? Yet, imagine what an effect we will have in our community if they see how we look after the needs of our brothers and sisters in the Lord. This would truly bring honour to God among the unbelievers.

What did it really mean for the Christians, in Acts chapter two, "to have all things in common"? We will get to this in at a later stage, but for now we can say that having all things in common is not about selling of all our possessions to give to the poor. Many of the saints did sell their possessions, but this was to meet the needs of the saints, and was only because they already "had all things in common". "Having all things in common" has to do with sharing lives, which is very foreign to the institutional church. The early church would meet the needs among their family in the Lord, even if it meant selling their luxuries and abundance to do that. John the Baptist puts it this way:

Luk 3:11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. (KJV)

Let us have a look how Paul deals with having all things in common in:

2Co 8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, **it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.**

2Co 8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

2Co 8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a

supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

2Co 8:15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack. (KJV)

Is there any indication that Paul is saying that we should give in faith; even if we battle financially? No, not at all. He specifically teaches that one gives “according to what one HAS and not according to what one does not have”. Paul is not saying that one should be burdened because of the lack of others. What Paul was teaching was that the saints learn to meet each other's needs, with the things we have extra. It is especially those who actually do have extra that have the responsibility to give to those who have need. This is what it means to have all things in common.

Some would argue, that even if you don't have, you should still give, by quoting the following example:

Mar 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

Mar 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

Mar 12:43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

Mar 12:44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. (KJV)

If you look carefully you'll see that Jesus didn't really give a command to the poor to give all they have, for this would have contradicted Paul's teachings that only those who have should give. In this object lesson Jesus only illustrated that someone who give everything is giving more than someone who was giving out of their abundance. That was all the Jesus was getting at; nothing more.

Let us now read a little further on from Paul's letter to the Corinthian church:

2Co 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

*2Co 9:7 **Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,** so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. (KJV)*

Giving should be done from the heart and not by religious obligation. Giving under religious obligation is an outward pretence and not an inward leading of the Holy Spirit. **The Holy Spirit does not lead people to give 10%. Giving by the Spirit is not focused on a particular amount but meeting a particular need.**

After the Spirit has made us aware of specific needs that we should minister to, then **WE** – not the Holy Spirit, determine **in our own hearts** how much we should give. If some people determine in their heart to give 10% they should not blame the Holy Spirit for that. This is however an alien concept for those who are used to follow man made tradition instead of what Scripture actually teaches. Let us read further from:

2Co 9:10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

2Co 9:11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

2Co 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

2Co 9:13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; (KJV)

Do we read anything in this passage about Paul collecting for a church organization? You will see all through the New Testament, when a collection was made, it was for the needs of the saints and not for an organization.

Jas 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

Jas 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

Jas 2:16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (KJV)

You might ask the question: Will this: “having all things in common” not motivate others to just sponge off the church? I suppose it might, especially if church is just something that one would attend like a religious club. However, for those who live with all things in common Paul instructs the following in:

1Ti 5:9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

1Ti 5:10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

1Ti 5:11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; (KJV)

According to Paul; who are we to support among the saints? Those who do not have the capability or the means to supply their own needs any longer, as long as they have proven themselves faithful to Christ by good works. From that context, we read Paul's following instructions to the Corinthian church:

*1Co 16:1 Now concerning the **collection for the saints**, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*

1Co 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

1Co 16:3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. (KJV)

As you can see, the collection was for the saints and not for a church organization. This instruction to the Corinthian church was in response to an actual church life event that we can read about in Acts:

Act 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Act 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

Act 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (KJV)

So, it is clear from Scripture that when needs arise, such as in a famine or, in modern terms, recession or where saints lose their jobs, we need to meet those needs. In whatever way you want to fill in the details, one thing is clear, and that is, you won't find anywhere in the Bible where Christians tithed or collected money for a church organization or an institution. From this point let us have a look at supporting church workers in the next and last section on this topic.

4.5: Supporting the Ministry

If the church is not to pay tithes how are we to support the ministry? In this chapter we will be dealing with the biblical perspective of what is meant by living from the gospel. Paul writes in:

2Th 3:7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

*2Th 3:8 **Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought**; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:*

*2Th 3:9 Not because we have not power, but to **make ourselves an ensample** unto you to follow us.*

*2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, **that if any would not work, neither should he eat.***

2Th 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. (KJV)

What did Paul try to teach us through his example? That we ought to work to support ourselves. What does Paul then say, should we do with people who do not want to work? We should not give them anything. The context of this instruction is Paul giving himself as an example of how to work as appose to just “living from the gospel”. This is important to understand as we deal with this topic: “living from the gospel”. Paul writes in:

1Co 9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. (KJV)

The context of Paul’s words: “... so the Lord has commanded...” to the Corinthians, he referred to Jesus words in:

Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mat 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Mat 10:9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,

Mat 10:10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Mat 10:11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is

worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

Mat 10:12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.

Mat 10:13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Mat 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. (KJV)

According to this passage, who are those who preach the gospel?

- A) Those who give sermons on a Sunday at church.
- B) Those who preach the gospel to the lost from one place to the other, such as apostles.

Well, the context is clear that this passage refers to apostles. Apostles are those who are sent out to preach the gospel and make disciples of the whole world. In other words, they are not pastors, but rather what some people would see as church planters or missionaries.

Let us read another passage that some believe justifies pastors making a living from the gospel as opposed to only apostles. Paul instructs in:

1Ti 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

1Ti 5:18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. (KJV)

Who is to be counted worthy of double honour for their labour according to Paul?

- B) The Pastor
- C) The Head Elder
- D) Or the elders who labour well in preaching the gospel and teaching.

This passage refers to any elder and does not even mention the word pastor. Also, the actual phrase “they who labour in word and doctrine” is also translated as “they who preach and teach”. Preaching was to the unbelievers and teachings were to those who were still spiritually immature and needed spiritual milk as explained in:

Heb 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. (KJV)

Are you still one of those that needs to be taught while you should have been a teacher by now? Might it be that that thing you call church wants to keep you spiritually immature so that they have an audience Sunday after Sunday, making a living off you from motivational speaking instead of truly equipping the saints for the work of ministry? Now, of course if you still need to have someone teaching you, Paul instructs this in:

Gal 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. (KJV)

Nevertheless; sharing in all good things does not mean the same as making a career of being a pastor. Sharing in all good things follows the principle of having all things in common. It means that if you are still being taught by an elder how to listen to the voice of our Lord, then you need to share the good things you have with the one who teaches you. This might sound very strange to you, but it will make sense to you in the parts to follow where we deal with how the New Testament “church” actually functioned.

When Paul was admonishing the elders in Acts twenty to “shepherd the flock well” he continued by saying to them in:

*Act 20:33 I have **coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.***

Act 20:34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

*Act 20:35 I have shewed you all things, **how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak,** and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, **It is more blessed to give than to receive.** (KJV)*

Does this passage give any indication that elders lived from the gospel? Is it not more plausible to conclude that elders were to do secular jobs like everyone else to support themselves, but may be rewarded for their efforts in preaching the gospel and helping the maturity of new Christians? The problem that we have today, is that we are reading the Scriptures with an unbiblical westernized mind-set that sees the traditional “ministry” as some kind of career one enters into. Yet from a biblical context the ministry was compared to a day labourer who brings in the harvest.

Luk 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would

come.

*Luk 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, **The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.** (KJV)*

Day-labourers were hired by the land-lord when it was time for the harvest that was brought in. They were then paid as the land lord willed; as seen by the parable told by Jesus in Matthew 20 from verse 1-15. When the harvest was completely brought in; the day labourers had to look for somewhere else to harvest the crops. There was no permanent monthly salaried person when it came to harvesting. It is from that context we read Paul saying things like:

1Co 9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (KJV)

None of the passages in scripture indicated that “pastoring” a church was a career. Even the apostles did not do it as a career, but were called to bring in the harvest. Furthermore, the apostles had a trade they practiced alongside their calling to make disciples. Most of the apostles were fishermen. Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila were tent makers, and Luke was a physician. While the apostles were busy preaching the gospel, discipling the converts and planting churches, the churches assisted them financially so that their needs would be met. When they were not busy making disciples and planting churches, they did secular work to supply their own needs through their own trade.

I would like to conclude this part of the teaching by addressing the concept of peddling the word of God. Paul writes in:

*2Co 2:17 For we are not as many, **which corrupt [peddling]**¹ **the word of God:** but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. (KJV)*

What is “corrupt/peddling the word of God”? It is selling our ministry to others. Meditate on what is peddling the Word of God when you go to church, attend Christian guest speaker meetings or your local Christian book store again. Some would remark that Jesus and his disciples had a money box as we read in:

*Joh 13:29 For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, **Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.** (KJV)*

What does it prove? Well, that people ministered to Jesus and His disciple's needs. We read about this in:

*Mar 15:41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and **ministered** unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem. (KJV)*

There is no indication that Jesus and the apostles were ever paid for their ministries. One only read about their needs being met. There is a big difference of having one's needs met to that of being paid for the ministry. It does not matter how one looks at it but if we are honest with ourselves then we have to admit that being paid for "the ministry" is the same is peddling the word of God. Jesus said in:

*Mat 10:8b ... **freely ye have received, freely give.** (KJV)*

There are probably still a lot of unanswered questions in your mind. You may be wondering "How on earth can the church as you know it, actually function if we are to follow what the Bible teaches about tithing and giving?" What type of servant of the church will still serve the church if he does not have the security of a salary? Those are very good questions. Are you ready for some radical answers to those questions?

Chapter 5: Church Fellowship

5.1: Christ's Body

Congratulation for getting so far without deleting, burning or throwing away this material. However I can imagine that some might say at this point, "Well, there is no such thing as the perfect church, so why get hung up about a wrong teaching on tithing, leadership, church meetings and worship?" There is even a common joke made that if the perfect church exists, then you should not join it, or else it wouldn't be perfect anymore. Remarks like these do give the impression that it would be an unrealistic ideology to find "the perfect church", because of the inherent imperfection of the human beings that make up the church.

And yet, there is something wrong with this mind-set. If we say that there is no such a thing as the perfect church, what then does it say about the words of Christ found in Matthew, chapter sixteen verse eighteen that *He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it?* Is Christ not able to use rough, living stones like us and build a glorious and perfect church despite our imperfection?

Might it not be that the reason why many believe that there is no such a thing as the perfect church is because they think of church as an institution of man and not a spiritual entity of Christ? What if we tell you that the perfect church does exist, even though it is being built with imperfect living stones like you and me! This church where Christ is central is the church that, in the core of our being, we long to be a part of. This is the Body of Christ.

Here is something to consider: Even with all the sincere church activities, programs, revival meetings and spiritual experiences, there still seems to be a spiritual emptiness ruling our institutional church today. More and more saints are wondering if what they are busy with is actually real or just emotional hype. Why is that? Would you consider the possibility that what most people consider to be church might not be the church that Christ is building? You might then ask: well where is this perfect church? Why have we never heard of it or seen it?

The good news is that you have always been part of that perfect church that Christ is building—since the day you were born of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus. **The church that Christ builds is the actual people who are part of Christ's Body.** In other words, the perfect church is not something you can join, but something you are already part of through the Spirit of God dwelling in you.

The perfect church is not the organisation that you attend every week, but is all the Disciples of Christ, irrespective of their institutional baggage. The question is therefore not where to find it, but how to function in it. In understanding the Body of Christ we can compare it to the makeup of a human being. Paul writes in:

*1Th 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God **your whole spirit and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

There are many who debate the issue as to whether people consist of three parts, namely: body, soul and spirit, or whether we are only two parts: body and spirit-soul, where it is theorised that the spirit-soul are actually two sides of the same essence. Whatever your persuasion is, one cannot ignore the fact that Scripture does speak of three factors of the person, whether the spirit-soul are just two sides of the same essence or whether they are two different elements of a person that resides in a body. For instance we read in:

*Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the **dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow**, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (KJV)*

For argument's sake, one can think of the soul as the personality or conscience of the person. The soul steers the body through the organ called the brain. The soul also uses the brain to access the memories that helps the soul to make decisions. Some claim that the eyes of a person are the windows to the person's soul. One could say that the soul is the actual person that dwells in the body. The spirit on the other hand is that which gives a person life. In creating Adam we read God doing the following in:

*Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and **breathed** into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a living soul. (KJV)*

The word "breath" in both Hebrew: "neshamah" and Greek: "pneuma", actually means "spirit".¹ So God breathing into Adam gave man life or what we understand as *spirit*. When the spirit of man separates from the body, the person dies. The body in other words cannot live without the spirit or breath of God. Without the spirit of man the body has no soul and is just a lifeless corpse. Keep in mind how life entered Adam, when God breathed breath or *spirit* into him, as we deal with the revelation of Christ's Body. We read in:

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Eph 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Eph 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

Eph 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (KJV)

We are most probably not going to grasp the great magnitude of what actually happened at the cross of Jesus Christ till we see Christ face to face. Yet Scripture does make certain things clear to us. One of the things is that the cross of Christ brought about reconciliation to the Father. What is important to note is how the cross brought reconciliation. Paul teaches that Christ created in Himself ONE NEW MAN. That means whether we are Jews or Gentiles we are reconciled to God in ONE BODY. This body is a totally new creation. Paul speaks of the new creation like this in:

2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2Co 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

2Co 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (KJV)

Those who are in Christ are a new creation. How are we in Christ? Well; as explained in the letter to the Ephesians through that NEW MAN in ONE BODY. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself through Christ's body. That is why Paul would write in:

Col 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Col 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (KJV)

We also read in:

Eph 1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

*Eph 1:23 **Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.** (KJV)*

God has put everything under Christ's feet through the church, which is His body. The Greek word for "body" is "soma" which means both the instrument of life and the outer shell of a man.² The church is therefore the "soma" or outer shell of Christ on earth. Through the Spirit we have become part of a new creation: one new body in Christ. In other words Christ embodies Himself through the church. Paul explains it like this in:

1Co 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (KJV)

Every person that is born of the Spirit has been created in the Body of Christ as a *body-member*. See how Jesus identifies Himself as being persecuted when Paul was actually persecuting the church in:

*Act 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?***

*Act 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, **I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.** (KJV)*

We then read some time later on, after Paul's conversion, where he speaks of his own suffering as actually adding to the affliction of Christ through His Body in:

*Col 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that **which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:** (KJV)*

This is a marvellous revelation that Paul had concerning the church as the Body of Christ. Yet the only way for us to grasp this, is if we can understand that the Body of Christ is not a religious institution but an organic being indwelt by the Spirit of God. After Christ went to the Father, He sent down the Holy Spirit to be poured out on the church. In that very moment the Body of Christ, that was created through the death and resurrection of Christ, received the breath of the Life of the Spirit of God, as Adam did when he was created.

The church is a dead corpse without the Holy Spirit. Through the life of the Holy Spirit the Soul of the church who is Christ controls the Body as the Head of the church. This means this NEW MAN, this new Creation, which is called the *Body of Christ*, is Body, Soul, and Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit – Christ the very Soul of the Church is present as Jesus promised in:

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (KJV)

We need to understand that Christ does not enter the meeting when we welcome Him in prayer “in the name of Jesus”. As the Holy Spirit dwells within every one of us that is born of the Spirit of God, so, Christ dwells in our hearts. Therefore Soul of Christ is already in the midst of His Body through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This means that we have, in a sense, brought Christ to the gathering by being members of the body of Christ. As we are Christ’s body so He is in our midst.

1. Vine' s New Testament and Old Testament “breath” e-Sword 13.0.0

2. Vine' s New Testament “body” e-Sword 13.0.0

5.2: Body Life

Christianity is not an individualistic religion, but a new creation as the Body of Christ reconciled to the Father. That means that if we want to be joined to Christ who is the Head, we would need to be attached to other Christians as well who are part of the Body of Christ. Think of it this way; what will happen if a finger is amputated from a human body? Well, the reality is that the amputated finger will wither away because it is separated from the life source of the body. Is it then possible that a member can only be a member of the head without having any relation to the rest of the body? No; he or she will wither away spiritually. Let us have a better look at how Paul describes the body of Christ in:

1Co 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

1Co 12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

1Co 12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

1Co 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

1Co 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

1Co 12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

1Co 12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

1Co 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1Co 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

1Co 12:23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

1Co 12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

1Co 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

1Co 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (KJV)

In order for us to have a genuine relationship/fellowship with Christ, we have to have fellowship with the whole Person of Christ, which is Body, Soul and Spirit. John writes concerning Jesus, the Word of life, the following in:

1Jn 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Is it not amazing that John would say that the reason they preached to them was that they may have fellowship with John and the other believers? It is as if John takes it as a matter of fact that fellowship with them is a natural consequence of their fellowship truly being with the Father and with the Son. Why would he depict that as the natural consequence? The answer is that John and the other disciples were the Body of Christ, and having fellowship with the Body is part of having fellowship with Christ. For that reason, while we are in the Body of Christ we also have fellowship with the Father. So then, having fellowship with Christ means we are to form biblical fellowship with the saints. Paul writes in:

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

*Eph 4:16 From whom the **whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth**, according to the **effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body** unto the edifying of itself in love. (KJV)*

This knitting and joining together goes much further than Bible study, prayer meetings and socializing. It is about sharing lives. For instance, would one think a husband and wife are in a good loving relationship with each other when they only see each other when they have meetings once or twice a week? It might happen occasionally that a husband and wife might not be with each other for a week or two, because one of them is off on some business trip, but if this happens frequently it could cause a serious strain on their marriage. Now it might be that the husband and wife may hold each other in their hearts while they are absent from each other physically. They might even say to each other that they are with each other in spirit. Yet should they only see each other once a week or even once a month, and then only as though they were in a meeting, that would not be considered a normal healthy relationship. The norm would be that the husband and wife be with each other daily and only rarely be apart from each other for a week or two.

From this perspective, how often should we have fellowship with Christ; once a month, or perhaps once a week? Most Christians would say that they speak with Christ every day, yet hardly have any contact with the members of Christ's body except for the Sunday worship service. Yet fellowshiping with Christ everyday should incorporate fellowshiping with the members of the Body EVERY DAY. We read in:

*Act 2:46 And they, continuing **daily** with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (KJV)*

Reading this passage from an institutional mind-set one would think that the early church had daily meetings. However Scripture says only that they were together in the temple with one accord. We need to understand that the first converts in the church were Jews. As Jews they expressed their faith by going to the temple that was seen as "the house of the Lord". This was not a church service, but a testimony to their Jewish brethren who were not converted to Christ yet. Daily fellowship is not daily "meetings". More church meetings have nothing to do with biblical fellowship. One may schedule daily meetings with your spouse yet still be out of touch with what is happening in his or her life. Even in a traditional context, if one only has weekly meetings, without fellowship with the Body of Christ every day, the meetings will be just empty shells, empty of the true fellowship of Christ. The writer of Hebrews writes:

Heb 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

*Heb 3:13 But exhort one another **daily**, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Heb 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; (KJV)

How many times a week are we to exhort one another? The reason that so many Christians are being deceived by sin is because they spend more time in front of that glowing idol that is called a television, than they do exhorting one another. Many Christians might see no problem watching TV every day, even for hours, but exhorting one another daily seems too radical. Saints of God, we need to re-evaluate our priorities in these last days.

Christians go from one so-called church institution to another because they don't want to connect with other saints. They want to have their private lives free from interference from others in the family of God. They would even go to a so-called church in another city, town, or suburb so they don't have to deal with Christians intruding into their personal space. How can we call this being the Body of Christ?

Is it not ironic that we find so many in the institutional church that go to weekly worship services, but their homes are dysfunctional, with no life of Christ in them? There are as many families that go through divorces and teen pregnancies in our church today as there are in the world. Christians are living with all kinds of addictions such as alcohol, drugs and pornography with no power to be set free. Surely this is not the church that Christ was talking about that He would build, where the gates of hell would not be able to prevail against it?

So what is the answer? The answer lies in "DAILY EXHORTATION so that we will not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness". We are to live as though we are an actual organic body that needs each member. Where no one can say to another I have no need of you. Discipleship does not happen through sermons and Bible study. That might produce encouragement and we might gain knowledge, but very little discipleship is accomplished through it. Jesus might have preached to the crowds, but those who lived with Him and shared **day to day living** and struggles with Him He called His disciples.

There are many Christians who are sincerely seeking to be part of the Body of Christ in true fellowship, but then are left frustrated, by the busy-ness of empty church programs and the pretence of Christian fellowship. Be encouraged to know that you are not strange nor are you alone. What you are feeling is the Holy Spirit, in you, aching to express the very life of Christ through the Body of Christ.

5.3: The Family of God

The concept of the Body of Christ might still seem very strange to you, so let us have a look at another way Scripture explains the life in Christ. It is called being part of the family of God. After Jesus spoke to His disciples about the difficulty rich people have in entering the kingdom of God the following was said between Him and His disciples:

Mar 10:28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

Mar 10:29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

*Mar 10:30 But he shall **receive an hundredfold now in this time**, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. (KJV)*

It is clear from Christ's words that He was not only dealing with giving up our riches. Jesus was dealing with everything that we might deem precious in our lives. If we have truly forsaken all, we would as a direct result receive a hundredfold in the household of God. In other words, our true family becomes those who are also following Christ; our possessions are no longer just for us but for the needs of our family in Christ and theirs for us. In essence, we have traded in self and family when we became Christ's disciples. With the trade-in we have a new family of brothers, sister, mothers and fathers that has DAILY interaction. The question one is faced with is whether we truly could take Jesus' words that literally? Well it seems that the early church did, as seen in:

Act 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

*Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and **fellowship**, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Act 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

*Act 2:44 And all that believed were together, **and had all things common**;*

*Act 2:45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, **as every man had need**.*

*Act 2:46 And they, continuing **daily** with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of*

heart,

Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (KJV)

What type of lifestyle must the early Christians have had that had such favour with all the people? Most times the term “out of fellowship” is used to refer to people who don’t “go to church”. However when looking at the word *fellowship* from Scripture one realise that it has but only a small part to do with *going to church*. The word fellowship comes from the Greek word “koinonia”, which has to do with sharing. It comes from the same word “koinos” used to describe how the believers “had all things in common”.¹ The words *koinos* originates from Greek word “oikia” which means household, which has to do with a closely knitted family.² In other words having fellowship is about the family or household of God sharing their lives with each other as though they are of the same household of brothers and sisters.

Most Christians, whether they are pastors, elders, worship leaders, deacons, cell group leaders might attend their weekly church meetings but are as much “out of fellowship” as those who don’t attend church meetings. Biblical fellowship is not about attending church services, having Bible studies, or prayer meetings. Biblical fellowship is about sharing their lives as a close family of brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers would. This is a family that exhort each other DAILY whether they are going to the temple or sharing a meal at each other’s homes, whether they go and do shopping or play sport together; whether they share their joys or their sorrows with each other; whether they help each other with the care of their children or the struggles in their marriages, whether they help each other to face the struggles at work, or when someone lost his or her job, correcting each other when they love the world more than loving the Lord ... in order that they may not be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness,. A family where they love and care for each other so much that they would feel safe to confess their sins to one another. This is a family where they place each other’s needs above their own riches, desires and comforts, because they love each other as Christ loves them. We read Paul write the following for instance:

1Co 10:24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. [well-being]³. (KJV)

*Php 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem other better than themselves.***

Php 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things

of others.

Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (KJV)

John writes:

1Jn 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1Jn 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

1Jn 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (KJV)

Loving brothers and sisters would share with their siblings who are in need. Mothers and fathers would take action in guiding their children who would make foolish decisions. Good parents would not leave their children to their own devices so as to be popular and accepted by their children. Good parents would teach their children that to love the world is to be an enemy of God. James writes in:

Jas 5:19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

Jas 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. (KJV)

Most of us have never allowed this type of faith to take hold of our lives, where we allow mere brothers and sisters in the Lord to correct us when we fall back into loving the world and its passions. Now there are those of us, that don't want their space, to be invaded, and who would quote Jesus' words in:

Luk 6:42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. (KJV)

However, if you read carefully you will see that Jesus did not say that you should not help your brother to take the speck out of his eye. He said that before you do, you should first take the plank out your own eye so that **you would see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye**. The issue was not that we should not take the speck out of someone's eye, but that we should see clearly before we do. A plank prevents us to see objectively. A mother or a

father is someone who has overcome in certain areas of their lives and so are qualified to help others to overcome in those areas. It might be that, at another time, the other brother or sister might be the mother or father in a different aspect of life. Jesus is saying though, that we have no place in trying to help others overcome sin in areas of their lives where we have not yet overcome similar problems, or able to see objectively. This type of Body or family life is not for people who just practice a Christianity religion. John writes:

*1Jn 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; **and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.***

1Jn 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

*1Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love; **but perfect love casteth out fear:** because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

1Jn 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

1Jn 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

*1Jn 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, **That he who loveth God love his brother also.** (KJV)*

What does John mean by hating ones brother? Hate simply means that we can't stand our brother. If we are not able to have a heart for our brothers and sisters in the Lord then we don't abide in the love of God. No amount of philosophising about the Love of God or priding ourselves on how we obey the Law of God, can substitute for loving each other as Christ loves us. Jesus did not talk about being mere distant relatives, such as uncles, nephews, great grandparents, but about being actual brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. In this is the test of whether or not we belong to the household of God:

Luk 8:20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

*Luk 8:21 And he answered and said unto them, **My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.** (KJV)*

1.Vine's New Testament "fellowship", e-Sword 13.0.0

2.Vine's New Testament "fellowship", e-Sword 13.0.0

3. Insertions is mine for clarification.

5.4: The Bread of Life

Jesus said some strange things in the three years He ministered to the people before His crucifixion. Yet often we found it is these strange and sometimes “illogical” things that can have the deepest impact on our lives. For instance, look at this passage, found in:

Joh 6:50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

Joh 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Joh 6:52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Joh 6:53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Joh 6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

Joh 6:56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

Joh 6:57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

Joh 6:58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. (KJV)

Of all Jesus’ statements, this may be one of the most peculiar to understand. These words have even caused one of the mainstream church denominations, which we won’t name now, to hold onto very strange and superstitious beliefs. But what is Jesus actually saying here? His audience definitely did not understand His words and were quite offended by it. Then Jesus responded to their confusion with the following words further on in the passage:

Joh 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. (KJV)

So what spiritual illustration was Jesus giving when He said we have to eat His flesh and drink His blood to have life? Near the time of Christ’s death, Jesus ate

the Passover meal with His disciples. Look what happened while Jesus had the Passover feast with His disciples, in:

*Mat 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, **Take, eat; this is my body.***

*Mat 26:27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, **Drink ye all of it;***

*Mat 26:28 **For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (KJV)***

So why would eating the bread and drinking the cup, help us to spiritually eat His body and drink His blood? How would this help us to partake of Christ's life? Well, Paul gives us some more insight into this, in:

1Co 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

*1Co 10:17 For we being many **are one bread, and one body:** for **we are all partakers of that one bread.** (KJV)*

Paul explains that as the cup identifies with our union with Christ's death, so the bread identifies us with the union of Christ's Body, the church. In other words, the breaking of bread would declare that **our life is in that one body of believers**. So, through Christ, salvation is brought about in two ways, namely the shedding of His blood and secondly the breaking of His body. The Body and the Blood of Christ is the basis of communion in celebrating the Lord's Supper. It is on this basis that the Christians came together to break bread, as seen in:

*Act 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together **to break bread**, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. (KJV)*

It is especially noticeable when the Body of Christ was first filled with the Holy Spirit, that they continued with the fellowship in the breaking of bread as seen in:

*Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and **fellowship, and in breaking of bread**, and in prayers. (KJV)*

In reading this passage there is actually something very important that one needs to give attention to. The passage does not read: "... fellowship, AND the breaking of bread..."; but actually reads "... fellowship, IN the breaking of bread...". The New King James is one of the few translations that actually capture this idea. In the McReynolds Tyndale Greek text one finds that the Greek word for "and" which is "kai" is absent between fellowship and the breaking of bread.¹ The word "kai" is used between the apostle's doctrine and fellowship and between bread and prayers but not between fellowship and the breaking of bread. Grammatically, in biblical Greek, this absence of the word "kai" would render the meaning to be one function as opposed to two different functions. Therefore the text according to this Greek text should read as it is written in the New King James, that is, that they had fellowship **IN** the breaking of bread.

As said before the Greek word for fellowship: "koinonia" has to do with "sharing" which is derived from the Greek word "koinos" which is translated "having all things in common".² It is from this understanding that the phrase "**Holy Communion**" is derived.

The breaking of bread was, however, practiced as a full meal that was shared with each other, as seen in:

*Act 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, **did eat their meat** with gladness and singleness of heart, (KJV)*

In Biblical times bread was generally the main source of nutrition as it contained most of the oils and minerals that the body needed and was therefore the main course of the meal. Bread was sometimes supplemented with herbs to soak the bread in, or bread was eaten with fish, and occasionally with other meats and vegetables. For this reason when people in Bible times would invite each other to have a meal with them they would simply say: "Come break bread".³ As one can expect; the quality of bread in Bible times cannot be compared to today's bread that lacks these valuable nutrients and minerals. This gives a whole new meaning to Jesus saying that He is the "Bread of Life".

Yet if the breaking of bread was a full meal, where does the practice of a ceremonial "nip and sip" come from as it is practised in the traditional church? To understand how it came about we need to look at some historical events that led to this. At the beginning of the second century many Christians that were converted were previous worshipers of the "sun-god". Heathen sun worshipers

had the practice of praying before dawn to the “sun-god” to reappear. The new converts found it difficult to break the habit of praying before dawn for the sun to appear. Their whole life revolved around whether the sun would reappear or not, so this superstition kept them bound to this practice. So the elders of the church thought they would help these new converts by directing their focus away from the sun and towards Christ. The elders kept to the tradition of Morning Prayer before dawn about three times a week. This was easily justified from Scripture as Christ also used to pray in the early mornings. From this point on daily exhortation and spontaneous prayer gatherings started to give way to religious church meetings.⁴

From that point on we started to see two distinct meetings namely the evening breaking of bread and the Morning Prayer meetings. This can be verified by some early historical documents for instance, from the younger Pliny, a Roman Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, (111 - 113 AD), wrote about the Christian practices, *They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, ... after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food – but food of an ordinary and innocent kind*⁵.

Justin Martyr (110 - 165AD), wrote *“and in the remembrance effected by their solid and liquid food, whereby the suffering of the Son of God which He endured is brought to mind...”*⁶.

Near the end of the second century some members of the church introduced the use of bread and wine or just plain water into the morning-prayer meetings to partake of, as they would call it, “the sacraments”. The partaking of the bread and water or wine was not nearly as substantial as the evening agape feasts, due to the time constraints in the mornings. As a result, taking the sacraments easily became a more ritualistic, practice as opposed to a full meal. In the middle of the third century, Cyprian distinguished between the two meetings that had developed predominantly on Sundays. First of all, the Sunday morning prayer meeting with the “sacraments” and secondly, the Sunday evening agape meal.⁷ A sad fact was that Cyprian went so far as to say that the morning meeting had greater value, because at this point more people attended the morning meeting than the evening communal meetings. It is evident that at the time of Cyprian the Christians were starting to drift away from the communal meal and the importance of having genuine fellowship.⁸

By the third century daily encouragement was almost completely replaced by religious “meetings”. So it was of no surprise that when Constantine, in about

325 AD, institutionalised the church, he adopted many practices from the heathen/Egyptian worship of the “sun-god”, to try to make Christianity acceptable as a state religion to the masses and to his generals who still held to the pagan worship of the sun. One of the things he did as a compromise was naming the first day of the week Sunday in honour of the “sun-god”. The events that led to placing the importance of certain days above others will be further explored in the teaching to follow.^{4.}

Due to the effort the institutional church made to reconcile the worship of the sun with the Christian faith, the sacrament of the bread and the wine, shortly after Constantine, took on the shape of the heathen practice of the Egyptians who believed they ate their god “Osiris” by eating a wafer administered by a priest. Osiris was the mythical god of “regeneration and rebirth”. Osiris was also considered the god of the underworld that held the power of people’s souls after they died, because he was seen as holding the power of death and rebirth in nature. The Egyptians interpreted the sun going down as if it was dying and coming up again at dawn as if it was being reborn. So it was in Osiris's hands as to whether the “sun- god” “Rah” would be reborn or not.^{9.}

The sun-worshippers also believed that to insure their own eternal life after death they had to consume Osiris in the form of a round little wafer administered by the priest. For this reason we will still find the ritualistic sacramental little wafer or cracker followed by a small glass of grape juice administered by the priestly figure, called the clergy, up in the front of many institutional churches today. Even some main denominations don’t even use the wine/grape juice except for special occasions.

1. Paul R. McReynolds, *Word Study Greek-English New Testament*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, (Wheaton, Illinois 1990), 432.

2. Vine's New Testament “fellowship”, e-Sword 13.0.0

3. Los Angeles Times: <https://www.latimes.com/style/la-xpm-2011-feb-19-la-he-ancient-grains-20110220-story.html>, 20 May 2021

4. Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great_and_Christianity, 20 May 2021

5. Pliny, Letters, transl. by William Melmoth, rev. by W.M.L. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935), vol. II, X:96, cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 199. internet source https://www.bethinking.org/jesus/ancient-evidence-for-jesus-from-non-christian-sources#_edn10, 20 May 2021

6. Justin Martyr - *Dialogue with Tryph*, trans. Rev. M. Dods, M.A., 117.1.0 (ANT: 1.0), e-Sword 13.0.0

7. Cyprian – *Treatises of Cyprian*, trans. Rev. Ernest Willis, Ph.D. , 4.35.0, (ANT: 5.0), e-Sword 13.0.0,

8. Cyprian – *Caeilius, on the Sacrament of the Cup of the Lord*, trans. Rev. Ernest Willis, Ph.D. , 62.16.0, (ANT: 5.0), e-Sword 13.0.0,

9. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris>, 20 May 2021

5.5: Discerning the Body

In dealing with the issue of the communion as a full meal, we need to have a look at an important passage that many try to interpret in such a way as to justify an unbiblical snack ritual without fellowship. It is found in Paul's reprimand of the Corinthian church in:

1Co 11:20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

*1Co 11:21 For in eating every one **taketh before other his own supper**: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

1Co 11:22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. (KJV)

From this passage what was the initial reason why the Corinthian church was to come together, which they failed to do? They were to eat the Lord's Supper when they come together in one place. Why is it that Paul said that they were not eating the Lord's Supper? Well, each person was eating their own supper before the others arrived. In other words they just brought their own supper for themselves instead of the communal Supper of the Lord's that was meant to be shared. Remember the word "communal" comes from having all things in common.

So was Paul then suggesting by his reprimand that we should not eat an actual supper when eating the Lord's Supper? No, not at all; he was just saying that the food that was brought was meant to be shared, not like some who came and ate their own supper. The Lord's Supper is about the communion of the body. Communion with the body means sharing food with the body. That is why Paul speaks of the love/charity feast in:

*Jud 1:12 These are spots in **your feasts of charity, when they feast** with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; (KJV)*

The Greek word for "feast" in this passage is "deipnon". The Greek word "deipnon" is the same word for "supper" in reference to the Lord's Supper, depicting the chief meal of the day, taken towards evening or the end of the day.¹ The word love in this passage is the Greek word "agape" and is also

translated as “charity”.² The reason why they called it the “charity feast”, was because saints shared their food with each other, even with those who had nothing to give. Can you imagine the Lord’s Supper celebrated as a feast where the agape love is being shared among saints that function as a family?

The problem with the Corinthian church was that the more fortunate in the church brought their own supper and ate it before the less fortunate arrived. The less fortunate, who could have been day labourers, would have only arrived later as was the norm with day labourers at that time. The breaking of bread ought to have been a time to show charity to the less fortunate in the fellowship, demonstrating unity and love; instead the Corinthian church dishonoured the body of Christ through their individualistic attitude. The church was divided into social classes and therefore some were drunk and others were left hungry. That is why Paul wrote just earlier on in:

1Co 11:17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

*1Co 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, **I hear that there be divisions among you;** and I partly believe it.*

1Co 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

1Co 11:20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. (KJV)

However if the Lord’s Supper was to be a full meal, what would Paul have meant by writing in?

*1Co 11:34a And if any man hunger, **let him eat at home;** that ye come not together unto condemnation. (KJV)*

Paul only suggested that those who got hungry and were not able to wait for the rest of the church to arrive for the communal supper, should first eat something at home. It was a purely practical suggestion from Paul how to keep unity in the breaking of bread and not a command from him that the Lord's Supper should be reduced to a snack. Think about it; the very notion that some were **left hungry** indicated that they ate the Lord’s Supper as a substantial meal. We read further in:

1Co 11:23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

1Co 11:24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

1Co 11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (KJV)

When did Jesus take the cup and share with His disciples according to Paul? Jesus broke the bread while they were eating their Passover feast. After they had their SUPPER Jesus took the cup. Pure logic should dictate to us that we are to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a SUPPER and not as the Lord's snack. A supper is a full meal and **during the meal a loaf was broken among them and eaten with the rest of the meal.** Paul's instruction referring to the breaking of bread as the Lord's Table is also an indication of a full meal as we read in:

1Co 10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. (KJV)

Right through Scripture the reference to preparing a table always was in conjunction with a full meal or even a feast. Paul continues his instruction to the Corinthian church in:

*1Co 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, **unworthily**, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

1Co 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

*1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh **unworthily**, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, **not discerning the Lord's body.** (KJV)*

In discerning the Lord's body, was Paul trying to get us to consider our sins, when we break bread? No; that was not the Paul's focus. Paul was talking of in the manner in which they ate the Lord's Supper. The "unworthily" refers to the way they ate the Lord's Supper and not their spiritual standing with the Lord. They were being socially divisive, not discerning or considering the poor who were going hungry. When Paul spoke of "discerning the Lord's body" he was speaking of the church who is Christ's body. "Discerning the Lord's body" did not do with how well we perform before God, but whether we are in proper fellowship with the church, the body of Christ. Let us look at an example of Peter himself NOT discerning the body of Christ, by dividing the body according to race and culture, in:

Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

Gal 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (KJV)

What was so offensive about Peter and the other Jews, who suddenly did not eat with the Gentiles when some Jews from James came to visit? Sharing a meal was the expression of fellowship, communion and unity. Peter with his friends, withdrawing from eating with the Gentiles, was acting in direct contrast to communion and unity. This is what Paul was getting at when he wrote this passage that we have quoted often:

Eph 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Eph 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

*Eph 2:16 And that he might reconcile **both unto God in one body by the cross,** having slain the enmity thereby: (KJV)*

In our westernised culture the main purpose of food is generally only for nourishment. With our rushed lives it is a normal practice to eat on the move; grabbing fast-food and eating take-aways. Even supper at home has become TV dinners with no fellowship or connecting with each other. Yet in Bible times eating together meant that they were in COMMUNION with each other. That is why when a brother and sister were unrepentant over certain practices in their lives, the church was taught not to even eat with such a person, as we read in:

*1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; **with such an one no not to eat.** (KJV)*

Some would ask whether the Lord's Supper was not supposed to be just a New Testament replacement of the Passover meal. The breaking of bread as a covenant meal has its basis in the Passover *Seder*, because the Passover lamb points to Christ, the Lamb of God, the unleavened bread points to us the unleavened body of Christ. However with all of this symbolism, the Lord's

Supper is not the Passover meal in itself and therefore practiced differently. We will deal with the Passover Lamb practice more thoroughly in another series called "Understanding what we Preach".

Let me conclude this third part of the series by saying that it is in the proper sharing of our lives in the breaking of bread as the body of Christ, that Jesus our Saviour is really made known to us:

Luk 24:33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

Luk 24:34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

*Luk 24:35 And they told what things were done in the way, **and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.** (KJV)*

However not all of Christ's disciples are able to forsake their lives and eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood as required as we read in:

Joh 6:66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (KJV)

1. Vine's New Testament "feast", e-Sword 13.0.0

2. Vine's New Testament "love", e-Sword 13.0.0

Chapter 6: Church Unity

6.1: Church Divided

Why are there divisions in the church with various places of worship even in the same city or town? The diplomatic among us would say that it is God's way to cater for our differences. That could have been true if church was about us and the way we want to serve God. However as we saw in chapter one, Church is about God's kingdom in Christ Jesus. Therefore Church is not for our entertainment or the way we would like to serve God and for that reason you will find no Scriptural basis or justification for the church to be divided as we see it is at present.

Some would say division came about through doctrinal differences and different interpretations of Scripture. I would like to propose that division is more a product of people who wanted to build their own little kingdoms than it is about doctrinal differences. Doctrine is only the catalyst used to divide the saints from each other to gain control.

In dealing with this issue of church unity, there are those that would just brush this issue aside by saying that we are one in spirit, which does not mean that we have to be one in practice. We'll let us see whether Scripture supports that view. Jesus said in:

Joh 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (KJV)

There are a number of things which the Scriptures teach us with regard to discerning whether we are hearing the voice of Christ in our hearts or whether we are hearing the voices of deceiving spirits. In this passage, using the analogy of sheep, Jesus has given us a very important key to such discernment namely: When Jesus speaks, the sheep gather together. They might be grazing at different places in the field, but the moment the shepherd calls, they all come together. When Jesus speaks, Christians instinctively enjoy coming together and fellowships together. When wolves or deceiving spirits speak, the sheep scatter. Each sheep does its own thing, because without the voice of the shepherd, they are at a place of self-preservation.

When different flocks of sheep hear the voice of Jesus, they become one flock. When wolves or deceiving spirits speak, the flock divides and

scatters. Here we need only think of a church split, different types of denominations, or the inability of different fellowships to come together.

When a sheep has wandered away, the shepherd will go and look for them, and when the lost sheep has been found by the shepherd, it will be brought back to the flock. This is how we know that a lost sheep has been found: when it is back with the flock. A sheep that is not with the flock is still lost, no matter how spiritual the sheep thinks it is. A wolf or a deceiving spirit will always try and keep the sheep isolated from the flock as this way, it makes for easy prey.

The bottom line is this: when sheep hear the voice of the shepherd, their natural state is to be together with the flock, but when the sheep listen to wolves, their condition becomes that of isolation, division and dispersion.

Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (KJV)

Pastors talk about **their** church and **their** flock that they claim Christ has given them. They compete with one another and then accuse one another of stealing each other's flock. How can we steal sheep from one another when there is only **one** flock which belongs to Christ? Do you see how unbiblical it is when shepherds use terminologies like "church hopping"?

The Corinthian church was quite divided among favourite personalities and flavours of teachings. Notice how Paul deals with the matter, in:

1Co 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1Co 1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

1Co 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

1Co 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (KJV)

Looking at today's church, would Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, approve when we say: "I am Baptist" or, "I am Full Gospel" or, "I am New Covenant" or, "I am a Seventh Day Adventist" or, "I am AFM" or, "I am AOG" or, "I am Dutch Reformed" or, "I am Methodist" or, "I am Grace Church", "I am

Jewish roots”, etc, etc, etc... You can be assured He won’t, because Christ does not approve of His body being divided into denominations.

In chapter two we examined the biblical practice of leaders being servants of the church. The institutional, unbiblical practice of leaders being in charge of a church is one of the main reasons that there are divisions in the church. Human government over something that can only be governed by the Spirit of the Lord, will end up in division. Paul writes further over this issue of division, in:

1Co 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

1Co 3:2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

*1Co 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and **divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?***

1Co 3:4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

1Co 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? (KJV)

Do you think that churches that are divided into denominations are a sign of being spiritual or carnal? To call this carnal, will be putting it mildly! We can colour it in any way we like to, by saying that this is just different expressions of the church that Christ is building, but in reality we are deceiving ourselves. We actually don’t want to admit to the carnality of the institutional church. Paul writes in:

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

*Eph 4:3 **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***

*Eph 4:4 **There is one body,** and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (KJV)

What is the fundamental truth of Christ’s body? That it is **one body**. It seems

that we Christians are the only people on earth that don't understand what it means to be ONE. Jesus prayed in:

Joh 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Joh 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Joh 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

Joh 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (KJV)

What does Jesus pray that our union with each other should resemble? Our union should resemble that of Him and His Father. There is no closer union than Christ has with the Father. This kind of union is not some kind of figurative or token union, but a union of life. It is the very DNA of our being ONE Body – the body of Christ. The closest to that type of oneness on earth is that of a husband and wife. Anyone would agree that it would be absurd to think that the marital union is only figurative or symbolic and does not need to be lived or practiced. Yet this is what we are doing with the church. According to Christ's prayer our oneness is proof to the world that God has sent Jesus Christ.

Joh 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (KJV)

I cannot stress this point enough how unbiblical it is for the church to be divided into denominations. The very word denomination represents division. Let me explain; the word denomination is derived from the word denominate, which means to name by type. Denomination as you recall from school days is derived from the word denominator which is the technical term used to mean dividing into fractions. Denomination, in a sense, is to divide Christianity into different types and to differentiate by names. In other words denomination is to: "**divide by name**".

So, can we really believe that denominations are biblical, or something that Christ would be involved with? Everyone knows in the centre of their heart where Christ rules, that the church that Christ builds has nothing to do with our

denominations. Yet very few are willing to face this fact, because of what it would mean to actually do something about it. They would shrug it away as something of no importance. If our *expression* of church causes the church to function as disconnected members, then our *expression* of church serves only us and not the kingdom of God. Paul writes to the Corinthian church, in:

1Co 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the **fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**

1Co 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there **be no divisions among you;** but that ye be **perfectly joined together** in the same mind and in the same judgment. (KJV)

6.2: One Body

We saw in chapter three that the *ekklesia* meetings were interactive kingdom meetings and not religious spectator meetings. Yet how does this work when there are millions of Christians that are part of the body of Christ? In this chapter we will deal with the principle of a city church and how fellowships function as one body.

First of all, let us have a further look at the functionality of an *ekklesia* in the setting of a city. The *ekklesia* did not only refer to a particular gathering but to a body of believers as seen in chapter five. The *ekklesia* is the elect of all the saints administering responsibility of the kingdom of God on earth as royal priests. In other words, the meaning of *ekklesia* not only dictates to how we meet in a gathering but how we are to operate as a body of believers.

Let us start by looking at the secular Roman-Greek *ekklesia* meetings in biblical times. We see that their judicial meetings developed in local areas where they had to administer the affairs of the empire. These meetings had as their purpose to uphold order, ensure stability and the advancement of the particular government under which it functioned. As such, every city or town had its own *ekklesia* judicial body which made decisions for that city or town in accordance with the government of the day; very similar to a city council of today.¹

This was also true with the Christian *ekklesia*. The *ekklesia* in the body of Christ was not divided according to denominations but according to the city or town it was situated in. As you will see shortly, the only reason there was more than one church was because of geographical distances and border lines between cities and towns. For that reason, churches were identified by their city or town and not according to some denomination. For instance we read in:

Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against **the church which was at Jerusalem**; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. (KJV)

1Co 1:2 Unto **the church of God which is at Corinth**, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: (KJV)

1Th 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, **unto the church of the Thessalonians** which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be

unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

In each of these examples above it speaks of one singular church in each city. Now note the difference in the following passage, in:

Rev 1:11 *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it **unto the seven churches** which are **in Asia**: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (KJV)*

How many churches is John writing to in each of the seven cities of Asia? John is addressing seven churches. Why is John addressing more than one church? The answer is actually simple, you see Asia is not a city, but a region. It was an ancient Roman province containing these seven cities. John was writing to each city in Asia and so he was addressing only to a “single” church in each of these seven cities in the province of Asia.

See if you can point out something interesting in the following well known passage of Scripture:

Tit 1:5 *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in **every city**, as I had appointed thee: (KJV)*

Why would Paul ask Titus to appoint elders in every city as opposed to appointing elders in every church? Because every city or town consisted of only one church! In biblical time elders oversaw a city, and not an institution.

The following passage may lead to some confusion:

Act 14:21 *And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to **Iconium, and Antioch**,*

Act 14:22 *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

Act 14:23 *And when they had **ordained them elders in every church**, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. (KJV)*

In verse twenty three we read that elders were appointed in every church; but

looking at verse twenty one we see that the reason was because Paul went to three different cities, namely: Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. So it is logical that each of these cities had its own city-church. So it is obvious that Paul appointed elders in every one of these three churches each based in one of these three cities. We read in:

Act 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. (KJV)

Did Paul call for the elders of all the churches of Ephesus or did he call for the elders of THE church of Ephesus? As you see that the city of Ephesus only had one church which was overseen by the elders of that city church.

This brings us to an important aspect of the ministry of elders. In biblical times, the Jews, Romans, as well as the Greeks were accustomed to appointing elders to oversee a particular city or town. They were responsible to make judgments where the community of that city was not able to sort out the problems for itself. This is even evident in the Old Testament. For instance we read of elders of a city needing to deal with a murderer, in:

*Deu 19:12 Then the **elders of his city** shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. (KJV)*

We also see how elders of a city getting involved concerning a rebellious child, in:

*Deu 21:19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the **elders of his city**, and unto the gate of his place; (KJV)*

So we need to understand that to the Christians in biblical times, elders over a city and elders over a church were synonymous. It was foreign for the Christians at that time to have different churches in a particular city, town, or suburb. The elders did not each have their own church in a city or town. They worked together to shepherd and serve that one *ekklesia* church in a particular city. However, when we read about provinces in the Bible we read about multiple churches. For instance, we read in:

*Gal 1:2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the **churches of Galatia**: (KJV)*

*Gal 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the **churches of Judaea** which were in*

Christ: (KJV)

Galatia and Judea were not cities, but provinces, the same as we saw with Asia earlier on. In other words there is only one church in a city or town, but because there are multiple cities and towns in a province there would be multiple churches in a province. This would lead to a couple of questions. For instance, how on earth do we get all the Christians in a city or town or suburb together to participate in a judicial interactive meeting?

We saw in chapter one and three that the church came together in each other's homes and functioned in pockets of fellowships. We read in:

*Act 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were **added unto them about three thousand souls.***

Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Act 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Act 2:44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

Act 2:45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

*Act 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, **and breaking bread from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (KJV)

We see here in Acts chapter two that there were many home fellowships in Jerusalem yet we see that Jerusalem was spoken of as only one church in:

*Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against **the church which was at Jerusalem**; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. (KJV)*

The question that many people would ask is: If a home gathering is seen as a fellowship of the church of a city, why would Paul talk of *the church* that meets in someone's home, such as in:

*Rom 16:5 Likewise greet **the church that is in their house**. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. (KJV)*

If we read this with our modern understanding of church, we would assume that the whole church is gathering in this home. Yet the language that Paul uses here does not necessary talk of “a” church in someone’s home. Let me illustrate this with following illustration: When I speak of South Africans living in the city of Durban and there are South Africans living in the city of Johannesburg, I am not implying there are two different countries called South Africa, am I? Whether we live in Durban or Johannesburg, we still are part of the same country – South Africa. The same is true when Paul spoke of the church meeting in someone’s home. He is not referring to “a” particular church but those particular members that belong to “the” church, that were meeting in someone’s home.

The *one* church in each city, or town contained fellowships that would come together in each other’s homes to break bread from house to house, and to pray together while holding to the apostles’ teachings. These fellowships were the building blocks of the Christian life and church in each city, or town. For those that are part or were part of an institutional church, think of a biblical fellowship as a cell group but all these groups being part of one city-church.

1. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ecclesia-ancient-Greek-assembly>, 16 May 2021;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_ancient_Greece, 16 May 2021.

6.3: Breaking from Denominations

As we have seen in the previous section, there might have been a church in each city consisting of several assemblies, but all these churches in the provinces still functioned as one body. God's Kingdom is not divided and therefore the churches were not to function as separate entities. Paul writes in:

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

*Eph 4:3 **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.*

*Eph 4:4 There is **one body**, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (KJV)

According to Paul, are the churches formed into:

1. Different denominations?
2. Different organizations?
3. One body?

Each city had one church and all these churches in the different cities formed one body. The body of Christ was not divided into denominations or places of worship. However, it was spread across various geographic areas, and tended to cluster in particular cities or towns. In Acts fifteen we read that the church in Jerusalem had to make a decision concerning Jewish practices that were being taught to the gentile churches by brothers who travelled from Jerusalem to other cities. So the *ekklesia* of the city of Jerusalem had an influence on the *ekklesia* in another city because they functioned as one body under Christ. However we need to realise that even though one church in a city had an influence on other churches in other cities, no one church was above another. They influenced each other because they were one and not because the one was in charge of the other.

Those who function under a man-made denomination cannot see the church ever functioning as one body because their scope of reference is that of a religious institution and not a heavenly Kingdom. Nevertheless the fact remains that IF Christ is truly the Head of His body then the church would function as one

body. This unity is not going to happen through organization and the good planning of man. Biblical unity is a matter of fact and is therefore organic and not organised. Practical and biblical unity can only happen when we as Christians stop trying to build our own religious clubs and start functioning in obedience to our King and Lord: Jesus Christ, who is building His church. We should simply be living stones in the hands of our King.

The big question we are faced with, is what we do with this monster we call denominations? Well, look what Paul says about it in:

Rom 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.**

Rom 16:18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but **their own belly;** and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (KJV)

From whom is Paul instructing us to separate ourselves? He is referring to those who divide the church, because they don't serve Christ or submit to His doctrine but submit to their own belly! "Belly" does not only refer to gluttony but means to covet things that satisfy the flesh such as wealth and control. You see; church denominations came about by people who want to control ignorant saints. With this comes deceiving them out of their money, to sustain that control.

Division goes against the teachings of Christ. However is separating oneself from an institution not in itself division? Well, it depends what one is separating oneself from. Separating oneself from that which causes division actually creates unity. We are not to separate ourselves from the saints of the body of Christ. We are to seek fellowship with all of the saints, no matter their denominational baggage. What we are to separate ourselves from is our association with institutional denominations that divide the body of Christ. If we separate ourselves from that which divides us, then all who are led by the Spirit would automatically function as one body.

Any doctrine, no matter with what smooth words and flattering speech it presents itself, if it divides the body of Christ into denominations, is not the doctrine of Christ. Each denomination is propagating a particular teaching to justify dividing the body of Christ. Yet the body of Christ is not formed by the doctrines and precepts of man, but by the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. One is not part of the body of Christ because one holds to certain views and interpretation, but because one is born of the Spirit of God through one's

faith in Christ. Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying that everyone who calls himself a Christian is part of the body of Christ. What I am saying is that people are born again through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and not through a particular doctrine. Look at the words of Jesus in:

Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Mat 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Mat 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Mat 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (KJV)

From Jesus' words, do we discern whether someone is born of the Spirit of God by whether they hold to our institutional man-made doctrines or by the fruit of Christ that is manifested through them? Their fruit is what the Lord says will enable us to discern who is or is not His, rather than people's knowledge or understanding. We are born spiritually into one family through the Spirit of God and not by our intellectual comprehension of doctrine. Some would disagree with this by saying that Buddhists also seems to have fruit of "peace", and some atheists have the fruit of joy. If this is the case, then Jesus must be wrong that the peace that He gives is not the same that the world gives. The fact is the fruit that Jesus is talking about here is the fruit of abiding in HIM. Jesus IS our fruit. Neither Buddhists nor atheists can give us the fruit of Christ. If Christ is not our peace and our joy, then it is not the fruit of Christ.

Why is fruit the determining factor? Spiritual fruit cannot be produced by ourselves; it is the work of Christ in us. Jesus said in:

Joh 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Joh 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Joh 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Joh 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

Joh 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Joh 15:6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. (KJV)

Did Jesus say that we will bear fruit by holding on to denominational doctrines or by abiding in Him? Abiding in Christ and learning to hear His voice as our Shepherd should be the focus of the church and not the doctrine of a particular denomination. According to Jesus, who will cut away those who do not bear fruit? God will, of course, not some man-made institution. Unity is not based on which direction the branches points to, or on what height of the vine they are abiding. Unity is only based that we are abiding on the same vine. Christ the Son of God our Lord, King and Saviour is our unity. Our personal pet doctrines can never be the bases of our unity.

The real issue that is dividing the body of Christ is not really the different views and doctrine, but carnal leaders desiring to control the church and carnal saints wanting men to shepherd them rather than Christ. So they place their pet doctrines and man-made religion above the unity of the Spirit and the love of the saints. When leaders focus more on equipping the saints for the work of ministry as opposed to teaching them their flavour of doctrine, then the church will function as one body. This is clearly taught by Paul in:

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

*Eph 4:12 **For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:***

*Eph 4:13 **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:***

*Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, **tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:***

*Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, **which is the head, even Christ:***

*Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted **by that which every joint supplieth,** according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, **maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.** (KJV)*

As we see from Paul's writing, a church leader's main purpose is NOT to teach doctrine, but to **equip** the saints **for the work of ministry**. When the whole church CAN minister to one another through the Holy Spirit then they will automatically no longer be tossed to and fro from every wind of doctrine by the craftiness of deceitful teachers.

Most saints cannot minister to one another through the Holy Spirit so they don't know how to discern. Saints only know how to recite the doctrines they were taught from a man standing behind the pulpit. So the saints are divided into their denominations and according to whatever new fad is on the market. The reason for this, is because the leaders take it upon themselves to do all the ministering and the church becomes spectators to motivational speaking and religious shows.

Yet, when the saints have learned to **minister** to one another and every part of Christ's body does its share to cause growth in the body in love, under the headship of Jesus Christ, then the saints will really grow into the fullness of Christ till we ALL come to the **unity** of the faith.

6.4: Ecumenicalism

Everyone that is born of the Spirit of God through Christ is part of the body of Christ. Which church then should we belong to? The answer is not a particular church. We already belong to the only church and that is the church that Christ is building. **We cannot join that church; we can only be born into that church through the Spirit of God.** It is not an institution but an organic body; a new creation in Christ. In practice this means that we don't join, or start a church. **We are to behave like the church.** This happens when we are obedient to our King by functioning as royal priests.

As we said before; it is our obligation to seek fellowship with all the saints of God whatever their institutional background, because we are one body. Yet we are to separate ourselves from institutions that divide the body of Christ into denominations. In other words we are to separate ourselves from the institution, but NOT from our family in Christ that is still mesmerised by the institution. We are to seek fellowship with saints that want to fellowship with us, even if they still belong to an institution.

Whichever city, town, or suburb we stay in; we are part of that church; made up of all the believers of that city, town, or suburb. We are obligated to find fellowship with the saints in that city, town or suburb. If, after some time, we can't find saints who would like to fellowship with us, then we are to pray and move to wherever God leads us where we can find a town, city or suburb that has saints who are willing to form this kind of fellowship with us. We should never cut ourselves off from other saints, even though they don't see eye to eye with us. We are part of the same body of Christ, even though we might see things differently.

Some might object to this and say that this sounds like ecumenicalism. In response I would say ecumenicalism is a man-made institutional unity. It is an effort to try to create unity by compromising the truth about Christ. This type of ideology is based on the idea that we should offend no one's beliefs. This false type of unity would even try to eliminate the fact of the gospel of God's Kingdom in Christ Jesus for the sake of unity. This is a very dangerous ideology and hence is not a unity formed by the Spirit of God. Jesus clearly said in:

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (KJV)

Jesus did not only come to give us life, He gave Himself who is life. We can search for the “life more abundantly” in Christianity, but if we don’t search for it in the person of Christ, then the abundant life is just diluted flesh-driven gratification of our personal desires.

Jesus did not only come to give us teachings or doctrine about what is true. Jesus is our doctrine ... our truth. If we try and follow Jesus’ teachings without understanding that His teachings are about Him, we end up being tossed to and fro from every wind of doctrine. Some claim that Jesus taught us how to keep the Law of God. Others would say Jesus taught us about the grace and love of God. Even though Jesus had much to say about God’s Law and God’s Grace, His teaching was about Himself - the Son of God. Jesus is the Law and Grace of God. Jesus is our truth and our doctrine.

Jesus did not only come to show us the way to God, but presents Himself as the way to God. The reason why the modern understanding of church is so far removed from the early Christians’ understanding of church that we read about in Scripture, is the inability to understand that Christ is the way to God. You see, the church is not a religious thing you attend weekly, but is actually the very Body of Christ that we are to belong to. This is not just a mental association to an idea of church, but something that one is supposed to be an active part of.

The man-made unity called: ecumenicalism is just another way for man to be in charge of a man-made church, but on a bigger scale. The people behind ecumenicalism are actually just merging religious businesses in order to make more money and gain more control. The unity of the Spirit, in contrast, is not organised by man, but is led by the Spirit as we subject ourselves to the person of Jesus Christ. In that case, how do we deal with saints who have different views and interpretations of Scripture than ourselves? Paul writes in:

Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, **who created all things by Jesus Christ:**

Eph 3:10 To the intent that **now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,**

Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed **in Christ Jesus our Lord:** (KJV)

The New King James writes in verse ten, “the manifold wisdom of God” instead of “the principalities and power in heavenly places”. The manifold wisdom of

God is not found in our personal revelation nor is it found in an institution or organization. The manifold wisdom is made known by the church according to the eternal purpose which God accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul also explains it like this in:

*1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, **which is the church** of the living God, **the pillar and ground of the truth**. (KJV)*

The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. How is that possible? Well we read in:

*Col 1:18 And **he** is the **head of the body, the church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things **he might have the preeminence**. (KJV)*

Christ who is the way, the truth and the life, is the head of the church, which is His body. So it is through the members of the body that the manifold wisdom of God is revealed. The body of Christ helps us to see things as they really are, as opposed to our own personal perspective of things.

To illustrate the limited perspective an individual has, a group of scientists did an experiment a couple of years ago to see what influence a person's visual perception has on his or her experience of the environment. To do this they placed individuals in separate rooms where everything inside these rooms were coloured green, such as their clothes, the walls, roof, floor, table, cupboards, plates, cups – everything was green. After a while the individual's brain interpreted the colour green as grey. Then, when they let these individuals out of their green environment, their brains interpreted all other colours as red, which is perceived as the opposite of green. It was only after getting used to the multi-coloured world, that their brains switched back to the reality of a world full of colours.

In the same way, we have a very limited perception of reality and truth, whether we are Christians or not. People who live their lives as individuals, isolated from others, are limited to their own perceptions of life, which would lead to a distorted one coloured worldview. This distorted worldview perceives all other views as opposing rather than complementing, or correcting their own. As individual Christians we also have a very limited sensitivity to the leading of God's Spirit. God has designed His church so that through all the different members, God's manifold wisdom in Christ Jesus would be revealed. Through the church we are confronted with God's multi-coloured spectrum of His

wisdom through the differences in people, in order for us to change to be like the image of Christ Jesus. That is why we should not divide the churches based on particular doctrines but rather get Christians to talk and share each other's different perceptions and let the Holy Spirit guide them to the truth as they learn to love each other.

Does this not seem too idealistic? The reason that people would look at this as too idealistic is that we base our union on our doctrine. For the first 300 years the church functioned as one body in a way that we are not able to even imagine today. How was it possible? Their union was not based on doctrine but on the Spirit of God through the complete work of Christ.

As we mentioned before, around 300 AD Constantine wanted Christianity to become an official state religion, and so devised a way for Christianity to become institutionalized. But in order to institutionalize Christianity, it had to develop an institutional infrastructure such as a unified doctrine of beliefs.

So around 325 AD Constantine called for the famous council of Nicea to try to establish doctrinal unity especially with regard to the deity of Christ. By institutionalising Christianity, Constantine could give state benefits in the form of official religious buildings and subsidies to the clergy who would have some kind of priestly function and authority as practiced by the other heathen religions.¹

Even though many Christians today hail this council meeting as the greatest doctrinal breakthrough, it actually became our greatest spiritual downfall. You see after the counsel of Nicea, doctrine was not taught and understood anymore through the revelation of the Spirit but accomplished by brute force dictated by an institution. So here the church that was supposed to be governed by another dimension in the Spirit, was now brought down to this world of man-made rule.²

Constantine invited about one thousand eight hundred elders from the east and the west. They estimated that about two hundred and fifty – three hundred actually attended. These plus minus three hundred elders were authorised to dictate church doctrines of faith over all issues under the Roman Empire of which Constantine was Emperor. Constantine would then enforce these by law. Anyone that would not follow the doctrines laid out under the Nicene creed had to go underground again. Yet not even this unification of doctrinal beliefs by a man-made institution held for very long. We saw that by the third council in 431 AD, the council of Ephesus, and the fourth council, the council of Chalcedon in

451 AD, the church got divided into three denominations; namely: The Assyrian Church of the East; the Oriental Orthodoxy; and of course the Roman Catholic Church. The power struggle led to the creation of more places of worship and consequently idol worship entered the church gradually over the years.^{2, 3, 4.}

I am not questioning whether the doctrines set by the three hundred elders were correct or not, what I am questioning is the way the doctrines became institutionalised. Doctrine had become the focal point of church. Right doctrine became more important than the living Jesus Christ in the midst of the congregation. This is still very evident in today's church. Today we have pastors and other church leaders, that divorce their spouses, have rebellious children, and even help themselves from the church treasury, yet nothing of consequence is said or done about it. However if the same leaders dare not follow their institutional doctrines then they will get excommunicated. This is in direct contrast to Scripture. It has become very clear that doctrine has become more important than character or spiritual fruit in the institutional churches. The reason for this is that *doctrine* has become the catalyst to control people and in so doing to divide people.

1. Jourels I., Constantine and Christianity: The Formation of Church/State Relations in the Roman Empire. (Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, 2015), 25.

2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea, 16 May 2021

3. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 5.55.7 (5.5) e-Sword 13.0.0

4. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 5.54.13 (5.5) e-Sword 13.0.0

6.5: Doctrine or Character

Every one of us would have experienced in the course of our lives, how we once were so sure about a certain doctrine only to discover later on in our lives that we were wrong. Yet we are still arrogant enough to think that our interpretation of certain Scriptures is worth dividing the church.

This was not the case before the church became institutionalised. Holding to correct doctrine was brought about by the conviction and correction of the Holy Spirit through loving relationships as each part of the body did its share. Am I then trying to say that doctrine is not important? NO, this is not what I am saying. The apostles put a lot of emphasis on right and wrong doctrines and right and wrong traditions. They would confront wrong doctrine head on as we see in:

Act 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

*Act 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas **had no small dissension and disputation with them**, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. (KJV)*

Paul and Barnabas did not compromise the truth, yet they did not go out and start a new church either. They chose to resolve the issue at Jerusalem where this wrong teaching originated. They never divided the church into two different denominations, such as those who are under grace and those who were under the law. Look for instance what Paul writes to the Roman church, in:

*Rom 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, **but not to doubtful disputations**.*

Rom 14:2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Rom 14:3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Rom 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Rom 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Rom 14:6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Rom 14:7 *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*

Rom 14:8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. (KJV)

Loving one another was more important than different interpretations of doctrine. This was clearly demonstrated in Paul's writings further on, from:

Rom 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. (KJV)

Loving one another is to be the focus point and not proving our opinions. We read in:

Php 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem other better than themselves.**

Php 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (KJV)

Paul also writes in:

Rom 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; **in honour preferring one another;** (KJV)

If our focus is in loving each other more than it is to prove that we are right, then Jesus, who is the truth, will lead us into all truth. Loving people with the love of Christ is what creates an environment for people's hearts to change. Our stubborn holding to doctrine, rather than caring for each other, will only divide us and drive us apart. Peter writes in:

1Pe 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: **for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.** (KJV)

Paul writes in:

1Co 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have

knowledge. **Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.**

1Co 8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. (KJV)

Paul writes again in:

*1Co 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and **understand all mysteries, and all knowledge;** and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and **have not charity, I am nothing.** (KJV)*

He writes further:

*1Co 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; **whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.** (KJV)*

Should we then just permit all things for the sake of love? Of course not, but our focus should be rather addressing bad fruit that could have originated from bad doctrine. We read, in:

1Co 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

1Co 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

1Co 5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

*1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, **if any man that is called a brother** be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

1Co 5:12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

1Co 5:13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. (KJV)

It is clear from Scripture that where someone who calls themselves a Christian, but then demonstrates bad fruit by their carnal conduct, action was taken in

order for that brother or sister to come to repentance. In this particular situation it seems that the brother did repent, as seen in:

2Co 2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

2Co 2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

2Co 2:8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. (KJV)

Today, we judge the unbelievers who practice immoral behaviour, which is only for God to judge, but then when it happens in our own fellowship, especially with so-called leaders we turn a blind eye. Yet when it comes to people who would teach things against the teachings of our denomination, we throw them out. This is contrary to clear teaching from Scripture. The only time we are to put someone out of fellowship, when it comes to teaching falsehood, is when bad fruit is evident. Peter gives example of this in:

*2Pe 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, **even denying the Lord** that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

2Pe 2:2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

*2Pe 2:3 **And through covetousness** shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* (KJV)

Peter then continues concerning their bad fruit in:

2Pe 2:12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

*2Pe 2:13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings **while they feast with you;***

*2Pe 2:14 **Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices;*** cursed children: (KJV)

He further warns in:

*2Pe 2:18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, **they allure through the lusts of the flesh**, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*

2Pe 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. (KJV)

The things we should make judgment on and take action towards are bad fruit or an un-repentant character. We are to love and care for people who might not understand Scripture like we do. We have to consider the possibility that we could be wrong as well and therefore not be so dogmatic over issues outside the life and headship of Christ. I am not saying that we should compromise the truth, but rather that we should be patient for the Holy Spirit to reveal the same truth to all of us.

When people first feel they are loved and accepted, they are more likely to be open to receiving the truth. Generally people will just close up to strangers that seem to force their opinion on them. Truth has to be revealed by the Holy Spirit as opposed to be forced on someone. **Godly love softens the heart to receive godly truth.**

Chapter 7: A Blueprint

7.1: Perspectives of Church

I am often asked about the basis on which I prescribe how church should function. Should I not just leave everyone to do church as they feel led by the Holy Spirit? The problem with that is that many people follow man-made traditions instead of the Holy Spirit. They might give it a modern look and say it is the Spirit of God, but instead it is just emotional hype which is far removed from what we read in Scripture. Does it matter to our King and Saviour how we do church? Contrary to popular belief, it does and therefore I do see a blueprint of church in Scripture. However, the task is for us to interpret the Scripture correctly. Interpreting Scripture starts off by understanding what the Bible is, and what it is not. Our understanding of the Bible affects not only how we practise Christianity, but also what we believe is the gospel.

I understand that there are many of you that agree with most of what I have just stated here, but obviously not with everything; which is perfectly fine, as there is a good chance that I don't have everything correct. However, there are many Christians that seem to have the attitude that when they disagree with one another, they will agree to disagree. That is an unfruitful attitude, because it prevents us from growing and learning. We should rather have the attitude that we might not see things the same way at this point, but be open to the Holy Spirit to use the different parts of the body to teach each other. Each view brings a different perspective on an issue, so that, when we bring these perspectives together, this may give us revelation which we would not have received by just looking at an issue from one perspective. If we are patient with each other, the Holy Spirit will bring us to the unity of the faith. However, the unity of the Holy Spirit will be hindered if we are not patient with each other and when we try to force our views on each other. We should allow the Spirit to teach us through each other even in our disagreements. James writes:

Jas 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Jas 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (KJV)

We have to understand that we don't know all things, but we are to make every effort to know and understand what the Lord wants us to understand. Paul writes in:

Eph 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

Eph 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

*Eph 5:17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, **but understanding what the will of the Lord is.** (KJV)*

The more we show ourselves faithful with the things that God reveals to us, the more God will bless us with His marvellous treasures in Christ Jesus. What has this got to do with how we do church? Paul writes:

*Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto **the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church** the manifold wisdom of God,*

Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (KJV)

God's eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus, is, that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church. Imagine this, that the manifold wisdom of God is being made known by the church! Paul even goes so far as to say in:

*1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that **thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself** in the house of God, which is the **church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.** (KJV)*

The church is the pillar and ground of truth. That is a very powerful statement and not something we can just brush aside. We ought to know how we are to conduct ourselves in the church, the house of God. The Spirit of truth reveals truth through the church. We therefore cannot afford to be blasé about how we do church.

Looking at our modern types of church we can roughly identify three main streams or trends in the evangelical church today. First we have the institutional church, secondly we have the out-of-church type of church and thirdly we have what we call the organic church. These types are based on three totally different paradigms. Let me sum up each of these different church paradigms for you.

The institutional church has a very religious and traditional emphasis. It has a place of worship, worship services and a hierarchy structure with a clear distinction between the clergy and the laity, with a great emphasis on the authority of the clergy. The institutional church is run by programmes. The undeniable truth about the institutional church is that it is built on money as it is

unable to function without it. Within the institutional church you will find various worship service styles, doctrinal differences and opinions which define the different denominations, but their structures and worship services follow the same basic principles as stated above. Usually, to be part of and to function in a particular church structure you need to adhere to pretty much all of that particular church's theology and dogma. ¹

The out-of-church, is based on individual experiences and revelations. It has no division of clergy and laity but are often guru driven. What I mean by guru driven is that the members place great importance on listening to professional bible teachers, either via social media or by reading books written by them. The out-of-church model has no formal structure or programmes, but functions by sharing knowledge, experiences or so-called liberating truths. Many of them would not like to be labelled out-of-church, as the very nature of being out-of-church is not to be placed in any box or category. They sometimes visit institutional churches and home or organic churches alike, but do not commit to any group. The reason for that, is that they, rightly, see themselves as part of the whole body of Christ, and so they say, "Why should we divide ourselves in order to belong to any particular group?" However, this correct analysis of the problem, does not necessarily lead to the correct solution. They don't see the need for true body life commitment. The concept of true body life where believers can take care of and be responsible for each other as members of Christ's body, is not adhered to by people in this model. Rather, they fellowship with only those who are like-minded, and only as long as it seems mutually beneficial to them. ¹

The organic church is sometimes called the home church or *ekklesia* church. It has no place of worship, or traditional worship services, but differs from the out-of-church model in that it does have official meetings. These meetings are interactive and actually judicial in form. The meetings may have a loose structure and are not programmed or clergy-led. The organic churches that are healthy are not guru driven but rather are relationship driven. This kind of church model is distinctly relationship-based, and is unable to function without close brotherly love. Within the organic churches like those of the institutional churches, many have various doctrinal differences and opinions; however, they are more tolerant of doctrinal differences within these fellowships. They don't allow these differences to divide them from each other; they would rather challenge each other in a gentle and loving way in order to grow in the grace of our Lord. ¹

All three of these church paradigms claim that they are Christ-centred. It may be

true that a lot is spoken about Christ in all three of these types, but these claims are not necessarily an indication of them being Christ-centred. Being Christ-centred means to be focused on what matters to Christ and His kingdom. The very life of Christ is not expressed by ideas, or revelations, or strategies, or programmes, or charismatic personalities. The life of Christ is about being part of His body, the household (family) of God, with Christ as the head. The household of God is the body of believers called the body of Christ whose purpose is to seek and establish the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not what God does for us, but about Christ being the centre of our lives and the ruler of our hearts. Being Christ-centred takes the focus away from man and places it on Christ. ¹

It might not be so in all cases, but you often find that in the institutional church, the message is about the needs of people and how God is obliged to meet, or is focussed on meeting those needs in Christ. In return, all that is required from the members is to perform by faith, demonstrated either through their financial giving, dedication to church programmes, or religious observation of their denominational ideology. ¹

The out-of-church movement's view of Christ-centeredness is not always easily clear-cut, as it has aspects both of the view of the institutional church, as well as that of healthy organic churches. However, some people in the out-of-church movement don't see how a family of believers can actually play a role in their walk, and for some, being involved with other Christians is seen as only a distraction. In contrast to both these views, the organic church that functions healthily, centres its focus on the kingdom of God and Christ's rule in our hearts as executed by His body - the church. ¹

Although these summaries are generalisations, they are not unfounded. This is clear when you consider the kind of narrative that is used by those who promote each type of church. What is interesting to note, is that the paradigms behind these three types are greatly influenced by the way they read and interpret the Bible and the value the Bible has in their Christian experience. Before we look at a biblical perspective of the Bible, let's briefly summarise the view of the adherents of each of these three paradigms. ¹

From the institutional church's perspective, the Bible is often called the Word of God. Unfortunately, this does not guarantee that their practices line up with what they call the Word of God. Numerous members of the institutional church are quite inconsistent in their approach to the Bible. They pick and choose those Scriptures that suit their world-view. They find texts to verify their ideas and

then oblige their followers to agree with them by telling them that this is what the Word of God says. Yet, when it comes to passages that contradict their world-view they spiritualize them, sweep them under the carpet of the cultural context, and manipulate the Scriptures till the passages become completely unrecognizable. If that does not get the desired result, they simply ignore them, stating that there are more important issues to consider. This demonstrates the inconsistency between what they say and what they practise when it comes to viewing the Bible as the “Word of God”. ¹

The out-of-church people have a very simplified approach to the Bible. For many of them, the Bible is not the Word of God. They do see its value in gaining knowledge and understanding, but consider that it’s not necessary to line up one’s world-view accordingly. To them the Holy Spirit is sent to us to “teach us all things”. Even though those in the out-of-church movement would not admit this, in practice their following the “Spirit” is merely doing what feels right to them. They don’t see any need to adjust their view according to Scripture, as it is generally seen as relative to anyone’s interpretation. For them, to be obliged to follow any Scripture is of no real value to the Spirit life. Some of them would mistakenly consider what Paul said: “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” as referring to all Scripture and not only to the Law of Moses.

The organic church’s way of approaching the Bible, could easily be confused with both of these two approaches when viewed superficially. That’s why we need the following four sections in this chapter in which to clarify some of the points that I am briefly going to make now. Many who are part of the home church do not necessarily see the Bible as the Word of God, but rather as the Holy Scriptures. What is the difference? That I’ll get into shortly, but for now I can confirm that those who see the Bible as the Holy Scriptures have a greater sense of obligation to follow the instructions of Scripture more accurately than the adherents of the institutional church. However, like those who are part of the out-of-church movement, they understand that following the Scriptures without the life of the Spirit are dead works.

Those who understand the Bible as the Holy Scriptures have a unique understanding of what is meant by all Scripture being inspired by the Holy Spirit. It might seem contradictory, but they don’t necessarily understand the term “inspired by the Holy Spirit” to mean the same thing as the Word of God. By understanding the Bible as the Holy Scripture instead of as the Word of God, they implement a logical and consistent approach to the cultural and historical contexts of various passages in Scripture. The way we approach Scripture has a great influence on whether we are able to discern Bible teachers' and church

leaders' motives. This discernment will protect Christians from wandering fruitlessly in the darkness of man's opinions and doctrinal fads.

Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so. (NKJV)

1. This perspective is based on my personal dialogues and email correspondence I had with various leaders in these groups.

7.2: The Word of God

In dealing with the topic of Scripture's being the Word of God, please don't jump to a conclusion at this point as you might completely misunderstand me. I believe the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is therefore above all of man's doctrines, opinions, and perspectives regarding our walk with Christ and church practices. However, I do question the motive behind calling the Bible the Word of God while acting on it as though it is merely a suggestive guideline... making God's Word of no effect through our traditions. The very people, who argue that the Bible is the Word of God, tend to be the very people who pick and choose from the Bible, according to whatever suits their own worldview, and then ignore other Scriptures as irrelevant or trivialize their importance.

What is interesting to note is that you will NOT find one passage of Scripture that actually states that the Bible or the Scriptures are the *Word of God*. Nevertheless, there do seem to be some Scriptures that some people will say implies this. So let's have a look at one of these passages that many claim does state that Scripture is the Word of God. It is found in:

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2Ti 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (KJV)

The phrase "inspiration of God" is translated from the Greek word *theopneustos* which literally means God breathed. ¹ God breathed is used in the Bible to mean God gives life to or empowers something or someone. However, one does not find a single Scripture reference that would validate the notion that God breathed also means God's Word. That is why God breathed is correctly translated to mean *inspired of God* instead of the Word of God. I know that this probably doesn't make sense, but bear with me; it will become clearer shortly.

To get our minds around this, we would need to properly define the term the *Word of God*. All the uses of the phrase: the Word of God in the Scriptures, are of instances where God actually spoke about something, either through a vision, or an angel or a prophet, for example, in:

*Gen 15:1 After these things the **word of the LORD came unto Abram** in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (KJV)*

*2Ki 9:36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, **This is the word of the LORD**, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: (KJV)*

The following verse helps us distinguish between the terms Scripture and the Word of God:

*1Sa 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. **And the word of the LORD was precious in those days**; there was no open vision. (KJV)*

This passage makes it clear that while the priests had the written Scriptures of Moses, the “word of the LORD” was rare in those days. This is a clear indication to us that the word of the Lord did not mean the same as Scripture to the priests and the prophets in the Old Testament.

Another point to consider is the fact that there are many strange and even obscure events in Scripture, for instance the apostles having a disagreement. We cannot say that these recorded instances, themselves, were things that God spoke. They were merely things that happened which the Holy Spirit led the writers to record for our benefit. Even Paul made a distinction between what he wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in the following instances:

*1Co 7:12 But to the **rest speak I, not the Lord**: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. (KJV)*

*1Co 7:25 Now concerning virgins **I have no commandment of the Lord**: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. (KJV)*

There are things written in Scripture that are the words of God, such as when the prophets spoke God’s words. These instances are indicated by the phrase: “the word of the Lord came” In that instance, God inspired the prophets to record His words. I have to emphasise, that the Word of God means spoken by God whereas God breathed means inspired by God or life from God. The phrase life from God simply means that God has breathed life into Scripture. For instance, an artist may be inspired to paint a scene from nature. The painting is not the actual scene but only an expression of the artist. In the same way, God’s Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible to write certain things, but only some of the things that were recorded are the actual words of God.

The Scriptures therefore, as Paul taught Timothy, are used to teach doctrine, to

test doctrine, to correct behaviour and to teach us about righteousness. Scripture is there to test whether what people claim is from God, is truly from God, as the Spirit will not contradict Himself. This means that when the saints prophesy, they should not go against what is written in Scripture; for Scripture is inspired by the same Spirit Who has given them a word. For instance Paul writes:

1Th 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.

1Th 5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (KJV)

John confirms this in:

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (KJV)

On the other hand, doesn't testing a word of prophecy with Scripture not confirm that Scripture is the Word of God? Let us explore a passage that does seem to imply this, in:

*Heb 4:12 For **the word of God** is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (KJV)*

When we look at the context though, we read that the author of Hebrews was discussing entering God's rest. To make his point, he quotes a prophetic word from Psalm 95:

Heb 4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (KJV)

The word of God in this context has to do with God speaking through the prophet. The word of God is living and powerful. When God speaks to us it is like a two-edged sword, dividing that which is soulish from that which is spiritual. Saying this, take note that the author of Hebrews was not referring to the whole Bible, but to those passages that record what God actually spoke. Paul illustrated this when he taught about the gift of prophecy, in:

1Co 14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one

unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

1Co 14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (KJV)

Reading a passage of Scripture to the church doesn't mean that the reader is giving a word of prophecy which would be the word of God for those hearing it. All Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, but not everything that is in Scripture is the Word of God. Do you see the difference? I will repeat the point that the word of God that is recorded in Scripture is that utterance that God has made either through an angel or through a prophet for a specific audience for a specific reason. A recorded event in Scripture is not the word of God even though the Spirit inspired the writers to record those events for us.

This leads us to investigate the difference between the Greek words, *logos* and *rhema*, that are translated as "the word" in English. Some Bible teachers give a simple explanation by suggesting that *logos* means the written word and *rhema* means the spoken word. However, that distinction is not made in Scripture. A more accurate distinction is that *rhema* is a distinct revelation or word relating to a particular situation or person, whereas *logos* is the complete mind or thought of God's will behind the revelation.² An example of God's *logos* would be that people should not commit adultery; whereas God's *rhema* would be to a particular person who is in an adulterous relationship. In other words, the *rhema* of God might be that God says to this person that if he does not repent of the adulterous relationship he will lose his family, his job and get fatally ill. This however is not the case for everyone, even though the *logos* for all people is that they should not commit adultery.

During the Roman Empire the Greeks understood *rhema* to mean a general discussion of a subject, whereas *logos* was seen as the expression of precise ideas and concepts.² The apostle John reveals a new dynamic to this distinction by calling Jesus the Word or *Logos* of God.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word [logos], and the Word [logos] was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (KJV)

In this personification of Jesus as the Word of God the true meaning of *logos* is

captured by the following words:

Joh 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (KJV)

The *Logos* who is the complete and precise mind and thought of God was in the bosom of the Father, and He declares to us who the Father really is. Jesus is the Word, the *Logos* of God. We can only know the Father through His expressed Word in the person of Jesus Christ. Scripture only tells us about God, but Jesus lets us know God intimately. Without Christ, the *Logos* of God, Scripture is a dead religious book. Saying this there are those who believe all scriptures or the bible is the Word of God, and so it is the Bible that became flesh in the man Jesus. This is obscurely wrong and no Scripture supports this. Even Jesus said in:

Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Joh 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. (KJV)

With Christ, Scripture is “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. Without Christ, trying to follow the Bible, is but an empty dead pursued of a religion without life.

1. Vine's New Testament "Inspired Of God", e-Sword 13.0.0

2. Vine's New Testament "word", e-Sword 13.0.0

7.3: Church Foundation

This brings us back to how we do church. Does it matter to God how we do church and, for that matter, who determines how we do church? Paul writes in:

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

*Eph 2:20 And are **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;***

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

Eph 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (KJV)

Paul makes a rather strong statement when it comes to the church being built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. Our English word, apostle, comes from the Greek word *apostolos* literally meaning “sent out”.¹ Apostles are the delegates of a king whose task is to establish his kingdom wherever they have been sent. For instance, look at Jesus' command when he sent out the apostles, in:

*Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.***

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

*Mat 28:20 **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (KJV)*

When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and the church was born, we read the following, in:

Act 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

*Act 2:42 And **they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (KJV)*

The Greek word for doctrine is *didaché* and means teaching². The church continued in the apostle's teachings as Christ commanded. What's interesting to note is that the church did not only follow the apostle's teachings but also

their traditions as the following passages state:

*2Th 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the **traditions** which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. (KJV)*

*2Th 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the **tradition** which he received of us. (KJV)*

Paul went so far as to say, in:

*2Th 3:14 And if **any man obey not our word by this epistle**, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

2Th 3:15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (KJV)

Paul placed great importance on the apostolic writings, to the point of saying that whoever does not obey the apostles' letters should be isolated from the church in order to put them to shame. Paul also praised those in the church who followed the traditions that they delivered to them, in:

*1Co 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and **keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.** (KJV)*

The Greek word for tradition is *paradosis*, which means a handing down of values and practices³. From a plain reading of Scripture, it's clear that we are to follow the apostles' values and church practices. Some would quibble because the Lord and His apostles also taught us not to follow traditions:

*Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the **tradition of men**, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (KJV)*

Peter even writes in:

*1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your **vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers**;*

1Pe 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (KJV)

Jesus goes so far as to say in:

Mat 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Mat 15:4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

Mat 15:5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

*Mat 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. **Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.** (KJV)*

Yet, as we read these passages from Christ, Paul, and Peter, we can see that they were talking about man-made traditions that were not inspired by God. At the time the Jewish oral traditions were commentaries and interpretations of God's commandments and Scriptures. Later on, these were written in a format called the Talmud. There are therefore traditions created by man, for his own agenda, and then there are traditions that are inspired by God's Spirit, for an important purpose.

From a New Testament perspective, the apostles' traditions were not man-made, but were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the institutional church has formulated new man-made traditions that have turned us away from the apostles' traditions as laid out in Scripture. So, part of the foundation of the church needs to be based on the apostles' teachings and the apostles' traditions but not the traditions of *man*. That explains the foundation of the apostles, but where do the prophets come in? We read in:

*Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the **testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** (KJV)*

The prophetic words of Scripture centre on the testimony of Jesus. Jesus revealed this fact to two of His disciples in:

Luk 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Luk 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

*Luk 24:27 And beginning at **Moses and all the prophets**, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (KJV)*

Peter said the following, in:

Act 10:42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

*Act 10:43 To him give all the **prophets witness**, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (KJV)*

Peter also wrote in:

2Pe 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

*2Pe 1:20 Knowing this first, that no **prophecy of the scripture** is of any private interpretation.*

2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (KJV)

The Spirit behind the prophetic words in Scripture is Jesus Christ. The church is built on the revelation of Jesus as the anointed King, as prophesied in the Old Testament. As we meditate on the prophetic Scriptures about Christ, God's mystery that was hidden at times past will be illuminated in our hearts. Paul writes in:

Eph 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

Eph 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

*Eph 3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; **(as I wrote afore in few words,***

Eph 3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

*Eph 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now **revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;***

*Eph 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, **and of the same body**, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

Eph 3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. (KJV)

In practice, the church is to be built on the words of the prophets as recorded in

the Old Testament Scripture, speaking of the Messiah and of God's plan to establish His kingdom. It is also built on the teachings of the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament Scripture, that instruct us how to function in this kingdom of Christ in and through the church.

1. Vine' s New Testament "apostle", e-Sword 13.0.0

2.Vine' s New Testament "doctrine", e-Sword 13.0.0

3.Vine' s New Testament "tradition", e-Sword 13.0.0

7.4: Validating Scripture

Some would ask why we would hold to the Bible alone as authoritative if there are also other writings from that time? Validating the importance of the Old Testament should be simple for Christ often used the Old Testament Scriptures to validate Himself. This fact, in turn, validates the Old Testament Scriptures. One example of this is Christ's conversation with two of His disciples after He was raised from the dead:

*Luk 24:27 And beginning at **Moses and all the prophets**, he expounded unto them in **all the scriptures** the things concerning himself. (KJV)*

What then about the New Testament? Matthew, John, and Peter were three of the twelve disciples who Jesus validated in:

*Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.***

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

*Mat 28:20 **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (KJV)*

These apostles, who Christ personally commissioned, were eyewitnesses of Christ's glory as John explains in:

*1Jn 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, **which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;***

1Jn 1:2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

1Jn 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1Jn 1:4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. (KJV)

Peter explained it like this in:

2Pe 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made

known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, **but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.**

2Pe 1:17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

2Pe 1:18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (KJV)

This set the twelve apostles apart from the other apostles who were sent out by the church. The apostles who were sent out by the church are sometimes called second-generation apostles. We call them missionaries today. As you might recall, apostle literally means sent out. An example of a second-generation apostle, who was sent out by the church, is Barnabas:

*Act 11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and **they sent forth Barnabas,** that he should go as far as Antioch.*

Act 11:23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. (KJV)

The second generation apostles did not have exactly the same calling as the first twelve who were commissioned by Christ *in person*. The Bible also shows that the twelve apostles form the foundation of the New Jerusalem in a prophetic sense, in:

*Rev 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of **the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** (KJV)*

There is a lot of symbolism found in Scripture concerning the number twelve, however what is important to note in this context, is the fact that there were twelve chosen by Christ who form the foundation of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. We can deduct that this has something to do with the foundation of the church. As you might recall, church, as translated from the Greek *ekklesia*, has to do with those elected from a town or city to make decisions concerning the affairs of the kingdom. The twelve form the foundation of the heavenly capital city of God's kingdom. Of those twelve would be, John, Peter, Mathew and Jude who wrote letters and historical documents in the New Testament.

This leaves us with James, Mark, Luke and Paul who were also writers of the rest

of the New Testament, but which one would not normally included in the twelve. James is a bit tricky to explain. There were three disciples of Christ named James; of which one was called the son of Zebedee. He was martyred in about 44 C.E, which makes him an unlikely candidate to have written the letter. ¹ Theologians doubt that the other apostle James, the son of Alphaeus, was the writer, because he was not spoken of often in Scripture. ² Yet I am not so sure whether this would be a good reason for him not being the writer.

The third apostle, James, was the James that has been identified as Jesus' brother and who had a great influence on the church of Jerusalem. ¹ However, because there is no consensus among theologians as to which James wrote the letter of James; I would not like to make a definite statement about which one wrote the letter; as whoever it was, he was identified as an apostle, who was with Christ.

Mark and Luke were not part of the twelve, however, they did not write doctrine to the church. They merely wrote a biography of the events of Jesus' life, His teachings and the events around the apostles' actions during the infancy of the church. Mark and Luke were both close companions of Paul.

Paul, on the other hand, is somewhat different to the other apostles. More than half of the apostolic traditions and teachings that we have from Scripture come from Paul's writings. The issue with Paul is that he was not part of the original twelve. If he was not part of the original twelve, why should we build church theology and practices on what Paul had to say? Well, I believe Scripture gives us the answer for this.

As you would recall, Judas, who was one of the twelve, was deceived by Satan and betrayed Jesus, and so he was disqualified from being part of the twelve. The question is then, who would have replaced Judas as one of the twelve? Before the Holy Spirit was given to the church, the apostles took it into their own hands to remedy this problem. We read in:

Act 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Act 1:16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

*Act 1:17 For **he was numbered with us**, and had obtained part of this ministry. (KJV)*

Act 1:20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

Act 1:21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

Act 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Act 1:23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Act 1:24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

Act 1:25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

*Act 1:26 **And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias;** and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (KJV)*

At this point, the church had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit nor is there any proof that it was Jesus who appointed Matthias as the twelfth apostle to replace Judas. You will recall that Jesus commanded them to wait for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on the church, in:

*Luk 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: **but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.** (KJV)*

Jesus did not ask them to appoint a replacement for Judas, but to wait for the Holy Spirit. At most, we can only say that Matthias was appointed as an apostle by the church but not by Christ, personally. Therefore, it would be a mistake to count him with the twelve. However, if Christ did not mean to replace Judas with Matthias, then who was to replace Judas? There is something really marvellous in the way God worked this all out. As satan stole Judas away from the twelve, by divine intervention, Christ stole one of satan's disciples to replace Judas. His name was Saul. We read about this in:

Act 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

Act 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Act 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

*Act 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?***

*Act 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, **I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.***

*Act 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, **Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.** (KJV)*

Saul, whose name changed to Paul, is shown here to be an eyewitness of Christ's glory and at that moment was commissioned by Christ Himself to be His apostle. Paul qualifies his apostleship as given to one who was born out of due time:

1Co 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

*1Co 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, **as of one born out of due time.***

1Co 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (KJV)

It does seem apparent from Scripture that Paul was the twelfth apostle chosen by Christ to replace Judas. Peter even validated Paul's place by acknowledging Paul's letters as part of the rest of Scripture, in:

2Pe 3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

*2Pe 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, **as they do also the other scriptures,** unto their own destruction. (KJV)*

Peter's words, "also the other Scriptures", indicate that Peter considered Paul's letters to be Scripture together with the other writings inspired by God. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the chief cornerstone. In practice, the church must be built on the Scriptures that prophesy about Christ in the Old Testament, as well as on the New Testament instructions of the apostles concerning Christ. That foundation shows that the

church is subjected to the resurrected Christ who is King. A church that claims to be subjected to Christ will be built according to the instructions found in Scripture.

1. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Chapter 3 Apostolic Age, (21,16,0), e-Sword 13.0.0

2. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Letter-of-James>

7.5: The Letter that Kills

The church is being built on Scripture written by both the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles, with Christ being the chief cornerstone. We repeat Paul's words to Timothy, in:

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2Ti 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. (KJV)

What does Paul mean that *all* Scripture is profitable? To answer this question, let's first look at a much debated passage found in:

*2Co 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: **for the letter killeth**, but the spirit giveth life. (KJV)*

What is the "letter" that Paul is talking about here? Let's understand the context of Paul's words, by reading from:

2Co 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

*2Co 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the **new testament**; not of the letter, but of the spirit: **for the letter killeth**, but the spirit giveth life.*

*2Co 3:7 But if the ministration of death, written and **engraven in stones**, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the **face of Moses** for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:*

2Co 3:8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? (KJV)

In this passage we see that Paul is dealing with the Law of Moses that was written on stone, and not the prophetic words about Christ, when he stated, "the letter kills". I'll get into this in much more detail in the book I wrote "Understanding what we Preach". What I'll say for now is that we cannot obtain righteousness by our religious performances. Only Christ in us is able to be the righteousness that God requires. It is not through a religion but through a personal relationship with the righteous One in us - Christ Jesus.

Scripture is therefore not meant to be followed to obtain righteousness. Righteousness is only through the person of Christ and not our own effort. There is no exception to this. From this standpoint, we need to understand

what place Scripture has in our lives. Scripture is used to instruct us how to walk in Christ, who is our righteousness.

*1Co 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and **righteousness**, and sanctification, and redemption: (KJV)*

Scripture therefore, is given so that we may know how to function as the church of Christ, and to show us how to discern whether or not we are following the Holy Spirit. In other words, if the church does not follow the Scriptures as laid out by the apostles, then we can be sure the church is not being led by the Holy Spirit.

*1Co 4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; **that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written**, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. (KJV)*

However, I must add that, just because we follow the apostles' traditions to the letter, this does not mean that we are being led by the Holy Spirit. The church of the Bible should not be a church that follows the Bible correctly from the outside. The church of the Bible should have a deep longing to experience intimacy with Christ in their midst. Jesus said the following, in:

*Joh 10:27 **My sheep hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me: (KJV)*

It is a sad fact, but many Christians interpret Scripture according to what they would like it to say, rather than what Scripture actually teaches. I have found that even genuine brothers who have a very good grasp of exegesis and hermeneutical principles will compromise those principles, should the Scriptures in question not align with their world-view. For the sake of interest, exegesis deals with the context, culture, and purpose of the writer during the time when a passage of Scripture was written. On the other hand, hermeneutics deals with whether or how that Scripture applies to us.

So, how can we get around this tendency to compromise the correct interpretation so as to suit our own worldview? Peter wrote in:

*2Pe 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of **any private interpretation**. (KJV)*

Peter wrote this at a time where they generally had only the Old Testament

prophecies concerning Christ to guide them. Today, we also have the apostolic Scriptures, whereas then they had the apostles with them. However, what Peter wrote still stays the same and that is that no Scripture is a matter of private interpretation. So what does this mean in practice? Let's get back to Jesus being our Shepherd. When Christ speaks to His Sheep, He makes them one flock.

*Joh 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and **they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*** (KJV)

The proper way to interpret Scripture is through the body of Christ and not through our own private interpretation. That is why Paul wrote (and I repeat):

*Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto **the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,***

Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (KJV)

Also in:

*1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*** (KJV)

The manifold wisdom of God is made known through the church which is the pillar and ground of the truth. When the church meets and together interprets the truth of Scripture, God's wisdom is declared to the principalities and powers. This means that the interpretation of the Scriptures has to stand the scrutiny of others in the family of God. The proper interpretation and understanding of Scripture forms the foundation from which we discern what the Spirit is saying to His church.

We should not become lazy or ignorant concerning our responsibility. There are tremendous dangers in thinking that we need some guru to help us understand Scripture, rather than corporately discerning what the Bible teaches. That is why Paul also wrote, in:

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

Eph 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (KJV)

Again, we consider the words of Paul, in:

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

*Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, **tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine**, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (KJV)

As has been said before, Paul did not say that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers should do all the ministering. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are there to equip the saints in order for the rest of the church to do the ministering. When the whole church does the ministering, then the church will not be tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, as we so often see in the institutional church and the out-of-church movement. In the institutional church, and even in the out-of-church movement, the saints are used to following gurus and so do not know how to discern as a church.

It's my conclusion, therefore, that the church cannot function without the Holy Scriptures. It's true that the early church did not have the Bible that we have now, but they did have the Old Testament prophecies and the twelve apostles

on whom the church is built. It is also true that many Christians in those days were not able to read, but there were always people in their midst who could read to the illiterate. We can see evidence of this in these verses:

*1Ti 4:13 Till I come, **give attendance to reading**, to exhortation, to doctrine. (KJV)*

*1Th 5:27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle **be read unto all the holy brethren**. (KJV)*

Even though the Bible is not the word of God per se, we cannot afford to ignore the instructions of the Holy Scripture. God has preserved the Scriptures through the blood of many saints so that the church can be grounded on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. We cannot afford to do church the way we like. We, the church, have to follow the apostles' traditions. However, we must also understand that Scripture is empty without the living presence of Christ in our midst, as Christ alone is the chief cornerstone of the church.

I pray that as you search the Scriptures through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, you will be able to rightly divide the word of truth.

Chapter 8: A Spirit filled Church

8.1: Pentecost

The *ekklesia* church is the elect of Christ who come together to discuss and make decisions concerning the Kingdom of God. Surely, if we are to make decisions concerning God's Kingdom in our lives, we should expect that the King would have a say? That is why Jesus said, in:

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (KJV)

In what way do we see Christ in our midst? In the book of Acts, we see one of the most important events that happened after Christ's salvation work on Calvary. The event came about on the Jewish Feast of Weeks called Pentecost. It was fifty days after Passover at the beginning of the wheat harvest. ¹ We read in:

Act 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Act 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

Act 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (KJV)

When the Jews, who were nearby, heard the commotion made by the disciples who being filled with the Holy Spirit, they came to investigate. This was Peter's response to their investigation:

Act 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

*Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit **upon all flesh**: and your sons and your daughters **shall prophesy**, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*

*Act 2:18 And on my **servants and on my handmaidens** I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: (KJV)*

The church of Christ only really started to function when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Yet somehow it's this manifestation of the Holy Spirit that has

caused a lot of confusion in the church during the past years. Why is that? The answer is quite simple. It is because of human control over something that is only to be controlled by our King and Saviour, Jesus Christ. When man tries to take control over the church, you will find either carnal behaviour or demonic manifestations, or the quenching of spiritual gifts such by the use of programmes in order to avoid the use of spiritual gifts.

How did things go so wrong? Church history shows that the same spiritual gifts that we read about in the Bible were still evident throughout the first three centuries of the church, as recorded in these extracts of the church fathers' documents and letters:

Justin Martyr in 150AD remarked that - *"the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to their present time..."* He continues *"...it was possible to see amongst us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God"*.²

Irenaeus wrote around 180AD: *"In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God"*.³

Tertullian, wrote around 207 AD wrote: *"Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer - only let it be by the Spirit, 198 in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, 199 whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him; let him show to me also, that any woman of boastful tongue in his community has ever prophesied from amongst those specially holy sisters of his. Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty, and they agree, too, with the rules, and the dispensations, and the instructions of the Creator; therefore without doubt the Christ, and the Spirit, and the apostle, belong severally to my God. Here, then, is my frank avowal for any one who cares to require it."*⁴

Novatian, who lived between 200 and 258 AD, wrote: *"This is He who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, often discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts there are of charismata; and thus make the Lord's Church everywhere, and in all,*

perfected and completed. ⁵

Then something happened that changed all of this around 300AD. As you would recall; Constantine the emperor of Rome institutionalized the church. The church rather suddenly had places of worship, and people were placed in charge over the institutional church. These people found they had a platform to give their priestly performance while the rest of the church became spectators. What do you think happened to the spiritual gifts? Well, just look at the attitude of those who were placed in charge of this institution of man they called the church:

Eusebius wrote in around 339AD about someone who had spiritual manifestations: *"He became possessed of a spirit, and suddenly began to rave in a kind of ecstatic trance, and to babble in a jargon, prophesying in a manner contrary to the custom of the Church which had been handed down by tradition from the earliest times.* ⁶

Chrysostom who lived around 344-407 AD and who, as you might recall, gave us the art of rhetoric, better known as the sermon, wrote: *"This whole phenomenon [of speaking in tongues] is very obscure, but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their (termination), being such then as used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity hath produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more.* ⁷

Chrysostom's question is valid. Why, indeed, did it happen before and no longer in his time? He just could not see it was this very institution and the religious performance of a one-man show that were quenching the spiritual gifts.

Augustine of Hippo, around 354 and 430AD wrote: *"In the earliest times, "the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues", which they had not learned, "as the Spirit gave them utterance". These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away. In the laying on of hands now, that persons may receive the Holy Ghost, do we look that they should speak with tongues? Or when he laid the hand on infants, did each one of you look to see whether they would speak with tongues, and, when he saw that they did not speak with tongues, was any of you so strong-minded as to say, These have not received the Holy Ghost; for, had they received,*

*they would speak with tongues as was the case in those times? If then the witness of the presence of the Holy Ghost be not given through these miracles, by what is it given, by what does one get to know that he has received the Holy Ghost? Let him question his own heart. If he love his brother, the Spirit of God dwelleth in him.*⁸

Right up to the present day, many in the institutional church still hold to this philosophy of Augustine of Hippo, that the manifestation of the Spirit does not happen as it happened in the Bible anymore. He, like many today, believed that the indication that you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit is by the love you show others. In this section of the Spirit-led Church we'll look at the Scriptural validity of such a belief. One of the proof texts that are often quoted to prove the cessation of the spiritual gifts after the time of the apostles, is:

1Co 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

*1Co 13:10 **But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.***

1Co 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

*1Co 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; **but then face to face**: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (KJV)*

Cessationists argue that the perfect came when the canon of Scripture was completed. But this is clearly out of context. This passage does not refer to the canon of Scripture at all. Verse twelve, in referring to "the perfect", has to do with us: "face to face". The only time that we will know just as we also are known is when we see Christ face to face, as John explains in:

*1Jn 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; **for we shall see him as he is.** (KJV)*

The perfect that comes, is Christ in all His glory, not the canon of Scripture. Right up till today we still only know in part. This is evidenced by the fact of the fragmented nature of the church. When we see Christ face to face then we will know all things as He knows us. Then those things which used to help us in our ignorance and weakness, like the spiritual gifts, will not be necessary anymore.

Some might respond, but why does that, which is intended to help us in our

ignorance, apparently cause even more confusion? Well, simply put; the gifts of the Spirit were not intended to be put on a stage for religious entertainment. The consequences of this misuse of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the promotion of man's agendas and the manipulation of Christians. These manifestations actually counterfeit the genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit. In marked contrast to this show, the correct use of the spiritual gifts enables the members of the body of Christ to minister to **one another** and to **spread the gospel**.

1. Leviticus 23:15-21 e-Sword 13.0.0
2. Justin Martyr - *Dialogue with Tryph*, trans. Rev. M. Dods, M.A., 87.1.0, 88.1.0, (ANT: 1), e-Sword 13.0.0
3. Irenaeus – *Against Heresies, Book 5*, trans. Rev. W.H. Rambaut, 6.1.0, (ANT: 1), e-Sword 13.0.0
4. Tertullian – *Against Marcion, Part 2, Book 5*, trans. Dr. Holmes, 8.1.0, (ANT: 3), e-Sword 13.0.0
5. Novatian - *Trinity Treatise*, trans. Rev. Robert Ernest Wallis, 28.1.0, (ANT: 5), e-Sword 13.0.0.
6. Eusebius Pamphilus: *Book 5 part 4*, trans. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., and Henry Wace, D.D., 21.2.29, (PNT: 1), e-Sword 13.0.0
7. Chrysostom: *Homilies on First and Second Corinthians*, edit. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., T&T Clark, Edinburgh, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 112.1.18 (NT: 12), e-Sword 13.0.0
8. ST. Augustine: *Homilies First John Six*, edit. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., T&T Clark, Edinburgh, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 17.02.5 (NT: 7), e-Sword 13.0.0

8.2: Tongues and Prophecy

Even though a number of spiritual gifts are listed by Paul in one Corinthians twelve, we see that when the saints were filled with the Spirit in the book of Acts this was generally manifested in two ways. That is, with prophecy and with tongues. We also see that Paul spent a whole chapter in one Corinthians fourteen to deal with prophecy and tongues. Why was that? What significance do prophecy and the gift of speaking in tongues have, that is not shared by the other spiritual gifts? Well, to answer this question, let's first look at how these two spiritual gifts functioned in the *ekklesia*:

*1Co 14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but **rather that ye may prophesy.** (KJV)*

So, according to Paul, what should we pursue and what should we desire? First of all, we need to pursue love, for that is the basis of ministering to one another, and then we should desire spiritual gifts. We should not only accept spiritual gifts in our meetings, but actually desire them, especially prophecy. Why prophecy? Well, Paul continues in:

*1Co 14:2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue **speaketh not unto men, but unto God:** for no man understandeth him; **howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.***

1Co 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

1Co 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. (KJV)

So why does prophecy seem so important? As this Scripture tells us, prophecy *edifies, exhorts and comforts men*. But there is something more. Prophecy literally means speaking by the inspiration of God. In other words, a prophet is a spokesperson for God. In contrast, when someone speaks in tongues, Paul wrote that that person: *“does not speak to men but to God”*, because no one understands the person who speaks in tongues. The person is speaking “mysteries” “in the spirit” as Paul puts it.

It seems as if Paul's explanation of tongues is a little confusing. If tongues are for personal edification, why would the Jews hear God being honoured, each in their own language, when the Spirit came upon the disciples for the first time, as we read in?

Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Act 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Act 2:6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

Act 2:7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

*Act 2:8 **And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?***

Act 2:9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

Act 2:10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

*Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, **we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.***

Act 2:12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? (KJV)

Before we delve into this matter, let us first explore a theory that was made popular by a so-called bishop named Thomas Aquinas in 1265AD. Aquinas apparently believed that the gift of tongues was given for the purposes of missionary work. He even explained that Christ did not have this gift because He only ministered to the Jews. He writes: "*nor does each one of the faithful now speak save in one tongue*"; ..."*no one speaks in the tongues of all nations, because the Church herself already speaks the languages of all nations*".¹

There are those today who hold to a variant of this belief, which is that speaking in tongues could still happen but only for the purpose of mission work. Yet this view contradicts Paul who specifically wrote, in:

*1Co 14:2 For he that speaketh in an unknown **tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God:** for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. (KJV)*

And again we read in:

*1Co 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue **edifieth himself**; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. (NJV)*

Tongues were not meant as a way to preach the gospel, but for personal edification. So how do we explain Acts 2, where the Jews who had returned to Israel from many regions, heard God being glorified, each in his own regional tongue? Well, Paul explains in:

*1Co 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, **except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.** (NJV)*

We need to understand that the word, tongues actually just means languages. When the Spirit was poured out on the church the disciples spoke in different languages. Only those who understood the tongue that was spoken were being edified. It's clear that those who do not understand the tongue would not be edified, as Paul explains, in:

1Co 14:6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

1Co 14:7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

1Co 14:8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

1Co 14:9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

1Co 14:10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

1Co 14:11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

1Co 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

1Co 14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. (KJV)

At Pentecost, when the Jews heard God being glorified each in their own

regional tongue, the writer shows us that they had not repented at that point. They might have been curious and some even mocked the phenomenon, but many of the Jews only converted when Paul preached the gospel afterwards in their common language. There is neither evidence nor example found in Scripture to suggest that tongues were a gift to use in missionary work or to preach the gospel. In that case, if the gift of tongues is not for missionary work, how does it edify the person who is speaking in tongues? Paul continues:

1Co 14:14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. (KJV)

What does Paul tell us happens when we pray in tongues? Our spirit prays, but our understanding is unfruitful. That means we won't have any comprehension of what we say when we pray in the Spirit. How does not understanding what we speak edify us? Paul writes something interesting in:

Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Rom 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (KJV)

It is as though Paul suggests that relying on the Spirit to give us words to pray beyond our understanding gives us an opportunity for our spirit to pray in the Spirit far above our natural abilities. So this gift allows us to be led by the Spirit in faith beyond our mere understanding. Paul continues to explain in:

1Co 14:15 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.

1Co 14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

1Co 14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. (KJV)

Have you noticed the difference Paul makes between praying in the spirit and praying with the understanding? Paul teaches that, should we pray in the Spirit then we and most probably those who hear us would NOT be able to understand what we say, because we would pray or sing in other languages. This is the

reason that Paul wrote that we can't just pray and sing **with the Spirit**, but that we also need to pray and sing **with the understanding**. Paul then continues to explain in:

1Co 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

1Co 14:19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

1Co 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. (KJV)

According to Scripture, what is more important in the gathering: speaking with the understanding or speaking with tongues? Speaking with the understanding is of greater importance in the church meeting. Paul makes it clear here that speaking in tongues (or other languages) is not meant to edify others unless there is an interpretation of those languages. So once again, we see no indication that this was a gift meant for missionary work.

I will repeat that tongues are for personal edification unless the utterance is interpreted so that the church understands what is being said. It's for personal edification because the person who speaks in tongues is learning to follow the leading of the Spirit in prayer in his or her own spirit, without having to lean on his or her own understanding.

Pro 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Pro 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (KJV)

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speaking_in_tongues

8.3: A Sign

Tongues were not only for personal edification. Tongues, as well as prophecy, were given to be signs. It is these signs that distinguish them from the other spiritual gifts. Paul writes further in:

1Co 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

1Co 14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. (KJV)

What is Paul referring to here? Well Paul was quoting from the book of Isaiah, in:

Isa 28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

Isa 28:12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

Isa 28:13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. (KJV)

So, in what way are tongues a sign for those that do not follow God's precepts? As we see from Scripture, things were not going well between God and Israel. Right from the time of Moses, God gave the Law and the prophets to guide Israel. Yet Israel steered away from God's Law and they turned their backs on the warnings of God's prophets. They were not willing to hear God speaking to them. So God foretold through Isaiah that He would speak to them in "another tongue" and "stammering lips". That which would have been rest and refreshing for them has become the sign that they would not hear God. When God judged Israel, He opened His Kingdom to believers from all nations and languages and so the manifestation of tongues became a sign of God's judgment on those who reject Him: **first for the Jews** and then for the Gentiles. So tongues became the indication of God's judgment on those who **do not** obey God's word. Prophecy, on the other hand, shows us that God is among His people, that the gap between us and God is dissolved. Paul explains this further, in:

1Co 14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all

Speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

1Co 14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

1Co 14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (KJV)

Isn't Paul contradicting what he has just taught: that prophecy is a sign for believers and tongues a sign for unbelievers? Not really; look carefully what Paul is saying. An unbeliever might be aware of God's presence with believers when they prophecy; but prophecy is a sign for believers that God is with them. We read that even unbelievers acknowledge that God is with believers, as the hearts of the unbelievers are exposed by the prophecy. So the acknowledgement of the unbelievers that God is there, is actually a sign of confirmation to the believers. But how can tongues then be a sign to unbelievers, if they mock this strange phenomenon? Well, Paul just explained two verses before, in:

1Co 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. (KJV)

The sign is that they will not hear God even if God speaks to them in other languages. This is exactly what happened at Pentecost:

Act 2:12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

Act 2:13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. (KJV)

Some of the Jews who witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church, recognized that tongues might be a sign. We are told this by their response: "Whatever could this mean?" The verse afterwards shows us that another group of Jews mocked the speaking of tongues by declaring the disciples to be drunk. Paul speaks of this kind of mockery, in:

1Co 14:23b ... will they not say that ye are mad? (KJV)

How could their own scornful response be a sign to them if they don't recognize the sign? Well you see, biblical signs do not have to be understood by those that

they are intended for, especially the signs that indicate God's judgment. For example, we read about the sign of the rainbow, in:

*Gen 9:13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a **token [sign]** of a covenant **between me and the earth.** (KJV)*

The sign of the rainbow is still a sign between God and earth even though you will be hard pressed today to find unbelievers recognising this to be a sign from God to the earth. Another example is when the Scribes and the Pharisees asked for a sign from Christ, Jesus answered them as we read in:

*Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, **An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:** (KJV)*

The Pharisees and Scribes never understood that the sign of Jonah had to do with Jesus's death and resurrection. Yet that was still a sign for their generation who did not understand that Jesus was the Christ. This is one of God's mysteries in the way He judges the unrighteous. Tongues are a sign of God's judgment on the unrighteous. It is a judgment from God that originated in Genesis eleven verse one to nine when God judged the people of the earth by dividing them by confusing their languages when they were building the tower of Babel.

Let me now go on to consider another aspect to the sign of prophecies and tongues. Prophecy and tongues also demonstrates sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. As said before, there are many Christians who believe that we are automatically filled with the Holy Spirit when we believe in Christ Jesus. Yet, does the Scripture teach this? The first time the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, we read in:

*Act 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, **they were all with one accord in one place.***

Act 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

Act 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

*Act 2:4 And they were all **filled with the Holy Ghost,** and began **to speak with other tongues,** as the **Spirit gave them utterance.** (KJV)*

What happened to them when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit? They

began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Let us read another account of the Spirit coming upon people:

*Act 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had **received the word of God**, they sent unto them Peter and John:*

*Act 8:15 Who, when they were come down, **prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:***

*Act 8:16 (**For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**)*

Act 8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. (KJV)

Did the people receive the Holy Spirit when they accepted the gospel that Philip preached and were baptised? No they only received the Holy Spirit when the apostles laid their hands on them some time afterwards. After this we read of a very interesting occurrence:

Act 8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

Act 8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

Act 8:20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (KJV)

Simon, who used to practise sorcery before his conversion to Christ, thought he could purchase the ability to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. What is interesting about this is the fact that there must have been some kind of manifestation, such as prophecy or speaking in tongues, that would make Simon want to be able to impart this kind of experience so much that he would pay for it. Now let us read:

Act 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Act 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

*Act 10:46 **For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.** Then answered Peter,*

*Act 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, **which***

have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? (KJV)

What happened while Peter was preaching the gospel to the Gentiles for the first time? The Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the word. How did those believers of the circumcision, who accompanied Peter, know that the Gentiles also received the Holy Spirit just as they did? They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God just as they did when the Spirit came upon them. Can we say that receiving the Holy Spirit is a result of being baptised? No, because these Gentiles were baptised only after they had received the Holy Spirit. Let's look at one more incident:

Act 19:1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

Act 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

Act 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Act 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

Act 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

*Act 19:6 And when **Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.***

Act 19:7 And all the men were about twelve. (KJV)

Is it true that all disciples have received the Holy Spirit? No; because Paul would not have asked those disciples whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, if receiving the Holy Spirit happens automatically when one believes in Jesus Christ for salvation. Could it not be possible that these were not actual disciples yet? The fact that the Scripture calls these men disciples means that these people *were* actually disciples. Also, Paul's question as to whether they had received the gift **when they believed**, indicates that it is *not* necessarily that believers receive the gift of the Spirit when they believe.

Some would ask then, whether these disciples received the Holy Spirit when they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus? No, because we read that they received the Holy Spirit only afterwards, when Paul laid his hands on

them. Finally, what happened to the disciples when they received the Holy Spirit? They prophesied and spoke in different tongues. So prophecy and tongues was a sign that the disciples had received the Holy Spirit. In the next section we will look at how one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

8.4: Receiving the Holy Spirit

So, what can we conclude from the book of Acts, concerning being filled with the Holy Spirit? Firstly, when the disciples did receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift manifested either through prophecy or tongues or both as they magnified God. Secondly, the disciples did not necessarily receive the Holy Spirit at the time of their conversion and baptism. This shows that just because one has become a Christian does not mean that one has received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is hard for Christians who have never had this kind of encounter with the Holy Spirit to accept. They believe that they have received the Holy Spirit as a matter of course, through their faith. This is based on the following passage of Scripture:

Joh 20:20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

*Joh 20:21 Then said Jesus to them again, **Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.***

*Joh 20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, **Receive ye the Holy Ghost:***

*Joh 20:23 **Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.** (KJV)*

The question is, did the disciples actually receive the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them? If they did receive the Holy Spirit then, why would Jesus say that He first needed to depart?

*Joh 16:7 **Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.** (KJV)*

Earlier on, Jesus also said:

*Joh 7:38 **He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.***

*Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: **for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.**) (KJV)*

Jesus had not departed from them nor had He been glorified at the point when He “breathed” on them. In that case, what did Christ mean by saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” when He breathed on them? The utterance “Receive the Holy Spirit” is in the imperative. In other words, Christ *was* giving them a command, but in a prophetic sense. Christ was enacting and preparing them for something which would need to happen to them in the near future. That is why Jesus, just before He ascended to heaven said the following to the disciples:

*Act 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but **wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.***

*Act 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; **but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.** (KJV)*

This leads us to the important question: how are we to be baptized in the Holy Spirit? We read the following passage in:

*Act 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.***

*Act 2:39 For the **promise** is unto you, and to your children, **and to all that are afar off,** even as many as the **Lord our God shall call.** (KJV)*

We know that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a promise from the Lord and it happens after we have repented and believed in Christ Jesus. So, if we want to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit what should we do then? Well, we don't always have to wait for some kind apostle to lay His hands on us, as we have already noticed with regards to the recorded examples in Acts. Jesus said the following in:

Luk 11:11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

Luk 11:12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

*Luk 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly **Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?** (KJV)*

What does Jesus say we should not be fearful of when we ask the Father for the Holy Spirit? We shouldn't fear that we'll receive something evil when we ask for

the Holy Spirit. God is a good Father and won't give us a demon, like some claim, when we ask for the Holy Spirit. But, what do we do with the fact that there are so-called Christians that go around prophesying and speaking in tongues, yet who show no spiritual fruit? Well, even in the Old Testament there are examples of those who prophesied and whom we would not consider righteous people. For instance, when King Saul was in rebellion against God, he sent messengers to get hold of David so he could kill him, as David was God's choice to be the new king of Israel. Look what happened next, in:

*1Sa 19:20 And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, **the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul,** and they also prophesied.*

*1Sa 19:21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, **and they prophesied likewise.** And Saul sent messengers again the third time, **and they prophesied also.** (KJV)*

We have to admit that this is not a very good environment for God's Spirit to come upon people. Yet this just demonstrates that God does what He wants irrespective of our spiritual performance. Either way, it's clear that prophecy was the evidence that the Spirit came upon people. Before Saul became king, Samuel said to him:

*1Sa 10:6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and **thou shalt prophesy** with them, **and shalt be turned into another man.***

*1Sa 10:7 And let it be, **when these signs are come unto thee,** that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee. (KJV)*

We see from Samuel's words that the Spirit would come upon Saul for the first time and then he would prophesy and would even be turned into another man. He would receive boldness just like the disciples did in the New Testament. What does Samuel call this manifestation? Samuel calls it "**these signs**", **so that he will know that God is with him.** Is that not interesting? Look what happened to Saul.

*1Sa 10:10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the **Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.***

1Sa 10:11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another,

What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? (KJV)

What is amazing is that even though the Spirit came upon Saul, and he was changed, he still fell away and rebelled against God later on. This proves that just because someone has received the Holy Spirit this does not make him or her incapable of falling into carnal behaviour such as jealousy, pride, lust in the flesh and rebellion against God. We need to realise that the gift of the Spirit is not the same thing as the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at the Lord's explanation of the work of the Holy Spirit:

*Joh 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, **the Comforter will not come unto you**; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

*Joh 16:8 And when he is come, **he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment**: (KJV)*

Does the world receive the Holy Spirit when He comes to convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment? Well Jesus said earlier:

*Joh 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter**, that he may abide with you for ever;*

*Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; **whom the world cannot receive**, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (KJV)*

So the Spirit does work in the world by convicting people of sin, righteousness and judgment, but on the other hand, the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. In the same way, there are disciples of Christ that have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, yet who sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and bear spiritual fruit, as we read in:

Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (KJV)

It might not be a good analogy, but consider that one can drink water to quench one's thirst, and one can also bath in water to wash oneself. These are two different experiences but the same water, and so it is with the Holy Spirit. First

of all, the Holy Spirit convicts all of us every day in our hearts as to how we should live under the lordship of Christ; which produces the fruit of the Spirit. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit also wants to fill us with His power; which produces the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Does this mean one should be able to speak in tongues or prophesy if one was baptised in the Holy Spirit? The Old Testament records the Spirit coming upon the elders of Israel in Sinai, in order for them to function in the task that God called them to do:

*Num 11:25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, **they prophesied, and did not cease.** [...and did not continue]¹. (KJV)*

What happened when the Spirit came upon the seventy elders of Israel in the time of Moses? They prophesied but only for that particular time. This means that the experience that you had when you were baptised in the Holy Spirit will not necessarily be repeated. Also, Paul asks the following rhetorical questions to help us understand something:

1Co 12:29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

1Co 12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? (KJV)

What was Paul getting at here? Well, Paul was asking these questions to illustrate the difference between the multiple parts of the body of Christ. He was teaching that just as each member of the body is different from another, so the gifts of the Holy Spirit are also differently distributed to each member. The answer to Paul's questions was intended to be in the negative, in that not all are prophets or teachers and neither do all have gifts of healing or are able to speak in tongues. It is very possible that some spoke in tongues or prophesied when they were baptised in the Holy Spirit but afterwards practised other gifts such as discernment or healing.

1. Insertion is mine for language clarification.

8.5: Practising Spiritual Gifts

Of all the spiritual gifts, prophecy and tongues were different in that they were a sign, as explained in the previous sections. They are a vehicle that God uses to speak to us, either through our understanding or in the Spirit. That is why they were the main expressions of the Spirit when the people were first filled with the Spirit. Paul continues his teaching on this in:

1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

1Co 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

1Co 14:28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. (KJV)

Spiritual gifts in the church are for the edification of all the members. The instruction quoted above was for an *ekklesia* gathering. In this passage, Paul stipulates that two, or at the most three, may speak to the fellowship in different types of languages but then someone *has to* interpret the languages. What should happen if there is no interpretation? Well, those who speak in tongues should not address their tongues to the fellowship but rather speak just to themselves and to God in those tongues. As we have already seen, tongues are for personal edification when we pray in the spirit. Tongues are the way in which the Spirit magnifies God and His deeds in various languages. However, if no one in the *ekklesia meeting* receives the interpretation of those praises in various languages then no one can be edified by the utterance and no one can say, "Amen".

Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. (KJV)

Continuing with the practice of prophecy, Paul writes:

1Co 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. (KJV)

So what is Paul saying about the practice of the gift of prophecy in the meetings? First of all, there should only be two or three persons speaking the oracles of God in turn in a meeting, while the others in the gathering should judge what they say. That means judging whether what the prophets are saying

is really from God or not, and secondly, deciding what the saints in the *ekklesia* gathering are going to do about this prophetic word. How much judging of prophecy happens in the institutional churches today? I am afraid very little, if any. Paul writes in:

1Th 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.

1Th 5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (KJV)

There seems to be a grey area with regard to quenching the Spirit and testing the Spirit in the church today. Some quench the Spirit but think that they are testing the Spirit while others allow carnal and even demonic manifestations for fear that they might quench the Holy Spirit. Why is that? Well, as I said before; when we are used to spectator oriented, programme led church meetings, you will find these two unbiblical opposing extremes.

Let's first deal with the carnal behaviour that comes about through these stage-performance style of church meetings. Spiritual gifts were not intended to be a performance. They were intended to be the ability of Christ's body to function as a body led by the Head, Jesus Christ. The spiritual gifts are for the purpose of ministering to the church's spiritual and physical well-being, so that the body of Christ will grow to maturity.

Stage performances in churches are more focused on the individual's needs than on the body of Christ. They focus on feelings and appearances and not necessarily the well-being of the body of believers. A popular example is the so-called "drunk in the Spirit" manifestations. People who are into getting drunk in the Spirit generally quote:

Act 2:13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. (KJV)

Yet it's clear from the context that the phrase, "...full of new wine" was meant as a mockery and not an indication of what happens to those who are filled with the Holy Spirit. Just think about it; was there any indication that the behaviour of the disciples resembled those who are drunk? No, it was the phenomenon of speaking in other languages that was being scorned.

What should we look for to discern which manifestations are from the Spirit of God and which are just carnal behaviour? Paul writes in:

1Co 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

1Co 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

*1Co 1:31 That, according as it is written, **He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.** (KJV)*

Jesus said in:

Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

*Joh 16:14 **He shall glorify me:** for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (KJV)*

The above passages make it clear that *no **flesh*** should receive glory in God's presence. In a performance based church the focus is on fleshly manifestations which have only entertainment value for those who are looking for the miraculous. These are carnal manifestations and even though they might be done using the name of Christ, they do not glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit seeks to glorify Christ and not Himself.

Quenching the Spirit and despising prophecies goes hand in hand. When we are more interested in motivational speaking, eloquent narrating, dealing with personal needs, sharing the latest theological fad, or dissecting Bible verses than we are about what God has to say, then we are quenching the Spirit.

Am I saying- that Scripture does not play that big a role? Of course not! Scripture is of the utmost importance. But Scripture must be used for what it is intended for, and not as a replacement for the Holy Spirit. The Bible was not meant to be used as a fortune cookie, in which to find a quick Scripture as a replacement for a real word of prophecy from God. The Bible is not some book of enchantment with magical powers. It is the historical account of saints and ordinary people, instructions from men of God, words of wisdom, words of praise to God and words from God. Each book of the Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit in order to help us to test what is and what is not from God. In other words, the Bible is the standard to be used to test the spirit and the hearts of men and women.

Some meetings in home churches can easily turn into book clubs. By that I mean that people come together to discuss the literal and figurative meanings of some

inspirational writings. They dissect the deeper meanings and how certain words affected them and perhaps inspired them. In itself this is not necessarily bad, but often this has taken the place of actually hearing what the Spirit has to say to the church. The Bible should be used to test whether what is being said is from the Spirit, but not to replace what the Spirit is saying. These kind of Spirit-led meetings are rare because of the widespread inability of the church to hear the Spirit of God.

Paul continues to write in:

1Co 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

1Co 14:30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

*1Co 14:31 **For ye may all prophesy one by one**, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*

1Co 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. (KJV)

In an *ekklesia* gathering there might be two or even three prophets who might bring a specific word from the Lord. As the others judge this word someone else may bring forth an additional *word*. In that case, Paul says that the first speaker or speakers need to give an opportunity for this additional word; as all may prophecy one by one and be encouraged and learn what the Spirit has to say.

The passages that follow on from verse thirty three deal with women speaking in church. We'll look at this in more detail in the next chapter. Paul wraps up his teaching on spiritual gifts by saying:

1Co 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

1Co 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order. (KJV)

I want to stress the point again, about the general inability of the church to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. An *ekklesia* church shouldn't meet to just discuss the latest doctrinal fad, share feelings, or chat about whatever comes to mind. It is about *Christ* conducting a meeting with His elect about *His Kingdom*. For that very reason we should earnestly desire to prophesy, so we can hear what our King and Saviour have to say to us. We should also not prevent speaking in tongues as long as it is followed by interpretation.

When each member of the body comes together for the Lord's Supper, this

uniting brings about a special communion with the Head that is not possible apart from each other. Yes, each one of us should learn to hear the Spirit speak to us individually in our private times with the Lord. But there's another dimension of communion with the Lord that is only possible when we gather together. However, that dimension can only be accessed when we are conscious of Christ's presence, and our hearts are expecting to hear from Him as His body. This should be the time and place where men and women stop talking so as to give space for the Spirit to talk in, through and to the church. It is holy, it is powerful, it is joyful, and sometimes with tears in our eyes we know we are at the feet of Jesus. It is a place where the showmanship of the flesh will be too embarrassed to parade itself.

The next section will be even tougher to get through, but it is important to persevere, as I believe our understanding of this will help us to get closer to becoming the kind of fellowships who hear their Lord speaking to them. I pray that as you become the expression of the church that Christ is building that you will submit to Christ in all things, as He desires to interact with the body, His bride, the house of God. We remind you that none of these teachings should be enforced on others, but by grace and patience, study these topics together with the family of God, until the Holy Spirit brings you to a consensus about how to go further as a fellowship on this journey.

Chapter 9: Church Covering

9.1: Christ and the Church

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for the church to do is to hear what the Lord has to say to the church. We are so man centred, and focus so naturally on man's needs, that we are unable to just be quiet and hear what the head – Christ - has to say to His body. It actually goes deeper than that, we don't even know how to function in the church with Christ being the actual head of the church. This is demonstrated by the relationship between men and women in the church.

The interwoven relationship between Christ and man through the church is so magnificent and beyond the realm of our senses that one is left without adequate words to express this relationship. However, the Holy Spirit is able to bring revelation through mere human words. Therefore, I would ask you, earnestly, to seek to understand above and beyond my weak attempts to describe the church that is beyond our imagination. If you only consider *my words*, without seeking revelation from the Lord, you will be left with questions and doubts and be unable to really grasp the accomplishment of Christ on Calvary.

The following topics I am dealing with are quite sensitive even among those who already practise the *ekklesia* church. So, for that reason, do not take my teachings as your complete guide to function in a biblical church. Never ever force or manipulate people to practise the things I am dealing with in this part of the series. Also do not even attempt to implement these views without first having a revelation from the Holy Spirit and reaching a consensus in your fellowship over these issues. This could take longer than you would like, but so be it. It should be Christ who builds His church and not our feeble understanding of what church is.

The way we conduct our meetings is the visual representation of our relationship with Christ. Visual representations can be very powerful catalysts for growth in our understanding, our emotions, and our implementation of truth. We can see this, for instance, in the bread we break, which represents Christ's body and the cup we drink which represents Christ's blood. These representations go even deeper, as we saw in the chapter five called: Church Fellowship. In this teaching we are going to look at another and very important visual representation that has to do with Christ and the church.

To understand the relationship between Christ and the church and how it

influences our meetings and our day to day lives, we need to look at some very interesting truths found in the mystery of the Gospel. One of the great mysteries of life is the question: Why were we created? Atheists, obviously, do not have an answer for this question. Yet there seems to be a great variety of answers to this question, even from those in the Christian faith. Many of the answers that Christians give to this question can be traced back to the focus and priorities that Christians have in their lives. With some colourful interpretation of Scripture, anyone can find a justification for their answer.

Given all the answers that Christians supply to the question, “Why were we created”, would you allow me to point to some key passages in Scripture that you might never have noticed? You will see that these passages give us a perspective that is not man-centred but rather, Christ-centred, in helping us answer this question. Paul writes in:

*Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, **and for him**: (KJV)*

According to this passage, through whom are all things made? All things were made through Jesus Christ. Fair enough, but if all things were made through Christ; then for **whom** were all things made? All things were not only created through Christ but were actually created **FOR** Christ. Christ is not only the source of all things - Christ is also the reason and goal of all things. The purpose of every single thing that is created is therefore Christ. Whatever the will of God may be, it has its destiny and purpose in Christ. The author of Hebrews writes about it like this:

*Heb 2:10 For it became him, **for whom are all things**, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (KJV)*

Paul writes in a similar vein, in:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

*Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things **he might have the preeminence**. (KJV)*

If all things have their purpose in Christ, would you say that the church has its purpose in us or in Christ? Think about it; Christ is the Head of the church, and through the church Christ may have pre-eminence over all. So the purpose of

the church is not us, but Christ having pre-eminence over all. Paul demonstrates this pre-eminence through a visual representation of Christ and the church in the following analogy:

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Eph 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Eph 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

Eph 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Eph 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (KJV)

So, what has Paul written about the relationship between Christ and the church? He compares this relationship to that of a husband and wife. Now, look how Paul unfolds this visual representation further:

Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

*Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: **but I speak concerning Christ and the church.** (KJV)*

What is the great mystery that Paul is referring to concerning Christ and the church? Well, the fact that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife to become one with her. This mystery has its very basis in Christ and the church. What was Paul getting at? Well, Paul was referring to a prophetic word, in:

Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Gen 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field,

and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

*Gen 2:20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; **but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.***

Gen 2:21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

Gen 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

*Gen 2:23 And Adam said, **This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.***

*Gen 2:24 **Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.** (KJV)*

Here is an interesting question to consider with regards to this passage of Genesis. When God declared it was not good for man to be alone, what did God do first?

1. God formed a woman.
2. God first looked to see what Adam would call the animals.

Isn't it interesting that God would first see what Adam would call the animals when He confirmed that it was not good for man to be alone? What did Adam realise when he gave all the animals names? Well, that among all the animals there was no helper for him that was comparable to him. What is the significance of this, you might wonder? Well, a study of Jewish tradition reveals that animals symbolise nations and their religious belief systems.

Are you starting to see where this is leading yet? So how was Eve formed? Adam was put into a deep sleep and a rib was taken from his side. Woman was now bone of man's bone and flesh of man's flesh. Woman was of man's essence.

How does this relate to Christ and the church? Think about it. From all the nations and religions that exist, none are suitable to be a companion for God's Son. They are all man-made institutions. In other words, they were mere animals by comparison to Christ. None of them are of Christ's kind or of Christ's essence.

Christ had to die; also referred to as a deep sleep; to purchase the bride with His blood. It is as if something was taken out of Christ as the soldier pierced His side. Blood and water spilled out of the side of Christ and so did something of His

essence. Christ left God the Father, and Israel, that is referred to as a harlot mother, to be joined to a bride that is spirit of His Spirit and essence of His essence.

Just like Eve who was taken out of Adam, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the church came out of Christ, life of His life and spirit of His Spirit. The church can therefore not be some man-made institution or religion. The church is something spiritual and something eternal. It is something that has Christ's likeness and essence. The church is something that belongs only to Christ. It is something that should subject herself to Christ alone.

9.2: The Bride of Christ

The nature of a religion is comparable to that of an animal. It is produced by the animal instincts of self-preservation and self-rule. Even though religion is based on worshipping a god or following a guru, it is actually centred on man and how the religion benefits him. The bride of Christ is to be Christ-centred. As woman was made for man so the church was made for Christ. Church practice should therefore be a representation of being Christ-centred and not man-centred. The snake, the most cunning of all animals, is at war against the second Adam who is Christ and the second Eve called the church.

One of the most controversial subjects, when it comes to church practice, is the role women play in the church gathering. Ironically, it is this controversial subject of the woman's role in the church, that really exposes the religious, beastly, carnal human nature, that has infiltrated the church.

Paul gives the following instruction to Timothy when it came to church order:

*1Ti 2:11 Let the woman **learn in silence** with **all subjection**.*

*1Ti 2:12 But I **suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence**.*

1Ti 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

*1Ti 2:14 And **Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived** was in the transgression. (KJV)*

The word authority in this passage is the Greek word *authentain*. This word is only used this way, in the whole of the New Testament. The Vines Dictionary explains that the word comes from two words. Firstly, the word *autos* which means self, and secondly, a lost noun *hentes*, which could be translated as either working or having dominion.¹ The word *authentain* therefore combines the ideas of having dominion and working according to one's own efforts. It implies that if a woman teaches in church, it's as if she's establishing her own work or authority. In a way, if a woman teaches the men in the *ekklesia* gathering it appears that the church is teaching Christ!

But what is Paul getting at here, and what has that got to do with Eve being deceived as opposed to Adam who rebelled? Satan deceived Eve whereas Adam willingly, with full understanding, subjected himself to the women's will and ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. For this very reason, God set the following consequences in motion:

Gen 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and **thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.**

Gen 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Gen 3:18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

Gen 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (KJV)

Some would ask, but has Christ not delivered us from the curse that was bestowed on Adam and Even? Well, Christian women still have pain in childbearing and men still have to work to eat. Then we should conclude that Christ's deliverance did not deal with the physical consequences of Adam and Eve's sin. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that woman's desire for her husband has suddenly disappeared and that man does not rule her.

So, let's look at the meaning of the statement that her desire shall be for her husband. Any person with a little bit of common sense will say that there are as many husbands who desire their wives as there are wives that desire their husbands. On the flipside, there are wives and husbands who have no desire for their spouses as well. Surely we need to question our understanding of "desire shall be for..."?

When we look at another verse, one chapter further on, we have more light as to the implication of the words "desire for...":

Gen 4:6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

Gen 4:7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. **And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.** (KJV)

What was sin's desire for Cain? Sin's desire was to control Cain, but God commanded him to rule over it. In the same way the desire of women spoken of earlier, was to control man, but in the same way man should rule over her. Adam sinned because he subjected himself to woman's will as opposed to

obeying God. So now, he will rule her as Cain had to rule sin.

Part of women's natural instinct is to feel safe and secure, especially when she is deceived; she then tries to take control of the environment that affects her security. For that reason, a woman desires to control men, in order for her to feel safe. So the epic battle is for women to try and control their husbands while the husbands will rule over them. Through sin, a woman manipulates and drains her husband by her constant desire to control him. Through sin, man misuses his responsibility to rule and protect his wife with love, and starts abusing her.

Strangely, there are some comparisons in the relationship between a husband and wife to that of Christ and the church. Christ for His part, loves, cares, protects and has given His life for the church, yet the church still battle to subject themselves to Christ. They still want to control Christ with their programmes and their personal agendas. The church is constantly giving their own opinions and even dictates to Christ as to what He should do, while most are unable to learn in silence from Him. We read in the previous section this passage of Scripture:

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

*Eph 5:24 Therefore **as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.** (KJV)*

When the church comes together for an *ekklesia* meeting, the husbands are symbolically representing Christ and the wives are symbolically representing the church. Paul addresses this when he explains why women are to learn in silence and are not permitted to teach men, in:

1Ti 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. (KJV)

Paul makes it even clearer in:

1Co 11:8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

*1Co 11:9 **Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.** (KJV)*

Man was not created for woman, but woman for man, so by the same analogy, Christ's existence is not for the church, but the church's existence is for Christ. As Christ is the head of the church so is the husband the head of the wife. If this

is the case, why would Paul seem to be so chauvinistic, when he clearly teaches in:

*Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither **male nor female**: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (KJV)

Paul was *not* contradicting himself, but was dealing with two different aspects of our walk in Christ. In the letter to the Galatians Paul was talking about our inheritance, that of being *one* in Christ. The promise is about being justified before God. All of us have obtained Christ's justification whether we are slaves or free in this world, whether we are male or female, whether we are Jew or Greek. Yet our justification in Christ does not nullify our role and calling regarding the manner in which we function in the church of Christ. Even though we are justified in Christ, the husband still has to love his wife, and the wife still has to subject herself to her husband.

Paul continues his instruction to Timothy and writes:

*1Ti 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be **saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.** (KJV)*

In the time when Paul wrote about the role of women in the church, one of the most popular religions was the worshipping of Diana. Diana; also known as the queen of the heavens, was the goddess of fertility. In those days, women had only a fifty-fifty chance of survival during childbearing, so Diana had a great following of pregnant women and their husbands. At Ephesus in Ionia (Turkey), her temple became one of the Seven Wonders of the World.²

Greek mythology describes how Diana requested her father, Jupiter, to give her six wishes. Two of Diana's requests indicated her spirit of independence and of claiming gender equality. These two requests were that she would have eternal virginity and that she would have a silver bow and arrow for hunting like her twin brother, Apollo. It was this spirit of independence and of claiming gender equality that stirred many women followers to question their role in a society that was generally governed by men. One can assume that this spirit of independence and striving for gender equality influenced the women in the church as well, in Paul's time.

So, it should be clear why Paul would emphasize that women would be saved in childbearing if they continued in faith, love, holiness and self-control. Paul was NOT talking about women's spiritual salvation here, as spiritual salvation has nothing to do with bearing children. The word saved here is the Greek word *sozo*.³ The word literally meant to be delivered from danger. Paul was addressing the fears of the women who clung to Diana to be delivered from the high mortality rate during childbearing. In other words, Paul was teaching women to rather trust in Christ, showing this in their faith, love, holiness and self-control, in order to be saved in childbearing, as opposed to trusting in the *goddess* Diana.

Diana was the symbol of independence and gender equality. This is the opposite of what the church is to be. The church is to be very dependent on Christ and submissive, learning with a quiet and peaceful spirit.

1. Vine's New Testament "authority", e-Sword 13.0.0

2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_(mythology)); Acts 19:24-35

3. Vine's New Testament "saved", e-Sword 13.0.0

9.3: Learn in Silence.

I have to acknowledge that the discussion on the roles of women and men, have led to a lot of abuse in the church. Without respect and love from both sides, any theology will end up in abuse, manipulation and disrespect. Husbands are to love their wives like Christ loves the church, and women are to be subject to their husbands as the church is to be subject to Christ. That is their role to demonstrate the relationship between Christ and the church. It has nothing to do with gender equality or male chauvinism. It has to do with the purpose of our existence which is Christ in all, above all and through all.

The reality is that when women understand who they are in Christ, and that they are safe and secure in Him, they have no need to find their relevance by participating in the meeting like the men. Their significance is in who they are in Christ, and not in what they do for Christ. Their role in the church does not determine their standing with the Lord. Their function in the church is about who they are, more than in what they do. Let us repeat Paul's words in:

*1Ti 2:12 But I **suffer not a woman to teach**, nor **to usurp authority over the man**, but to **be in silence**. (KJV)*

The word silence in this passage is the Greek word *hysuxiai*, which, according to the Greek-English Lexicon has a focus upon an attitude ¹. For example, in Acts twenty two verse two, when Paul addressed them in Hebrew, the people became even '**quieter**' – Greek: *hysuxiai*. This means that the women were not necessarily dead quiet, but it rather denotes an attitude of being still, such as *not* entering into a debate with the man who is teaching.

Gender roles were not only an issue in the church, but in the whole Roman and Greek world at the time of the apostles. Historians confirm that the Roman and Greek *ekklesia* were meetings where the men discussed and made decisions concerning the affairs of state. ² Women's influences in those meetings were through their husbands or the other men in their immediate family. We see this mirrored in Paul's instruction, in:

1Co 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

1Co 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

1Co 14:35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

1Co 14:36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

1Co 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. (KJV)

Some would say that this command was only given because of the culture of that place and time, and that it was only given to the Corinthian church, because the women there spoke too much. Others claim it was due to temple worship where some women who participated in this idol worship were temple prostitutes who shaved their hair. Even though cultural influences played a role in what Paul wrote, it was not for the reason that most claim. I'll go a little deeper into this a little later. For now, I will only say that these explanations of this passage do not actually correlate with what Paul was saying in the text.

The translators did not do a good job of cleaning up the confusion either. For instance, in the King James Version we have a sentence in verse thirty-three which ends with the words: *'...but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.'*

Verse thirty-four then starts with a new sentence: *'Let your women keep silent in the churches...'*

This is one of the most badly translated passages in most English translations, and was not done very honestly. In the original text the second sentence actually started after a comma, not a full stop! In other words, verse thirty-three should read: *'As in all churches the women should be quiet...'*. This fact can be verified by McReynolds "Tyndale Greek English New Testament". This is clearly not a mere cultural instruction to the Corinthian church, but a practice in all the churches.³

Nevertheless, Paul writes in:

1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (KJV)

Why would Paul say that when we come together each of us would have something to contribute, if women are not allowed to speak? There are a couple

of things to consider here though. One could say that Paul was addressing the brethren and not the sisters in the church. Yet the fact is that brethren in some instances in Scripture not only means the brothers, but also includes sisters. However, if we say that verse twenty six refers to both men and women participating in the gathering, then one would conclude that Paul contradicted himself in verse thirty-four which states that women were not allowed to speak in the gathering. Before we look at this further, let us first deal with what Paul said, just earlier on, to the Corinthian Church:

1Co 11:5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. (KJV)

In Paul's instruction to the Corinthian Church concerning the manner as to how women were to prophecy and pray, we see that Paul does acknowledge women prophesying and praying. The question here then is: whether Paul is talking of a church gathering or not? Paul writes further in:

1Co 11:15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

1Co 11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

*1Co 11:17 **Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.***

1Co 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. (KJV)

We read here that the context of Paul teaching or declaring these things to them refers to when the church comes together. So it seems that the women who prophesied and prayed in this passage did so in the church meetings. The fact that it is God's will that women should prophesy, is confirmed in:

Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

Act 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: (KJV)

This was Peter's message as he quoted the book of Joel when the Spirit was poured out upon the disciples that were gathered together in prayer as the Lord

had commanded them. Prophecy is not only intended for men but for women as well. Prophecy means speaking on God's behalf under the influence or inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So it should not be any surprise that women would prophesy in the *ekklesia* meetings also. We read in:

Act 21:8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

*Act 21:9 And the same man had **four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.** (KJV)*

So what are we to understand: women are not allowed to speak, but are allowed to prophesy in the meeting? But how are they to prophesy without speaking? It is possible, if one understands that prophesying is not man speaking but God speaking through His vessel. So when women prophesy it is *not* women speaking, but God speaking through a vessel of His choosing. When women pray they are not praying as themselves but as the church to God.

The Greek word for "silent" that Paul uses in one Corinthians fourteen verse thirty-four is: *sigao* and means **to keep one's peace.**⁴ The Greek word to "talk" in the same passage is: *laleo* which, in certain occasions, is used to mean **to speak out about.**⁵ In this context Paul was teaching how prophecy should be used in the gathering, and that the church ought to judge the prophecies. From my understanding, Paul was instructing the women to keep their peace concerning the prophecy and not to verbalize their judgment or speak out in judgment in the meeting with regards to the prophecies. You see when Paul writes in:

1Co 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. (KJV)

There is nothing written in the Old Testament Torah that speaks of women speaking in the judicial gathering. The law that Paul is referring to was the law within Roman/Greek world. To make sure there is harmony kept in the home, Paul is using the civil law as a guideline of judicial gatherings, which women are not to engage in a debate with the men in the meeting when making judgments in the *ekklesia* gathering.

Women are to learn in peace and are not to teach in the *ekklesia* gathering.

Women giving their own views, questioning the men that are teaching or vocalizing their judgment on prophecies, actually depict a church not willing to be subjected to the covering and headship of Christ. On the other hand, when a woman prophesies she is the vessel of God speaking the oracles of God and not man's opinions. Does this mean women ought never to teach? I will attempt to answer this question in the next two sections.

1. Greek-English Lexicon, (33.119), 402
2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_\(ancient_Greece\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_(ancient_Greece)), 16 May 2021.
3. Tyndale Greek English New Testament, (1Co. 14:33-34), 631
4. Vine's New Testament "silent", e-Sword 13.0.0
5. Vine's New Testament "talk", e-Sword 13.0.0

9.4: Covering.

So, let me summarise. There is a difference in the way women minister in the *ekklesia* gathering to that of women spreading the gospel, outside the *ekklesia* gathering. Outside the *ekklesia* gathering there is no symbolic representation necessary, so there is no difference in the ministry of men and women. However, the marriage and the *ekklesia* gathering represent the mystery of Christ and the church. The gathering has to demonstrate Jesus Christ being the head and covering of His bride the church. As we have said before, the relationship between men and women is to represent the relationship between Christ and the church. The way the men and women participate in the meeting is therefore a direct representation of how the church relates to Christ.

Let me repeat Paul's words in:

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. (KJV)

With this in mind, let us look at Paul's instruction concerning the head covering:

1Co 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. (KJV)

Before we read on, we can see that Paul is setting the basis for the instructions that are to follow. First, Paul praises the Corinthians for following the ordinances/traditions as he delivered to them. This in itself demonstrates that there is nothing wrong with tradition as long as it does not contradict or hinder us from obeying the word of God. Better yet, we should follow the traditions when they are inspired by the Holy Spirit and set forth by the apostles. In another instance, Paul writes:

2Th 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. (KJV)

Then Paul goes so far as to say, in:

2Th 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. (KJV)

On that basis, Paul wants us to understand the head covering, as he continues:

1Co 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (KJV)

There's a clear order that Paul is setting out here. What is interesting to note is that the head of the church is not a man but Christ. The only covering of the church is not an institution or organization, but Christ. He is the only head and covering of the church. With this, Paul teaches us that as God is the head of Christ, and Christ is the head of the church, so is man the head of woman. So from this point Paul continues.

1Co 11:4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

1Co 11:5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

1Co 11:6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

1Co 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

1Co 11:8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

1Co 11:9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

*1Co 11:10 For this cause ought the **woman to have power on her head** because of the angels. (KJV)*

Up to this point it seems clear that Paul is teaching that women should have her head covered when she prays and prophecies. There are a couple of misconceptions that I will need to clear up before we continue. Many ancient religions, and Judaism, practised the veiling of women. It is a core practice of the Islamic faith today. Yet many of those practices are based on the belief that it is essential to cover up the women's beauty in order to prevent the men from falling for their allure, or from being distracted from worship.

This same belief has infiltrated the institutional church, almost from the conception of the institutional church. So one still finds some churches today where women have to wear some kind of hat right through the so-called worship service. Yet, was Paul really trying to keep the men from being distracted by the women's allure?

First of all, Paul was not dealing with a worship service, but a judicial *ekklesia* gathering. There is nothing written here that women should have their heads covered during the whole meeting, as practised in some traditional churches today. Paul only speaks of the authority (KJV reads ‘power’) a woman should wear when she would prophecy or pray.

Secondly, Paul’s instruction is not culturally bound as some people claim. Paul did address the issue of heathen temple prostitutes that would have shaved their hair in those days, yet this only deals with the shame of women who shaved their hair. That is why as we read in verse five, it would have been a shameful thing in the Corinthian church for women to have had their heads shaved. Paul was saying that it was the women who do not want to be shamed with a shaven head, that need to have their heads covered should they pray or prophecy.²

However, temple prostitution was not the reason that Paul gave why women should wear a covering when she prophesied or prayed in the *ekklesia* meeting. In verse ten, Paul writes that a woman should have authority on her head because of the angels. What does the covering (that indicates authority) have to do with the angels? As you know the *ekklesia* gatherings are Kingdom gatherings and deal with God’s Kingdom, so it should be of no surprise that angels will be present. For that reason, the angels who are the protectors of the throne of God, are witnesses as to how we represent Christ’s glory here on earth in our judicial *ekklesia* gatherings.

Man is not to be glorified, but Christ is to be glorified. Let me say again, church has to do with Christ and not us. As man is to demonstrate Christ’s glory, he should not cover his head, but because woman demonstrates man’s glory she should cover her head. I’m repeating this to stress the point: the reason women have to cover their heads is to cover *man’s glory*, as only *Christ’s glory* is to be seen in the *ekklesia* meeting, in the sight of man and of the angels.

2Co 10:17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (KJV)

Now let us continue with Paul’s teaching to a place where it gets a bit tricky:

1Co 11:11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

1Co 11:12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

1Co 11:13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

1Co 11:14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

1Co 11:15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

1Co 11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

1Co 11:17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. (KJV)

From verse eleven Paul is clarifying the point that woman is created for man, but that man is not independent of woman since he is born of her and neither is woman independent of man as his seed is where life originates. Yet all things actually originate from God. Paul is arguing here that both women and men are dependent on one another and on God.

Then Paul moves on by stating that long hair is woman's glory in the same way that long hair would dishonour a man. The issue comes from the fact that Paul is saying that the woman's hair is given to her as a covering. This does seem to throw a spanner in the works. Yet, when one looks at the Greek words that Paul uses, one does understand this better. When Paul talks of a woman needing to cover her head in verse six, he uses the Greek word *katakalupto*, which literally means: to cover up or to cover oneself as one would with a veil.³ In contrast, when Paul speaks of woman's hair having been given to her as a covering in verse fifteen, he uses the Greek word "*peribolaion*, which literally means: something thrown around like one would with a mantle.⁴ The picture of a mantle has to do with **displaying** of glory and not a **covering up** of glory. In other words, Paul is just reaffirming the fact that should a woman pray and prophecy in a gathering she should cover her glory, that is, her hair, as a sign that she is under authority. A woman's hair is her glory, just like a wealthy man would wear a mantle to display his glory. The hair is not the covering of her head, but a mantle of glory that she would need to cover when she prays or prophecy in the meeting.

The head covering demonstrates an important spiritual truth about the church. The head covering demonstrates the church being subjected to Christ's headship. This is the church that does not glorify in man, but glorifies in Christ alone. To show this, man's glory is covered by the woman wearing a head covering and Christ's glory is shown by the man having his head uncovered.

Some people state that Paul's instruction is not just for the meeting but should be practised in all situations. However, as we saw earlier on, Paul writes this in:

1Co 11:17 *Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, **that ye come together** not for the better, but for the worse. (KJV)*

In conclusion, should one want to take Paul's instructions literally, one could actually put another spanner in the works. If long hair is woman's glory, what happens if a woman cuts her hair short, would she still need a head covering? Keep in mind that in today's culture it is not shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short as a short hair style does not represent temple prostitution as it did then to the Corinthian church. For Paul writes:

1Co 11:6 *For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. (KJV)*

Well that is between her and her husband. The answer to that I will leave for you to receive from the Lord.

1. Tyndale Greek English New Testament, (1Co. 14:33-34), 631

2. <https://biblethingsinbibleways.wordpress.com/2018/05/21/corinthian-prostitution-headcoverings-and-authority/>, 5 June 2021

3. Vine's New Testament "cover, covering", e-Sword 13.0.0

4. Vine's New Testament "cover, covering", e-Sword 13.0.0

9.5: Women Leading

Wearing a head covering and having a quiet spirit in the meetings is much more significant than just having a symbol on a women's head when she prays or prophecies. It talks of the church's attitude of being under Christ. We are so used to a man-centred church that concentrates on man's needs as opposed to being Christ-centred in dealing with God's Kingdom and His glory in and through Christ, that it's hard for us to grasp this.

The whole issue of how women participate has to do with how the bride of Christ, the church, learns to be quiet before the Lord. There is nothing wrong with sharing views and discussing issues, and teaching from Scripture. Yet above all of these things, the church needs to listen what the Lord has to say. The Lord wants to speak through the prophets and prophetesses. That will only happen when the church learns to become quiet before the Holy Spirit in order to hear the voice of the Lord.

If the Holy Spirit chooses to use women vessels, then we should not hinder this, because who are we to go against God's will? Saying this, I do believe that we need to indicate that the church should cover its own glory and in that case the women demonstrate this as follows:

- 1) Women are not to teach in the *ekklesia* gathering, but are free to teach outside the gathering, as needed.
- 2) Women are not to discuss issues or debate and ask questions in the *ekklesia* gathering, but rather should do this outside the *ekklesia* gathering and involve her husband, if he is a believer.
- 3) Women should not verbalize their judgment of prophecy in the *ekklesia* gathering, however, they have the rest of the week to bring their concerns to the church.
- 4) Nevertheless, a woman is encouraged to speak up when she has a word or vision from the Lord, while covering her glory (her hair) in the *ekklesia* gathering.
- 5) Women are encouraged to pray, as long it is not focused on herself but is for the benefit of the whole church, while she covers her glory.

I have found that this practice will lead the whole church, men and women, to understand what it means to be under the headship of Christ. It will also cut down any useless babbling about unimportant issues and the affairs of this world. This will help the church to focus on what the Lord has to say concerning the affairs of His Kingdom.

This leads us to the topic of women leading the church. So the question often arises as to whether a woman can lead the church. In order to answer the question correctly, we first need to establish what is meant by leading. As I have often pointed out in earlier chapters, that leading is not the same as managing. Managing is about creating boundaries, controlling and even dictating to others. Jesus as the Head of the church is the only one that is allowed to manage His church, because we all belong to Him and no other. In contrast, the Spirit might call people to lead the church in a certain direction. Leading has to do with inspiring and motivating a group of people to move towards a shared goal. Within a church we have but one goal and that is Jesus Christ. So the Spirit calls people to lead, that is, to inspire and direct the church in various ways according to the will of the Lord. So from that standpoint, are women allowed to lead the church? We already looked at Paul's instruction to Timothy in:

1Ti 2:11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

*1Ti 2:12 But **I suffer not a woman to teach**, nor to **usurp authority over the man**, but to **be in silence**. (KJV)*

The context of Paul's instruction seems to point to scenarios where men and women come together, as he speaks of men praying with their hands in the air, and dealing with how women ought to adorn themselves. Now making that assumption can be a stretch if one is to take that passage in isolation. However, in the New Testament, there are instances where women did teach men, for instance, in:

Act 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

*Act 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, **they** took him unto them, **and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly**. (KJV)*

Aquila and Priscilla were a husband and wife team spreading the gospel. They taught the way of the Lord more accurately to Apollos. Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, was therefore also teaching Apollos. How is this possible, when Paul instructed Timothy that women are not to teach men? Well simply put, this was not a church gathering. Preaching the gospel and teaching new converts was done outside the *ekklesia* gathering, so it was not unusual for women to do this

as well. This fact is confirmed by Paul's making mention of women helping him in spreading the gospel, in:

*Php 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help **those women which laboured with me in the gospel**, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. (KJV)*

So it is clear that women are also to lead people to the Lord, just as men do. Part of leading includes teaching. It was an excepted practice that women led the church, or else we would not have had the instance in Revelation where the woman named Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, led men into error such as sexual immorality.

*Rev 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which **calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols**. (KJV)*

This might not be a very good example of a prophetess, but it does show us an accepted practice in the church of the New Testament. Jezebel was reprimanded not because she prophesied or taught, but for seducing and teaching the servants of God to commit sexual immorality. Keep in mind that Jezebel likely spoke in the church meeting as though it was a word from God, and outside the meetings she taught some members of the church. She would only have been able to do this, if it was an accepted practice for women to do so. If women were not allowed to prophesy, in the gathering, or teach outside the *ekklesia* meetings, how would she have been able to accomplish that deception in the first place?

I've heard someone say that that proves that women should not lead in teaching or prophesying to the church, because she would lead the church astray. That does not seem to be a consistent argument, because, when studying Scripture, we see that most of the deception that the apostles had to combat, came from men. So, the idea that women, rather than men, will be deceived, is not a valid argument for a woman not being able to lead the church.

Paul speaks of a servant (a deacon) of the church, who was a woman called Phoebe, in the following exhortation:

*Rom 16:1 I commend unto you **Phebe our sister**, which is a **servant [diakonos]** of the church which is at Cenchrea:*

*Rom 16:2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, **and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.***

*Rom 16:3 Greet **Priscilla and Aquila my helpers** in Christ Jesus:*

Rom 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. (KJV)

So it's clear that women may lead the church in many ways, according to the Scriptural examples of leading. I repeat, leading is about people leading other people to the Lord. The issue is therefore not whether or not they are allowed to lead the church, but rather in what manner they lead the church. The manner in which women lead the church also varies whether it has to do with in the *ekklesia* gathering or outside the *ekklesia* gathering.

Besides the New Testament example we also see God using women to lead His people towards His will, in the Old Testament as well. For instance, we read in.

*Jdg 4:4 And Deborah, a **prophetess**, the wife of Lapidoth, **she judged Israel at that time.***

*Jdg 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of **Israel came up to her for judgment.***

Jdg 4:6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

Jdg 4:7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

Jdg 4:8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

*Jdg 4:9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; **for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.** And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. (KJV)*

Many Jews will tell you that they still reflect each year at Purim on the story of Esther who put her life on the line to save Israel. I don't have the space to reflect on all the examples, but I'm sure you get the picture.

It has been asked whether women are allowed to lead in the role of Elders /

Overseers (bishop)? The thing about elders is they ought to be able to teach in the church:

1Ti 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

1Ti 3:3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

1Ti 3:4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

1Ti 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (KJV)

Even though women did teach, but as explained already, they were not to teach in the *ekklesia* gathering. Being an elder/overseer one needs to teach in the *ekklesia* gathering when required. Furthermore there are no examples from Scripture where women were appointed to be an elder/overseer, as seen from the passage above, has made me concluded that it is not the will of our Lord, for women to be overseers/elders of the church. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that women represent the church and men represent Christ.

I would like to end off by stressing the point I started with in the first section of this chapter, that this teaching should not be used to divide the *ekklesia* church. It is good to discuss topics like this, in order to arrive at a correct understanding of our service to our King, but when discussing these topics, really try to hear each other out with respect as equal members of the body of Christ. This teaching should not be forced on any part of the body of Christ either. The special roles of men and women should only be practised according to the revelation given by the Holy Spirit to the bride of Christ. Be patient and loving towards each other as the Spirit deals with you as a body regarding these issues. Christ is the one building His church, so let Him do it.

10. A Spirit led Church

10.1: In the Silence

In this last chapter, I shall attempt to put all these topics together, and explore how they influence our understanding in the gathering of the church.

There is a very sensitive distinction to be made between following the blueprint of the Bible in how to function within the church, and doing things in a religious format. It's not easy to walk this tightrope; but it is very important to get it right. There are a couple of things in a meeting that can quench the working of the Holy Spirit and there are a couple of things in the meeting that will help us to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Often, in the *ekklesia* gatherings, we take the holy things of God, and use them as alternatives to hearing what the Spirit is actually saying to the church. For instance, when an *ekklesia* church gathering keep on having Bible studies, debating theology, or talking over what they have discovered on Google, can all distract us from what the Spirit is actually saying to the church.

Many of us come from churches where the proper use of spiritual gifts have been replaced by well-oiled church programmes, secular driven music with the name of Jesus in it, and motivational speakers. This has caused many of us who want to practise *ekklesia* gatherings, battle to function under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Yet, many of us long for to truly experience the leading of the Spirit as we read about in the Bible. For instance:

*Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, **the Holy Ghost said**, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

Act 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Act 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (KJV)

On another occasion, there was a theological disagreement, and after long deliberation the church sensed the leading of the Holy Spirit as to how to settle the issue, as we read in:

Act 15:23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

Act 15:24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

Act 15:25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Act 15:26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Act 15:27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

*Act 15:28 **For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost,** and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;*

Act 15:29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (KJV)

The church could not function without the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we are to function as the body of Christ, Him being the Head, then we need to hear what the Spirit has to say to the church. Paul writes the following, in:

*1Co 14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, **but rather [especially]**¹ **that ye may prophesy.** (KJV)*

And again in:

*1Co 14:5 **I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied:** for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. (KJV)*

Then he repeats this again in:

1Co 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. (KJV)

Every one of the above passages clarifies Paul's heart that the Corinthian church should practise spiritual gifts, especially that of prophecy. As seen already, prophecy just means speaking by inspiration of God's Spirit. There is an interesting account in the Old Testament where the Holy Spirit came upon the seventy elders of Israel in the time of Moses, and where Joshua was concerned about two elders who prophesied while not being with Moses and the other elders. Look at the way Moses responded to Joshua's concern, in:

Num 11:28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

*Num 11:29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? **would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!** (KJV)*

Moses, just like Paul's desire for the church, wanted all of Israel to prophecy. Surely we can see God's heart in this? God wants to speak to His people. When Paul starts to explain spiritual gifts to the Corinthian church, he writes the following interesting statement, in:

1Co 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

1Co 12:2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. (KJV)

Is it not amazing that Paul would speak of being led away by dumb idols? How would dumb idols, in other words, idols that don't speak, lead people away? The fact is that this very **silence** from God leads people to trust in their own imagination, which inevitably leads people into error. The living God speaks to His people. Christ is risen and is in our midst, and wants to interact with His body through the Holy Spirit.

We read an interesting account in:

Amo 8:11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

*Amo 8:12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, **they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.** (KJV)*

When God was silent and refused to speak to Israel, it indicated God's judgment on them for not listening to Him in the first place. It was in this silence of God that Israel was led into even further darkness as they followed dumb idols. If there is silence between Christ and the Church what do you think it indicates? God wants to speak to His church. The less man speaks, and the more he listens to what the Spirit has to say, the more he finds that Christ has something to say to His church. This is why the instruction to women to have a quiet spirit in the *ekklesia* gathering, has more to do with the whole church having a quiet mind

and heart than with the behaviour of the actual women in the church. As it has been taught regarding women needing to learn in silence, of the focus is really on the church, as the bride of Christ, needing to learn in silence and submission to Christ. That is why the psalmist would say:

***Psa 46:10** Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. (KJV)*

What type of still does God mean? Just being quite, but having our hearts and minds somewhere else, is not what the psalmist is talking about. God want our minds and hearts completely focused of the fact that He is God over all. So it is about our minds and hearts being quite about ourselves and the affairs of this world and just know that God is in control. All that is left is to hear what our Father has to say.

In the next section I am going to deal with the church being the temple of God. But there is something about us being the temple that I would like to mention here, that talks of us being quite. The Bible calls Christians living stones in this new house of God that is being built.

1Pe 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (KJV)

The thing about living stones is that they need to be chiselled and prepared so they can function properly in the temple. Yet many house churches make the mistake to do the chiselling and preparation during the *ekklesia* meetings. Yet the *ekklesia* meeting is not meant to be the time to work on the needs of the individual living stones. These living stones are not formed at the meetings but outside the meetings. For instance, when Solomon built the temple of God in Jerusalem, God gave them this interesting instruction:

1Ki 6:7 And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building. (KJV)

I repeat, the meeting place is not for us to work on our individual lives, but is about us being built into the house of God. We have the rest of the week to

work on our individual lives outside the meeting. When we come together for the *ekklesia* meeting, we are to keep quiet concerning our individual personal needs, and focus on what the Lord has to say to us as the body, the church, and the house of God. For it might be that there is an unbeliever or an uninformed person in our midst, and as we function as priests of our God, God, through us, in His house, may expose the secrets of their hearts and so they fall down on their knees acknowledging that God is truly among us.

10.2: When We Come Together.

Those who have embarked on this journey of what is called home church or organic church, would have found it a lot easier said than done. Why is that? The reality is that we are faced with much opposition to the success of our home church fellowship. I want to take some time to discuss these, because once we can properly identify these forces of opposition, we are better armed to defend ourselves against them.

1Co 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: (KJV)

2Co 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. (KJV)

Each one of us imagines what church should look like. Even though we would all claim that we are seeking the church that Christ is building, we are actually seeking the church we wish that Christ is building. By that I mean, that each one of us fantasises about a type of church that would be constructed around our personality, our needs, our desires, our biases, and of course our religious baggage. Many people, who “try” home church / organic church, became very disillusioned very quickly.

So, the group will start off with nervous excitement and may experience a honeymoon period. This often includes a big portion of the meeting being used to criticise institutional churches. However, this becomes stale quickly, as brothers and sisters are confronted the reality of their own inadequacies in ministering to one another. They might look back and wonder whether what they can offer is better than that provided by the institutional church. These doubts and frustrations lead to personal agendas which various people try to force on to the group. Unfortunately, each person has their own agenda, fuelled by their own needs, personality, and religious baggage. This eventually leads to disagreements which in turn lead to emotional arguments, which can lead to bitter feuds, which cause splits, hurts, or the breakup of the fellowship. What is the solution?

Before we explore for a solution, it must be said that disagreements are unavoidable, but they are not always a bad thing. Disagreements can actually show the members who among them has wisdom from the Spirit of God.

1Co 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

*1Co 11:19 For **there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.** (KJV)*

However, disputes can become bad when the flesh or carnality dominates the fellowship and the meetings. The fruit of the flesh is strife and divisions. Those led by the Spirit of God, seek the bond of peace and unity.

2Ti 2:23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

2Ti 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

2Ti 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

2Ti 2:26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (KJV)

1Co 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

1Co 3:3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (KJV)

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Eph 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Eph 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (KJV)

Those who are spiritually mature and are led by the Spirit, place the well-being of their brothers and sisters above their desire to win arguments or to be seen to have the correct doctrine. You see, any doctrine that does not bring us closer to

Christ, is not worth being correct on. Ultimately Jesus is our doctrine, as He is the only way to the Father, the truth, and the life. However, I am not insinuating that all other biblical topics are just peripheral, and not really important. What I am saying, is that we should not think that our own personal understanding of all the other topics in the Bible is infallible. We know in part, and all of us have to admit that we have been wrong before in our interpretation of some Scriptures. Where knowledge fails us, love will not.

1Co 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

1Co 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

1Co 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

1Co 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

1Co 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

1Co 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

1Co 13:7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

1Co 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

1Co 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

1Co 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. (KJV)

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Gal 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Gal 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (KJV)

Those who are mature in their walk with the Lord are able to discern whether it is merely a discussion where disagreement takes place in a healthy way, where everyone is searching out the truth with mutual respect, learning together, or whether the argument is merely about who is right and who is wrong. Love does not seek its own, but rejoices in the truth. When it's becoming evident that a discussion is becoming emotional and negative, then those who are mature need to respectfully intervene and request that the fellowship deals with the topic on another day, when everyone has had time to pray about it, and search deeper into it.

As I said before, the goal of the meeting is to deal with the affairs of God's Kingdom. For that to be accomplished, we need to hear what Jesus has to say to His church. I repeat, that the Kingdom of God, is about Christ's rule which produces righteousness. It starts with Christ's rule in our hearts, and overflows to Christ's rule over the rest of our lives. The foundation of the church is built on the rock of who Jesus is – the Christ, the anointed King.

*Mat 16:15 He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?***

*Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.***

*Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.***

*Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, **That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.***

Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (KJV)

Because of this fact, our church meetings should first be about seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness.

*Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) **for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.***

*Mat 6:33 **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.***

*Mat 6:34 **Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.** (KJV)*

Whatever we seek in our meetings has to direct us to God's Kingdom and His righteousness. How does that look like in our meetings?

1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. **Let all things be done unto edifying.** (KJV)

The Greek word for edification in this passage is: *oikodome* which according to the Vines dictionary means the act of building. The Vines dictionary explains it comes from two words: *oiko* meaning house and *demo* to build.¹ We need to ask ourselves, when we minister to the fellowship, has what we have to say, or sing, to do with the purpose of building up the house of God, or is it to build up our own egos? In fact, the whole theme of one Corinthians fourteen, has to do with edifying or building the church instead of ministering to our personal needs.

Does this mean we should not care for each other's burdens, thus neglecting the law of Christ? No, but we must realise that a family of believers who only see one another once a week for the *ekklesia* gathering, is not fulfilling the law of Christ anyway. We have the whole week to minister to each other's personal needs, shaping the living stones at the "quarry" so no noise of chiselling individual stones are heard at the temple. This is so that the *ekklesia* gathering is focused on the affairs of God's Kingdom directly.

1. Vine's New Testament "edification", e-Sword 13.0.0

10.3: How we Build

In the previous section, we saw that the edification of the church has to do with building up the church. The way we minister or edify can make or break the church; this is especially true for those who lead the church. Paul writes:

1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

*1Co 3:16 Know ye not that **ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?***

1Co 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (KJV)

The temple of God indicates two contrasting realities: the separation of mankind from God because of sin, and, simultaneously, God's desire to dwell with mankind. Let me explain what I mean, by highlighting something interesting concerning the temple that was built in Jerusalem. There are many spiritual meanings of every aspect of the temple, which I don't have the space to go into now, and other Bible teachers have already done an excellent job on the topic. What I do want to highlight is something that I have found to be relevant to this chapter.

Theologians speculate that the Holy of Holies, the most consecrated room in the temple in Jerusalem, was in the west part of the temple. The high priest would only come into the Holy of Holies once a year to make atonement for the whole nation. According to theologians, the entrance to the Holy of Holies would have been on the east side. The Ark of the Covenant was situated in this room. Above the ark were two gold covered, olive wood statues in the form of cherubs. The cherubs were designed in such a way, that their wings touched each other in the middle of the room while another set of their wings touched opposite walls

of the Holy of Holies, to indicate in a sense that one cannot pass them. Now when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, because of their sin, to prevent anyone from entering the garden of Eden, God placed cherubs and a flaming sword to guard the entrance to Eden. This entrance was on the east side of the garden. Theologians believe that the sculptured cherubs in the Holy of Holies represent the separation between God and mankind because of sin from the time of Eden.

Gen 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Gen 3:23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

Gen 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (KJV)

However, God's desire was to have mankind come back in His presence, and this seems to have been symbolised by the annual entry of the high priest into God's presence in the Holy of Holies, with the blood of the sacrifice for the sins of the nation. As you all likely know, Christ has fulfilled this prophetic foreshadowing as both high priest and the sacrificial perfect lamb once and for all, to give humanity access to God (See Hebrews nine). Mankind can now enter God's presence through a new temple that is not made with human hands. This temple is called the body of Christ, which is the church that He is building, the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells. I repeat Peter's words:

1Pe 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (KJV)

As quoted above from 1 Corinthians 3, Paul gives us all a warning as to how we ought to build this temple, especially those who seek to lead in building God's temple. Paul exhorts us to build with gold, silver and precious stones not with wood, hay and straw that can be easily burnt up. So what are those works that Paul describes that would either remain or be burnt up? Well Paul writes in another place:

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV)

What are those good works? First of all, the ability to do those good works comes from us being in Christ Jesus. The good works is grounded in Christ's love:

Heb 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (KJV)

When we act out of Christ's love, we can more readily discern people's motives. Everyone has an agenda; therefore we need to be able to discern what those agendas are. If our agenda is not motivated by our love for the members of the body of Christ, then what results will be dead works. For instance, if people feel that their opinions, or interpretations, or goals, or vision for the ekklesia is more important than the well-being of the body of Christ, the outcome will be dead works. Unfortunately, only dead works will follow the efforts of those people who are more interested in being right, or reaching the goal they believe God has called them to achieve, rather than taking care of the body of Christ in unity and bond of peace.

Tit 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Tit 3:9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

Tit 3:10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;

Tit 3:11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself. (KJV)

Tit 3:14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. (KJV)

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (KJV)

Rev 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him

will I give power over the nations: (KJV)

*Rev 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for **I have not found thy works perfect before God.** (KJV)*

Many Christians claim that we should place truth as the highest calling, but they are willing to cause so much damage in the body of Christ for their so-called truth. You see the problem is, that we only know in part and none of us has the complete truth. Every Christian will have to admit that they have been wrong in the past on a particular topic. When they did change their perspective, it did not change because they were persuaded by arguments, but by the truth that was revealed by the Holy Spirit, when they placed Christ, who is the truth, at the centre in all things. So, we need to show grace towards each other, and discuss things with respect and love and care for each other. We need to leave the work of revealing all truth to the Holy Spirit and give no place for the flesh. When we are driven by our carnal emotions over our doctrine, we start arguing about things that are not important, and we divide ourselves from the body of Christ, which Christ died for.

When we are anxious or upset by differences of opinion, we can see that this behaviour is carnal. What should stir our emotions is the spiritual well-being of our brothers and sisters in the Lord. In other words, the only knowledge that is worth being emotional about is the person Jesus who is the way the truth and the life. The reason why is that it's only Christ who can bring us into the presence of the Father. In fact, we who are the living stones and are being built up together as the temple of the Holy Spirit, have but one function, and that is to reveal God's presence to the world. Our goal for the *ekklesia* meeting is God's presence. The blood of Christ has reconciled us to the Father, so that we may have fellowship with the Father in the body or temple of Christ. You see, the body of Christ is the temple of the Holy Spirit. So, whether you consider yourself a leader or not, you are still a living stone in that temple not build by human hands, but by Christ Himself, in Himself. That means that the good works that have been prepared beforehand for us, has to do with building up the temple of God in the love of His Son.

Every effort from our side that is focused on meeting our personal needs, whether we want to be affirmed and approved, or whether we actually want notoriety, or whether we yield to the temptation to get impatient with each other's weaknesses, or whether we are trying to gain control, and so on... all these are dead works and will be all burnt up on that day. So, how are we to conduct ourselves in the house of God?

1Ti 3:14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:

*1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to **behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.***

1Ti 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (KJV)

Those who feel the unction of the Spirit to lead, must do so with sensitivity. They need to discern their own motivation, and agendas. They must not be forceful, or manipulative but gentle in the way they leading in the areas that they sense are from the Holy Spirit. The good works of the Spirit are not driven by fleshly motives, but rather, have the well-being of the fellowship above their own desires, just as Christ demonstrated at the cross for us all.

10.4: Me and My House

The relationship between family life and church life has taken very strange forms in most of the Christian world. For most, it seems that family life has been compartmentalised in the church according to the demographics of each particular fellowship. One would think that that is normal, as people's needs are different. For instance, the needs of husbands and wives are different from each other. The needs of parents compared to children's needs are different, and those from the needs of grandparents. The needs of those who have children are different to the needs of those who don't. The needs of those who are married are different to those who are not. It is therefore logical to think that church programmes are appropriate when they are geared to meet all of these various needs. The churches who can make their congregations feel that their needs are being met, are more likely to succeed in keeping their church attendance full.

However, those who have already been part of organic church, have come to realise that church is not about fulfilling our needs but about establishing God's Kingdom in our lives. The rule of Christ over His church starts at home as we submit to Him in our families.

Jos 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. (KJV)

We saw in the previous chapter that the relationship between a husband and a wife represents that of Christ and the church. The marriage relationship is based on the example of Christ as the head of the church. In the same way, the husband is to be the head of the wife. As the man is the head of the wife, so he is also the head of the home. What many men don't realise is that this is not a right, but a responsibility. The husband will have to give an account to his Head, Christ, regarding the spiritual well-being of his household, and what happens in his house, physically and spiritually. Paul gives the following instructions:

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Eph 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

Eph 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: (KJV)

The spiritual well-being of the wife is the husband's responsibility. When a husband neglects his responsibility it is often manifested in the church. However, it's also true that if a wife is unwilling to submit to and love her husband, this also affects the church. This is why Paul gives the following instructions to the older women:

Tit 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

Tit 2:4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

Tit 2:5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. (KJV)

The needs of the children are one of the greatest concerns for parents when they consider becoming part of an organic church. It is sad to see how many children become anti-Christian because they are forced to go to church and Sunday school, without seeing that reality in their parents. The children gain head knowledge without the substance of living out their faith from their parents' example. Instead of leaving the Christian education of the children to a church programme, parents should rather teach their own children at home. In fact, even though both parents have to share the load in teaching their children the ways of the Lord, the father as the head of the home, is ultimately responsible for this. The Old Testament is clear about the importance of a father teaching his children the ways of the Lord.

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (KJV)

*Deu 4:9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: **but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;** (KJV)*

Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine

heart:

Deu 6:7 And thou shalt **teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house,** and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (KJV)

Deu 11:18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deu 11:19 And ye **shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house,** and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (KJV)

However, the father should be loving and patient, not dictating as he leads by example.

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Col 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. (KJV)

Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (KJV)

What then of the absent father, or what if the mother alone is holding to the faith? Well, one of Paul's most helpful workers in the gospel was Timothy. From Scripture it seems that Timothy's father was either absent or not a believer, but because of the faithful examples of his mother and grandmother, Timothy became one of the main second generation apostles in Scriptures.

2Ti 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. (KJV)

The fact is that training children in the ways of the Lord, is not accomplished by church programmes. Instead, the day by day examples of parents who are living out their faith, both in word and action, train up the children to be faithful disciples themselves. In fact, discipleship in general is not effected by Sunday school classes, but in the day to day sharing of lives.

Tit 2:1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

Tit 2:2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

Tit 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

Tit 2:4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

Tit 2:5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Tit 2:6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

Tit 2:7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

Tit 2:8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Tit 2:9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;

Tit 2:10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. (KJV)

An organic church that is led by the Spirit, starts at home. It starts with the man in the home who says to all, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Men who head up their own households do not have to force anyone to be a Christian. Rather, through his daily speech and actions, he shares the life of Christ with those whom he loves and cares for. He does not have to act perfectly, but he should show that he has no confidence in his own abilities in the flesh thus demonstrating his dependence on Christ.

Furthermore, the man is strengthened by a wife who is confident in who she is in Christ. Such a wife does not seek her own glory, nor tries to control and manipulate her environment, including her husband and children, for her own security. The wife should be able to submit to her own husband as she supports him in taking ownership of the spiritual well-being of the household. She should aim to do this with a gentle spirit, thus demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit within her life.

1Pe 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

1Pe 3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

1Pe 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair,

and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

1Pe 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

1Pe 3:5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

1Pe 3:6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

1Pe 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. (KJV)

To reiterate, being led by the Spirit in the church, starts at home. It starts in the relationships between husband, wives and children, because these relationships impact into the fellowship. However, if we think that we have to be perfect in our family relationships, or if we pretend that we are perfect, we would never be able to meet together! What is needed, rather, is the realization that none of us have arrived but that we are willing to take up our responsibilities towards our own households, instead of thinking that church programmes must do this for us. Having stressed the importance of not relying on church programmes to disciple our households, I am not negating the importance of the body of Christ helping as can be seen within the previous quoted passage two Timothy one verse five.

Having said all this, how do the children function within the gathering? Well they can be part of the meeting according to their willingness to participate. There is no need to plan something special for the children. Children learn more from their parents' examples as they interact in the meeting, and leave the Bible lessons for the parents at home. Let's remember that church meetings are not about meeting our individual needs, but are focussed on engaging with the head of the church, Jesus Christ. The children don't need to be forced to sit with the adults who are dealing with the affairs of God's Kingdom. They can sit and play in another room or quietly nearby. However, we should not hinder them to engage, together with the rest of the church, in an *ekklesia* meeting, if they choose to.

Mat 19:14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. (KJV)

10.5: Church Practices

So, how do we go about forming a church that is Spirit-led? I wish it was as easy as just giving a simple formula, which, if followed correctly, would result naturally in a Spirit-led church. I mean, the word naturally implies organically doesn't it? However anyone who has been part of an organic or home church will testify that it just does not work like that. Why is that? Well, simply put, we deal with people, and people are complicated, especially when we deal with so much carnality in our personal lives. This however, should not demoralise us as we seek to do the good works that are in Christ Jesus for us to do. Furthermore, there are a couple of principles that we can find in Scripture, to help us start. These principles are not a magical formula for success, but they will point us in the right direction, making success more probable, and helping us to avoid so many traps of man-made wisdom and traditions.

These principles are especially geared to those who consider themselves to be leaders of the church. I would like to repeat the point that leaders are not managers. Leaders inspire, and direct people to Christ, while managers control and dictate as though they do it on behalf of Christ. So, what should leaders do to start to inspire the rest of the disciples and to lead people to our Lord? Jesus taught His apostles the following:

Act 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

Act 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (KJV)

1Th 5:16 Rejoice evermore.

*1Th 5:17 **Pray without ceasing.***

1Th 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1Th 5:19 Quench not the Spirit. (KJV)

Our gatherings will become useless and a waste of time, if they are not led by the Holy Spirit. We need to hear what the Spirit has to say to the church. If we are not able to hear, then we need to wait to be baptised with the Holy Spirit. After having been baptised with the Holy Spirit, we need to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

Eph 5:17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Eph 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Eph 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Eph 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (KJV)

Why is this so important? The answer is obvious, but I think it's important to highlight the obvious. Jesus says the following in:

Joh 10:1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Joh 10:2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

Joh 10:3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

Joh 10:4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

Joh 10:5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. (KJV)

The goal of each church meeting should be to hear our Shepherd's voice. From the start, people need to learn to always go back and talk to the Lord about; whether there is a dispute about doctrine, whenever there are personality clashes, or when carnality or sin shows its head. In all of these we need to hear our Shepherd's voice:

Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Joh 10:29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Joh 10:30 I and my Father are one. (KJV)

From Christ becoming a man, laying His life down, being raised from the dead, to His ascending and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Church has all to do

with being reconciled to the Father through the Son. The point of it all is for us to come into the presence of the Father, to talk to Him and hear Him talking to us. As indicated in the previous section, the communion of God with Adam and Eve, the structure and rituals of the temple, as well as the activities of the priests of old, were all pointing towards the glorious truth that we, His household, may hear what the Father has to say, and have communion with Him.

If we can grasp this, we will also realise that actually anything that we consider to be the affairs of the church, should have this relationship between us and Christ as its main emphasis. Let me explain by using two well-known ceremonies in the Christian world to illustrate this truth. The first is the wedding ceremony and the second is the funeral service.

I don't have the space here to explain how the church marriage ceremony evolved to what we have today. I would rather explain how the old Jewish customs give us a beautiful picture of the marriage between Christ and the church.

Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

*Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: **but I speak concerning Christ and the church.** (KJV)*

Any person entering into marriage must realise that their marriage has to represent the same covenant as that of Christ and the church. This does not leave much room for divorce and even less room for re-marriage, or adulterous relationships. Even being unhappy in a marriage is hardly an excuse for divorce, re-marriage, or being in an adulterous relationship, because marriage symbolises the love that Christ has for His church. Christ, suffered, died and gave everything for His bride, and so should we be willing to do, when we get married. Christ did not bind himself to the church because he is always happy with her, instead He is bound with her, because He has loved and will love her for eternity, irrespective of whether she is always pleasing Him or not. In what way is this symbolised in the ceremony?

The symbolism of the wedding of Christ and the church is based on a very old Jewish tradition. This tradition had the son leave the house of the father to meet a wife chosen for him by the father. When the son finds that the woman would make him a suitable wife, he would present a coin (today the engagement ring) as a seal that they are betrothed to each other (engaged). The son would

often use the services of a marriage broker usually a faithful servant who dealt with all the affairs of the father. Once the bride has prepared herself and the son has prepared a place for her to live with him, she would go with the marriage broker, to the place the son has prepared. There would be a feast, with all the guests as witnesses and then the bride and groom would enter a tent to consummate their marriage. There was no church marriage ceremony or legal papers in the modern sense, signatures, or any of the traditional things that are seen as essential to a marriage today. The intercourse was the act of marriage and the blood stained sheet of the deflowered virgin was kept in a safe place as a witness of the pure consummation.¹ In the New Testament we see Paul referring to the act of intercourse as becoming one flesh:

1Co 6:15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

1Co 6:16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

1Co 6:17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

1Co 6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (KJV)

One can see that this whole aspect of marriage symbolises Christ and the church. Christ has sent the Holy Spirit to function both as the marriage broker and to symbolise the seal of promise (wedding ring) till we are taken to Him at the great wedding feast. Christians must realise that sexual intercourse is the marriage, not a piece of paper, nor the religious ceremony. Yet, I do believe that the couple and their parents need to give a witness of their promise of intent by a seal such as an engagement ring, and then later by their wedding feast, before the couple consummates their union through intercourse to become one flesh. This makes room for the Holy Spirit to speak to all who are witnesses of the church's destiny.

The second ceremony is that of a funeral. As Christians we have the hope of eternal life. Again, I am not going to use the space here to discuss the theology of precisely what happens to those who have died. The goal here is rather to consider the ceremony itself. There have been many funeral customs and rituals throughout the world and all the ages. Many of them have religious meanings depending on different beliefs. Christians throughout the ages have adopted many of these customs, so as to ease the way for many pagan cultures to the Christian "religion". I do however believe that the religious ceremony of the

funeral has detracted from the actual focus, as seen from a Christian perspective. So how ought a funeral be conducted?

As Christians, we must first recognize that any funeral ceremony has no impact on the person who has died. The whole point of the funeral is for the loved ones to deal with the loss, and somehow find closure. Even so, in Western civilization, it is an accepted practice for a religious leader, such as a pastor, a reverend, a priest, for example, to conduct a ceremony and give some kind of sermon to comfort the bereaved. The rest of the people attend as a way to “pay their respects”. In some circumstances, some family members might be appointed to share something about the person. This ceremony is not found in Scripture.

Not being in Scripture, is in itself not really the issue. The real problem is that it does not really celebrate a life that has been lived on earth, so as to give real opportunity for closure. In order to celebrate the life of someone who has died, there is no need for some religious leader (who often doesn't even know the deceased) to conduct a ceremony. The occasion should rather take the form of a memorial, where everyone is given an opportunity to share their loving thoughts of the person they will miss, as well as their joy that they will see them again in that final marriage feast with the Lord. This is obviously only possible for those who have placed their hope in Christ. This can be a beautiful time of rejoicing even if it is also accompanied by tears. It is also an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to minister to those who do not have this type of hope.

*Joh 11:23 Jesus saith unto her, **Thy brother shall rise again.***

Joh 11:24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

*Joh 11:25 Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:***

*Joh 11:26 **And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?** (KJV)*

Whether we live or whether we die, we are Christ's. Christ has purchase a bride – the church with His blood. The church fellowship, the church gatherings and the church practices is centralised around the fact that the church is Christ's. As individual Christians we demonstrate that we belong to Christ; by the way we are part of His Body, the church. This church is not an organization but a body of believers, with all their short comings, have dedicated their lives to follow Christ.

1.<https://www.bible-history.com/biblestudy/marriage.html>, 7 June 2021

Questions and Answers

What follows are a collection of questions that people have asked me, concerning how we practice church. I hope that the answers to these questions will be able to bring further light as to how the Ekklesia church functions.

1. *What does a typical ekklesia meeting look like in your personal gathering?*

Our group has agreed to come together every Sunday evening around 17h00. When everybody has arrived and has put their eats on the communal table, which is the dining room table or something similar, one of us, whoever wants to, would get the attention of the rest and then lead us in a prayer for the meal, praising Jesus for what He has done for us. When it seems that everyone has prayed that wanted to lead us in prayer, we would start dishing up from the table. The men would generally allow the women to go first to serve themselves and the children. This is merely a cultural practice and we suggest you do what is acceptable in your culture as long as it does not go against Scripture

The meal becomes the catalyst to connect and share with one another. The loaf of bread is also on the table, and each person would break from it as they dish the other food up for themselves. The bread is eaten with the meal. When most of us have finished the meal, someone would take the jug of grape juice and start going around, pouring the juice in everyone's glass. During this time everyone would quiet down, because this is the time that we have agreed to wait upon the Lord. We would pray, sing songs, or keep quiet waiting upon the Lord. Someone might bring a word of prophecy, or share a vision. This could lead to a discussion of the prophecies or visions in order to make a judgment as to whether they were from the Lord or not. On other times there might be teaching or reading of Scriptures and discussion about what we understand the Lord would like us to do about what we are being taught from Scripture. The teaching would be in a discussion or interactive form as opposed to a monologue sermon. In other words, the rest of the church may ask questions and contribute to the teaching. During the discussion, depending on the circumstances, this time may lead to more prayer and psalms or songs.

We try to finish by 19h00. However we keep it flexible. If the Spirit's work with us has been completed, we would even finish by 18h30, or if it needs too much later than 20h00. After the meeting some of us either give others a lift home, while others stay a little bit longer for some socializing and coffee. If personal counselling is needed we try to leave it for after the meeting or during the week

where possible.

2. *Do you meet in just one person's home?*

No, we meet at the homes of the members who invite us during the week beforehand. But we generally meet at the homes with the largest living rooms and which are more central to where most of the members live.

3. *Who provides the loaf and grape juice or wine?*

We have come to agree that the home that we gather at would provide the wine/grape juice and bread, unless someone else would like to bring some or both of these at that time.

4. *Do you have weekly Bible studies and prayer meetings?*

Our fellowship does not have planned weekly Bible studies or prayer meetings. We pray and look at the Bible when we visit each other or as the need arises, during the week. Remember that the church that Christ builds is a church of members that exhorts each other DAILY so that they may not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We don't enforce this practice of DAILY fellowship, but let each person practice this as they feel convicted by the Holy Spirit. Some feel that giving a phone call or messaging on the phone works for them. Others feel they need to visit each other over a hot drink. Sometimes there might be occasions that someone might call for a specific prayer meeting for specific reasons, or arrange for a Bible study to look at a specific topic, but we don't have them scheduled for every week. We rather have those things as a natural cause of our daily interaction with one another.

5. *Do you have children's Sunday Schools?*

No, we don't have children's Sunday Schools. We feel that parents have the responsibility to teach their own children the ways of the Lord. They would take part in the gathering as the rest of us, but we don't compel any of the children to take part. We would allow them to play on the floor quietly or in another room, should they wish, but we welcome them in our gatherings. We believe that even though they don't always understand what we are talking about, the example of their parents taking up responsibility as priests in the *ekklesia* speaks volumes. The example is of much more worth to them than the topics we deal with. There might be an occasion where someone might have something for the children, but that is not a weekly habit.

We are open to children's or youth outreaches on other days of the week. In this case, those members who feel they have a burden and a gift in reaching out to them, would do this as the Lord leads them. The fellowship treats this as they would any other outreach ministry. They would bless the people who would participate in this venture with prayer and encouragement, or with needed funds, as everyone sees fit.

6. What happens if there are newcomers or visitors?

We do adapt our meeting slightly accordingly. The fellowship would be sensitive not to deal with topics that would not be appropriate for those that are visitors, or newcomers. This would be similar to the way a family would when they have guests for dinner.

7. How do you facilitate a wedding?

It depends on the couple... but we often don't follow the traditional root of a reverent giving a sermon... but the couple with their family chose for themselves.

8. How do you conduct funerals?

Again we often don't follow the traditional root of a reverent giving a sermon. The memorial gathering where everyone can share beautiful memories takes centre stage for us, and some even use it to share the hope they have within Christ.

9. What do you do when you guys can't come to consensus over on a doctrinal issue or practices?

We would not enforce a practice on which we cannot reach consensus, but we won't just brush it under the carpet either. We would give it time, till we all could come together to address it and see if we have come to new insight, or sense whether the Lord has brought us to consensus. One practice that we haven't come to consensus on in our meetings is about whether a woman should be quiet or have a head covering when she would prophesy or pray. At the moment some have concluded that those who feel convicted to follow these practices should do so, while the others would not be enforced to do so. However, when the time is right we would deal with this topic again to see if the Lord has given some of us new insight into that topic.

We believe that love for one another will give us the patience to be able to give each other the time needed for the Lord to deal with each other, till we come to the unity of the faith in that regard.

We don't have an attitude that we will "agree to disagree" because that will prevent us growing in knowledge and faith. We rather have the attitude that we are all still growing in knowledge and faith and that we have not all reached the same place of understanding in Christ. So, rather than enforcing doctrine or practices, we wait for the Holy Spirit to deal with our hearts till we are all at the same place.

Newcomers however, feel obliged to follow the practices that we have put in place. While they are welcome to question and discuss these they would continue joining in our practices until or unless the Holy Spirit persuades us otherwise. Our basis for making a judgment on these matters is Jesus Christ in us, who is our truth, and who gives us the grace to love one another as He loves us.

10. What do you do with discipline issues in your group?

We follow Jesus' instructions that should someone do what is offensive to another; the offended party should deal with that person privately. Should there be no resolution with the offended party, he or she should return to discuss the matter with the member who has caused offense, bringing two more members to see if there can be a resolution and whether the offended party actually has a basis to be offended. If the offended party has a basis to be offended and the offender is not willing to repent, the matter would be brought to the whole church fellowship. If it is still not resolved in front of the whole *ekklesia* gathering, and the offender is not willing to stop the offence, then that person would be excommunicated till he or she comes to their senses.

11. When does a gathering get too big to have a proper ekklesia meeting and what happens then?

Each group is different to other groups, due to the personalities that make up the group dynamic. There is no number that can be used. If some groups reach fifteen adults the group may feel it has become too big, yet others may be still comfortable with as many as thirty adults. What determines the size of the group is obviously the size of the living room they gather in and whether all the members feel that they can contribute should the Spirit lead them to. The other

thing that is very important is that the group must still all feel they are part of a family and not just a club that they attend.

When the group reaches a size where it is not comfortable to have a proper *ekklesia* meeting and people start feeling disconnected, then we would start praying for the Spirit to send some of us out to start a new fellowship. We would wait for a couple of weeks until a couple of families feel in their heart that they feel the leading of the Spirit in this endeavour. We would then have a special meeting to send out these families, to bless them and wait on the Spirit to give words of prophecies and encouragement. We would not break contact, but stay connected and perhaps even have a special gathering all together once every three months or so, or have families that would visit each other's groups.

We generally feel it is more practical to group together people who live in the same close geographical area, so that daily fellowship is more feasible.

12. When and how are leaders appointed?

We would only appoint elders the moment we feel the need for it, and only after a couple of years have passed so that those who have a shepherd's heart have become evident to all. Elders are only really needed when there are doctrinal disputes that threaten to bring division into the mutual fellowship of the church. If a couple of fellowships have formed in our town, elders could also keep the groups connected.

10. How do you implement the great commission?

This depends on each group. The first thing is we pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out labourers to bring in the harvest.

11. How do you go about baptizing people who are converted?

Often in someone's pool or wherever we can find a place.

12. Do you relate to other churches?

Yes, most of us in our group try to keep contact with brothers and sisters in the Lord from other church denominations whether they are in an institutional church or not. We would visit them in their church gatherings, and work at building a relationship of trust with them, to build bridges in the hope that we could learn from each other.

We also keep in contact with other *ekklesia* churches in the world, learning from and encouraging them. At this point we have not found churches in our suburb that practice the *ekklesia* church that we could network with, so we are waiting on the Lord to multiply us as He sees fit.

13. Don't you have big worship gatherings?

We don't see any need to have such gatherings, but we are not necessarily against them either. Our hesitation is what they would become. We know of some networks of home churches that would rent a hall for a month or more to have traditional church services on a Sunday morning as a way to reach out to the religious people in the community. The reason is that in our westernized culture people feel more comfortable in this kind of setting to weigh up their decision in a non-threatening environment. Once the people have decided they would like to become Christ's disciples they would get them connected with a fellowship; or get them to start up a fellowship with all those near them.

14. What type of gospel do you preach?

We are evangelical in our theology, but even in the evangelical world there are some slight differences. I have written a book called "Understand what we preach" to give a Bible study on how I understand the gospel, but even on some of the topics discussed in that booklet, many within the Home church are not all in agreement with. That does not really matter, as well all agree in this one thing, and that there is no other way to the Father accept through Jesus Christ, for He is the way the truth and the life.

Conclusion

I hope that these answers to the questions gave some more light to the practical side of the *ekklesia* church. Feel free to mail us any other questions that you don't think we have dealt with and we try and address them in our next updated transcript. May God bless you as you journey towards the church that Christ is building.

You are blessed in Jesus the Christ.

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