

What You Should Know About The Church

by J. W. Jepson, D.Min.

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Chapter 1

The Mystery Of The Ages

The Magi who came from the east sought and worshiped Jesus as the "King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2). Others (all Jews) had preliminary revelations about Him: the shepherds, Anna, Simeon, and of course Mary and Joseph.

The earliest believers in Jesus of Nazareth as the crucified and risen Son of God and Savior were also Jews. They did not see themselves as a new spiritual order. In their minds they were Jews who had received their Messiah and were following Him within the Jewish context, culture and community. James's epistle was addressed "to the twelve tribes which are scattered

abroad" (James 1:1), that is, to the Jewish believers within the greater Diaspora. Their meetingplace was referred to as a "synagogue" (James 2:2).

Jesus had a much broader vision. He saw His disciples and other Jewish believers as part of the universal Church that He was going to build (Matthew 16:13 - 18). Even though Jesus had commanded them to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19, 20), and even though He told them that He had "other sheep" that He would bring and that there would be one fold (John 10:16), His disciples did not yet see the "new humanity" made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers (Ephesians 2:15). That revelation was given later by the Holy Spirit to Paul, the other apostles, and the prophets.

And what a revelation it is!

The Church is divinely instituted. Man did not create the Church; God did. Eve was created out of Adam's side (Genesis 2:21 - 23); the Church was created out of Christ's wounded side.

The Church is not a material building. Even though it has organized structure, order and leadership, it is not essentially a human organization. It is an *ecclesia* (assembly), a called out people divinely formed for a divine purpose and destiny. They are in personal, vital, living unity with one another because they are in personal, vital, living unity with Jesus Christ. A relationship with the organized church did not create their relationship with Christ; rather, their relationship with Christ created their relationship with one another in the Church.

Although the Church calls and leads us *to* Christ, we do not come into Christ through the Church. We come into the Church through Christ. Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:17 KJV). It is our personal connection to Christ by faith that establishes our living connection to the Church. The individual who is not in a personal, living relationship with Jesus Christ is not truly in the Church, even if that person is a "church member" and participates in the social and religious activities of a church and supports it financially.

The Divine Mystery.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him” (Ephesians 3:1 - 12).

“. . . the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26, 27).

Although the word *ecclesia* (assembly) is applied to the Old Covenant congregation in Acts 7:38 and in Hebrews 2:12 (quoting Psalm 22:22 LXX), the New Covenant *ecclesia* was a “mystery” not known in Old Testament times.

In the Bible a “mystery” is a divine secret that is to be revealed or that is now revealed. The Church is one of the greatest of the mysteries of God. *The Church is the focus of the eternal purpose of God.*

In these inspired passages the apostle glories in God’s great mystery in the Church. The “mystery” is “that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.”

Let us pay specific attention to the statement, “to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places [angelic rulers and authorities].”

When Satan and his angels rebelled, and also when the human race went into sin, the holy angels saw a fearful demonstration of the holiness and justice of God. Such a demonstration of God’s holiness and justice without a corresponding and commensurate demonstration of His grace and mercy would have left the universe with an incomplete and heavily unbalanced knowledge and understanding of the character of God.

Satan rebelled. Adam and Eve sinned. The entire human race except for Noah and his family were wiped out by the Flood.

Then God called Abraham and made a covenant with him. The covenant passed to Isaac, then to Jacob and his family. A nation was being formed. Later, God called Moses and sent him to bring the nation out of Egypt. Miracles happened. A covenant with the nation was established at Sinai. Yes, there was a 40-year set back in the wilderness. But then Joshua led them across the Jordan and into the Promised Land.

The rulers and authorities of the angelic kingdom were watching all this. Something was developing. It appeared that God had a plan. But what is this? God’s covenant with Israel was not working because of the moral weakness of the people. Israel was declining. Eventually it went into a 70-year captivity. Afterward a remnant returned, only to be abused by one kingdom after another, including the Romans. Even their own religious leaders failed them. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

Why is God’s covenant not working? Why does almost everything God established through the centuries seem to fail? *What is God doing?*

The angelic rulers and authorities did not see the *mystery*.

Then came the incarnation of the Second Person of the eternal Godhead. The Babe in the manger. God became man.

The angels rejoiced.

Yes, there was the crucifixion. Also the glorious resurrection. The great commission. The ascension. Pentecost. Jews and Gentiles coming together as one body in the New Covenant in Christ! The Church was born!

It all became clear. God did have a purpose and a plan, and it did not fail. God knew all along what He was doing. The mystery has been revealed. God has demonstrated His manifold wisdom through the Church. God's eternal purpose and grand design is to call out a chosen people for Himself out of all nations, races, tongues, and peoples. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

The rulers and authorities in the heavenlies saw it, and from then on and forever they have a complete revelation of the perfect character of God.

The Importance of the Church.

Because the Church is the focus of God's eternal purpose, we who are the Church are of supreme importance to God. God has everything invested in the Church. Christ gave everything for the Church—for us. He bought us with His own blood.

The Church is God's heritage (see Ephesians 1:18). He upholds and sustains it with full and massive divine resources. The Church is chosen and predestined to eternal glory. Nothing is more secure, more sure of success, than the Church. The Church will not fail.

Chapter 2

Development And Destiny

The Church started small. Jesus had referred to His disciples as a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). It is generally agreed that the Church was inaugurated at the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Many of the 3,000 Jews and proselytes who were converted on that day were pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem from various parts of the then-known world. Acts 2:8 - 11 is a summary of the people’s comments as they recognized their own native languages being spoken by the 120 disciples. The list of their places of origin is extensive and represents a wide geographical scope.

The majority of these new believers returned home from Jerusalem, formed the nucleus of a community of baptized, Spirit-filled believers where they lived and shared the gospel of Christ with their families, friends and neighbors.

Then came the persecution of the Jewish believers who lived in Jerusalem. As a result, “they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:1 and 4 KJV).

Philip preached the gospel in Samaria with phenomenal results. Peter and John followed up and established the Church in Samaria by apostolic authority and with apostolic power.

Philip led the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ, who then returned home as a witness to the gospel (Acts 8:26 - 39).

In Caesarea an amazing Roman centurion named Cornelius was converted, baptized in the Holy Spirit, and baptized in water. So were his relatives and close friends who were present and heard Peter (Acts 10).

Meanwhile at Antioch in Syria a strong community of believers developed, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and became a center of evangelism. The disciples were contemptuously called "Christians" first in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Antioch was the launching point of Paul's great missionary journeys to the west (Acts 13:1 - 3).

So the gospel spread and the Church grew. Over the centuries the Church in its various forms has enlarged and is fast filling the whole inhabited world. In spite of setbacks, all opposition to the Church has failed. It has survived its own weaknesses and failures. It is more powerful today than ever. The Church is triumphant. Its future is glorious.

God gave the apostle John a view into the Church's future. There he saw the elect, the redeemed. Spread out before him was "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues . . ." (Revelation 7:9 KJV). They are Christ's treasure. He gave His life for them, and they will love, worship and serve Him forever.

Chapter 3

The Church Local And Universal

The New Testament gives us an unfolding, progressive revelation of the Church. In Romans and in First and Second Corinthians the emphasis is on the interrelationships of believers in local churches. When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; when one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).

When we come to the twin epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, the emphasis is on the Church universal—the whole Church everywhere, in all ages, made up of all who are truly “in Christ” by the new birth.

In the Epistle To The Hebrews we see both the church local and the Church universal.

The universal Church exists and functions in local churches (*ekklesiai*—assemblies). God did not create denominations, not even the Roman Catholic denomination *per se* (See Appendix A. The Influence of Roman Law And Political Organization On The Organization Of The Church). God created the Church, a living organism composed of living people existing and functioning in local churches. God leads churches to form denominations because denominations serve a good and important purpose. Denominations and other inter-church associations are means and opportunities for believers to live out our life in Christ beyond our local assemblies in matters of doctrine, order, fellowship, evangelism and service. Denominations usually form out of spiritual movements. Denominationalism happens when a movement stops “moving.”

The Local Church.

It is important to define and understand what is meant by “the local church.” The New Testament does not teach an exclusive congregationalism. The essential interconnectedness that exists in the local congregation exists also by extension to the entire Church.

In the New Testament the primary definition of “the local church” is the sum total of all who are truly in Christ by faith who reside in a given community. How “community” is defined is a sociological question, not a biblical one. Acts 11:22 speaks of “the church which was at

Jerusalem” (see also Acts 15:4, 22). We also read of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1; see also Acts 14:27; 15:3). Acts 18:22 refers to the church at Caesarea.

First and Second Corinthians are addressed to “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1). The Epistle to the Galatians was addressed to “the churches of Galatia” (Galatians 1:2; see also 1 Corinthians 16:1). Galatia was a province and included several communities and therefore several churches. The Epistle to the Ephesians is addressed to “the saints which are at Ephesus” (provided that the disputed words “at Ephesus” are genuine. See also Acts 20:17, 28). First and Second Thessalonians are addressed to “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). In Colossians 4:16 Paul referred to “the church of the Laodiceans.” Romans 16:1 says that Phoebe was a servant of the church at Cenchrea, a distinct community a short distance from Corinth in Paul’s day. In 1 Peter 5:15 the apostle speaks cryptically of “the church that is at Babylon.” In chapters two and three of Revelation, letters are addressed to the seven churches, with each church identified by its city.

At the same time, the New Testament gives a secondary definition of the local church, applying it to individual congregations within the larger “local church.” In those days believers did not build houses of worship but met and worshiped in homes. This is a practical point, not a doctrinal one. There was one “local church” that met in different homes as necessary.

Philemon lived in Colosse. Paul addressed his epistle to Philemon and to the church in his house (Philemon 2). This implies that the church at Colosse included more than one “church” (congregation), one of which met in Philemon’s house. In Colossians 4:15 Paul asks the Colossian church to salute the brethren at Laodicea, including Nymphas and the church that met at Nymphas’s house, implying that the church at Laodicea included more than one “church” (congregation).

Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote First Corinthians. He sent greetings from Aquila and Priscilla and the church in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19). In other words, it is implied that the church at Ephesus met in more than one “church” (congregation).

We have an interesting note in Romans 16:23. Writing from Corinth, Paul sends greetings from Gaius, who was Paul’s host and the host of the whole Corinthian church. This says something either about the size of the church at Corinth or the size of Gaius’s house, or both. In 1

Corinthians 11:18 and 20 Paul refers to the Corinthians “coming together in the church” (verse 18), and coming together “in one place” (verse 20) for the “love feasts” (2 Peter 2:13; Jude 12) that were followed by the Communion Of The Lord’s Supper. In 14:23 the apostle speaks of the whole Corinthian church coming together “into one place” (Gaius’s house?). In 14:28 he tells the person who gives a public message in tongues when there is no interpreter to “keep silence in the church” (singular). In verse 34 he instructs the women to “keep silent in the churches” (plural). Did the church at Corinth meet regularly in different “churches” (congregations), and come together on occasion in a larger venue? In Romans 16:16 Paul sends greetings from “the churches of Christ.” Does this mean the “churches” (congregations) in Corinth, or all the churches everywhere? Although these are interesting “teasers,” no essential doctrine is at stake.

The point here is that in a real, biblical sense all believers in a local community are part of the same local church. For example: suppose the Johnsons and the Smiths are next door neighbors. Both families are believers. The Johnsons attend First Church Of The Nazarene. The Smiths attend First Baptist Church. Now, do all the biblical obligations of believers in the local church to love one another, pray for one another, bear one another’s burdens, and so forth, apply to these two families? Of course they do! Why? Because in a real biblical sense *both families belong to the same local church*, even though they worship and fellowship with different “churches” (congregations). Both families belong to the Head (Christ); therefore both families are in the same body—locally.

God puts every believer into a local church to function in that church as He chooses (1 Corinthians 12:18). It is vital that every believer stay in the church. (Remember: when the banana leaves the bunch, that’s when it gets peeled!).

It is important for believers who are not able to attend church to stay connected with their church. It is also important that their church provide them with regular spiritual care.

Likewise, some believers are away from their home and therefore from their home church for extended periods of time (e.g. school, military). They should worship wherever they happen to be. They should also stay in touch with their home.

Still others live in remote areas where there is no church. They have to rely on personal and family devotions, fellowship and Bible study with any other believers who might be nearby, and occasional opportunities to attend worship services.

The New Testament churches thought of themselves as a community, and they were committed to the church community. This is reflected in the phrase “with one accord.” The word is *homothumadon*. It means “with one mind or purpose or impulse ([Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament](#), page 566). It occurs mostly in the Book Of Acts (e.g., 1:14; 2:1, 46; 5:12; 15:25).

In western Christianity, commitment to the local church community has been eroded by a spirit of individualism. A consumer mentality is common (what can the church do for me?). Some Christians deliberately or at least through habit and neglect do not connect with a local church. They do not fellowship with the church; they do not support the church; they do not work with the church; they do not come under the biblical order and authority of the church; they do not receive the sustaining grace and blessings God has for them in the church. They are spiritual anomalies. Because they have forsaken the assembling of themselves together with a local church, they are in disobedience to God (Hebrews 10:25).

These spiritual mavericks rationalize their disobedience in various ways. Some imagine themselves too “spiritual” for the church. Some have been hurt in the church (not realizing that where we get our hurts is also where we get our healings). Some take their eyes off the Lord and put them on people. Some refuse to join an “imperfect church,” not realizing that being a part of an imperfect church is far better than being an individualist. Some reject what they call “organized religion,” not realizing that they also reject what Christ Himself has instituted. Many have allowed themselves to become critics when Christ called them to be disciples.

They often assert that they can just stay at home and read their Bibles, not realizing that they cannot stay at home and *obey* their Bibles. Their place in the local church is vacant, and God commands them to fill it. By choosing to remain disconnected from their church they are living in disobedience no matter how “spiritual” they feel.

The local church is not a loose, casual collection of individuals. It is a covenant community joined with Christ and therefore with one another in vital relationships, with solidarity, stability, commitment and inter-dependence in love.

Leadership.

God has placed His Church under the leadership of ministers and deacons (Philippians 1:1). Ministers are also referred to as “elders,” and “bishops” (overseers).

Ephesians 4:11 lists the five orders of ministers. They are: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Some join “pastors and teachers” together to form four orders. These are classified as “elders” (*presbuteroi*) and “overseers” (*episcopoi*, usually translated “bishops” in the King James Version). “Elders” refers to relationship. “Overseers” (“bishops”) refers to function. The apostle Peter referred to himself as an elder (1 Peter 5:1). So did the apostle John (2 John 1; 3 John 1). These terms picture a God-called and God-ordained spiritual leader in the Church, especially in a local church, shepherding and feeding Christ’s flock.

The apostles and prophets exercised foundational functions (Ephesians 2:20). When the foundation of the Church was established in a particular area, their work was completed in that area (see Romans 15:23).

The prophets (not to be confused with “prophets” in 1 Corinthians 14) worked with the apostles in foundational ministry. Timothy and Titus are examples. They were also to “do the work of an evangelist” in fully performing the duties of their ministry (see 2 Timothy 4:5).

Even though the evangelists extended the gospel throughout their sphere of ministry, the biblical example of Philip indicates that they, too, stayed connected to a local church (Acts 8:40; 21:8 and 9). (For a study of the office and work of the evangelist, see Appendix B. The Biblical Function Of The Evangelist).

Chapter 4

The Church: The Body Of Christ

The Bible glories in the Church. Although various metaphors are applied to believers, such as “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13, 14), the New Testament *defines* the Church by specific nouns. In this and the next several chapters we will explore these biblical names of the Church, starting with the Church as the living Body of Christ on earth.

The human body is one of the most prominent comparisons of the Church found in the New Testament. The structure and functions of the Church closely parallel those of the human body. The comparisons are of immense help in understanding the Church.

The description of the Church as a body emphasizes both the Headship of Jesus Christ and also the inter-action of believers with one another in the local church. That is why the *local* church is pictured so practically in 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17 and 12:12 - 27. There the focus is on how the members work together and support one another. We saw that also in Romans 12:4, 5. The *universal* Church is also called the Body of Christ in Ephesians and Colossians. There the focus is on the Headship of Jesus Christ and our personal and corporate connection with Him. Thus the New Testament presents a progressive revelation of the Church from the local to the universal.

In the human body everything is vitally interconnected and interdependent. Life forces and resources flow throughout the body. Blood flows to the farthest extremities, bringing nourishment and life sustaining oxygen. The central nervous system with its afferent and efferent nerves connects and activates all the members, sensitizing and mobilizing the whole body.

When we stretch out our arms, our fingertips are vitally interconnected, even though they are five or six feet from each other. The same is true of all of our digital extremities. Connectedness, not distance, determines the vital inter-relationship.

The same is precisely true of the Body of Christ, the Church, both universally and particularly in its local life. Everyone is interconnected and interdependent. The life of Christ is present in each part and permeates the whole. The Holy Spirit is energizing every “cell,” sensitizing, activating and mobilizing the whole Body.

Just as everything in the human body is directed by the head, so everything in the Body of Christ is directed by the Head, Jesus Christ. Unless spiritual paralysis, resistance, or malfunction prevents, when our exalted Head directs, the Holy Spirit puts the Body (the Church) into action. In the human body the individual members do not have a mind of their own. Obedience is automatic. But in the Body of Christ we the members *do* have a mind of our own; therefore, effective functioning in the Church depends on remaining sensitive and responsive to our Head, Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit. As we do so, the grace of God works mightily within the Body, sustaining it and keeping it spiritually healthy.

“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Romans 12:4, 5 NKJV).

Believers are many and yet we are one. We are members of the structure of the local church because we are members of one another. Each of us has an individual place and function in the Body of Christ.

A living body functions in two ways: (1) certain parts work to maintain the body itself (e.g., the heart, lungs, digestive system, immune system). (2) other parts enable the body to function outwardly (e.g., the arms, hands, legs, feet). So it is with the Body of Christ. We must remain fully active in the healthy “one another” relationships and functions of the church if the church is to remain effective in reaching out to the community and to the world.

The only way to be in true and living connection with the Body of Christ is to be in true and living connection with the Head (Christ); otherwise, a person is only a participant in the religious and social structure of a local congregation—attached but lifeless.

Nothing becomes a part of our physical bodies by merely being attached to it. Holding a one pound loaf of bread does not increase the body weight one pound. It has to be assimilated into the body. So it is with the Church. We come first into a living, *personal* relationship with Jesus Christ; then as a result we come into a living *corporate* relationship with the Church—not the other way around. People who have a personal living relationship with Jesus Christ have therefore a living relationship with one another. If we live in relationship with the Head (Christ), we do not live in isolation from His Body (the Church). Body parts are not scattered all over; they join together, live together, work together.

First Corinthians 10:16 - 21

¹⁶The 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?
¹⁷For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. ¹⁸Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ¹⁹What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

We go now to the first epistle of Paul to the church at Corinth. In Paul's time Corinth was an idolatrous city with all the evils associated with idol worship. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 - 21 the apostle reminds them that idol worship is demonic and that believers are not to be "fellow communicants" (*koinonous*) with the Lord and with demons. They cannot partake of the Communion of the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) and then go to the pagan temple and join in their sacrificial eating and drinking. The two are mutually exclusive. Eating the sacrifices is an act of identification and participation with the altar and thus with the deity it represents, whether God or idols. This is true of any act of worship involving a sacrifice, even of "Israel after the flesh" (verse 18). It is true of believers because the communion of the Lord's Supper is an act of

identification with Christ's once-for-all sacrifice for us and a participation in the celebration of His sacrifice.

For believers in Jesus Christ this means that the elements of the Communion (Eucharist) emblemize and express our unity with the body and blood of Christ. By partaking of that bread we confess and demonstrate that we also are one bread and one body. As we are joined to Christ, so also are we joined to one another—one bread, one body. As we have a living, vital, dynamic relationship with Christ, our Head, so we also have a living, vital, dynamic relationship with one another in His body, the Church.

We live out our personal and corporate relationship with the sacrificed, risen, and glorified body of Jesus Christ in our personal and corporate relationship with His body on earth—the Church. “Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25 NKJV).

In Ephesians 5:22 - 33 Paul shows that the “one flesh” relationship between husband and wife mirrors the one flesh relationship between Christ and His Church. “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:30 NKJV).

First Corinthians 12:12 - 27

¹²For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴For in fact the body is not one member but many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? ¹⁸But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²²No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³And those members of the body

which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

In 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 27 the apostle compares the Church to the human body. He describes at length and in practical detail how certain parts of the human body interrelate and how their interrelationships find their counterpart in the local church, the body of Christ as it exists and functions locally. Take time to read the entire passage thoughtfully and prayerfully. Please refer to it as we consider it together.

When we think of 1 Corinthians 12, we usually think of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As we take a closer look, we see that the gifts of the Spirit (*pneumatika*) are listed and considered within the larger subject of the body of Christ. The reason is that the gifts function within the local church, the body of Christ.

In verse 12 the apostle calls attention to the fact that the human body has many members that together form one body. Then he makes a profound statement: "so also is Christ."

Notice, he did not say, "so also is the *Church*." He said, "so also is *Christ*." In other words, Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, is so identified with His Body, the Church, that His Church is not considered apart from Him and He is not considered apart from His Church. The Church is not only fully connected *to* Christ, but also fully *in* Christ. Also, Christ is fully in His Church. Christ is all and in all (Colossians 3:11).

Baptized By The Spirit.

How do we become part of Christ's Body? Verse 13 tells us. Let us study this verse very carefully. First, the baptism mentioned here is *not* water baptism. The baptism in verse 13 is

the act of the Holy Spirit placing (immersing, integrating) us into the Body of Christ at the moment we believe on Christ and are saved.

The Greek preposition “*en*” in this verse means “by,” not “in.” It is instrumental, not locative. This is evident from the context. The entire context is about the actions of the Holy Spirit, that is, what the Holy Spirit is *doing*. The gifts are given *through* the Spirit and *by* the Spirit. In verse 9 “*en*” must mean “by” because verse 11 clearly states that all of the gifts are the actions of the Holy Spirit Himself. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will” (KJV).

This establishes the contextual framework for defining “*en*” in verse 13 as “by.” In other passages *en pneumati* connected with *baptizo* usually means “in.” That is a grammatical construction used in other contexts; however, given the context, stringing them together in an effort to make *en* in 1 Corinthians 12:13 mean “in” is not the soundest exegesis. In this case, context takes priority and is determinative. (For other Bible passages where *en* means “by,” see: Luke 4:1 together with Mark 1:12; Luke 2:27; Ephesians 3:5).

Thus the baptism *by* the Spirit in verse 13 is *not* the baptism *in* the Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an act of Jesus Christ subsequent to conversion (salvation). John the Baptist said that Christ will baptize us in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

So then, the baptism *by* the Spirit in verse 13 is the work of the Holy Spirit that places (immerses, integrates) the believer into the Body of Christ, the Church, at salvation.

At salvation, the Holy Spirit is the *Agent* doing the baptizing; the new believer is the *subject* being baptized; and the Body of Christ (the Church) is the *element* in which the believer is baptized. Subsequently, at the baptism in the Holy Spirit, Christ becomes the *Agent* doing the baptizing; the believer is still the *subject* being baptized; and now the Holy Spirit becomes the *Element* into Whom the believer is baptized.

At salvation we *drink* [into] one Spirit. At the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we are *filled* with the same Holy Spirit. To put it another way, at salvation we drink of the living water; at the baptism in the Holy Spirit the living water becomes in us a well springing (gushing, bubbling) up unto life

everlasting (see John 4:14). Likewise, at salvation we come thirsty to Jesus Christ and drink; at the baptism in the Holy Spirit the fullness of the Spirit becomes overflowing rivers from Christ through us (see John 7:37, 38). The one is the earnest of the Spirit at salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5); the other is the seal of the Spirit subsequent to salvation (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; and also 2 Corinthians 1:22).

This one Body of Christ is made up of Jews and Gentiles, bond and free. We all have been “given the one Spirit to drink” (NIV). This leads to the statement in verse 14 and the verses following.

Talking Feet And Ears.

“If the foot shall say . . . If the ear shall say.”

Of course, nobody ever heard of a foot or an ear talking. These are descriptive statements intended to drive home a point. Because one member of the human body is not the same as another does not mean that it is not part of the body. Of course it is. In the church, the local body of Christ, the members *do* talk to each other.

Suppose the whole body of Christ locally were an eye. No arms; no legs. Just roll it around and set it in place. “Here’s looking at you.” What a vision! But no way to put the vision into action.

Hearing, smelling. The same principle. Every member of the human body has its function and that function acts together with the functions of all the other members. That is what makes it a fully functioning body. The same is true of the church, the locally functioning body of Christ. Many, yet one.

Verse 18 is very emphatic. As God has set the members of our physical bodies where it has pleased Him, even so He sets each and every believer in the local church, the body of Christ, as it has pleased Him (whether it pleases us or not).

Years ago a horror movie came out about a hand that was detached from its body and went crawling around here and there and doing all kinds of weird things. Why was the hand so grotesque? *Because it was detached from its body.* What a descriptive picture of believers who deliberately detach themselves from the body of Christ, the local church. Such believers are “body parts” scattered here and there; they are moving about but not functioning properly; they are not helping to support the body and its life and ministries; they are not receiving support from the body; they are out of place, out of order, out of God’s will.

A number of years ago I shared 1 Corinthians 12:18 with a man who claimed to be a believer but by choice was not a part of a church. When I emphasized that God sets every believer in the church just as He sets every member of the human body in its place, he replied, “I am just a corpuscle running through the body of Christ.” That was a new one for me. I do not find it anywhere in the Bible.

Verses 20 and 21 emphasize the importance of each member in the body of Christ. No believer is independent of the body of Christ, and no believer is to function spiritually independently of the body of Christ. What the Bible says about the Church forms the context of every Christian ministry, and every Christian ministry (personal and co-operative) is to function within that ecclesiological context and its principles. The Church is the true base of ministry. The ministry of every believer functions within the Body of Christ and interacts with other ministries within the Body of Christ.

For that reason we cannot say to another member of the body of Christ, “I have no need of you.” Whether we realize it or not, we need one another.

In western culture the priority is on *progress*. In the Church (universal and local) the priority is on *process*. That is, God’s eternal purpose in the Church is to conform us to the character image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28 - 30). That is an on-going process that takes place in relationships. It is said that it takes diamonds to polish diamonds. In the local church we love one another, bump heads with one another, “ruffle one another’s feathers,” forgive one another, pray together, stay together, grow together and work together. We are members one of another. We might withdraw fellowship from someone if and when necessary, but we do not amputate one another unless the life of the body itself is at stake.

The local church can be the slowest, most cumbersome way of getting God's work done. That can be due to people who are roadblocks who need to be moved gently but firmly out of the way; however, it is essentially due to the fact that in the church people are more important than programs and projects. As the Israelites journeyed, the whole congregation could not move any faster than the slowest sheep.

This is frustrating to "type-A" personalities. That is why many of them go outside of the church and form what are called "para-church" organizations. Most para-church organizations are modeled after "corporate America." The emphasis is on progress. "Get the job done, or you will get fired!" Relationships are secondary and utilitarian. Keep the machinery running! The problem is that machinery can chew people up and spit them out.

Para-church organizations serve a purpose; still, they should be connected to the Church, serve the Church, and be accountable to the Church.

Years ago I invited a man to attend our church. He let me know in no uncertain terms that he did not believe in "organized religion." "Welcome," I replied, "our church is about as far from organized as you can get."

Of course, churches should organize properly and operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. Disorganization hinders the work of the church. The key is making the organization serve people and not the other way around. We are to love the people and use the organization, not the other way around.

In the passage that begins with verse 22 we sense the tender love of Christ, our Head, toward each member of His Body. Each of us is important to Him and therefore to one another. Some are stronger and more prominent; some are weaker (delicate, fragile) and less prominent or perhaps not prominent at all. No matter. God knows how to "balance" us all out. Those who seem to be weaker are necessary.

The biblical illustration of all this is, of course, the human body. As we read this passage we keep in mind that everything that is said about the human body applies directly to the church, the local body of Christ. That is the real message of the passage.

The vital organs of the human body seem to be so delicate and vulnerable. We do not see them without imaging equipment; however, we know that they are there and we protect them. If they malfunction or if we neglect them, they have a way of getting our attention. So it is in the body of Christ.

Some of the parts of our human body we regard as less honorable than other parts. Because we consider a flabby belly to be “less honorable,” we try to hide it (some people don’t). We “bestow more abundant honor” on it by diet and exercise to help shape up those “abs.” We make our uncomely (unbecoming, immodest, unpresentable) parts more comely (becoming, modest, presentable). We shape up; we wear appropriate clothes that dignify our bodies and improve our appearance and self-image; and we discipline our posture and body movements.

Our presentable parts do not need special treatment (verse 24). They are already attractive by nature. All a pretty nose needs is a little powder. Wavy hair needs only a trim and a little hair dressing.

When I was in the ninth grade I learned a limerick that has stuck in my mind ever since. It goes like this: “I’d rather have fingers than toes; I’d rather have ears than a nose. But as for my hair, I’m glad it’s all there; and I’ll be very sad when it goes.”

When Paul states that God has “tempered” (composed, combined) the members of the body together, giving the weaker and unattractive parts greater importance, he is alluding to facts of human anatomy and physiology that were only generally known in his day. The advance of knowledge in these disciplines increases our understanding of the biblical analogy between the natural functions of the human body and the spiritual functions of the body of Christ.

Verse 25 states the purpose for the balance that exists in the human body and therefore by direct application for the balance that exists also in the church: “that there should be no schism

in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” “Schism” means a tear, like getting a hand caught in some machinery and having it ripped open.

God forbids division in the church. The strict prohibition is laid down twice in this epistle: “no divisions among you” (1:10); “no schism in the body” (12:25). The unity of the Body of Christ is of top priority with God (Ephesians 4:3). Only what would separate us from Christ should be allowed to separate us from one another. As the integrity of the human body is vital, even so is the integrity of the Body of Christ, both universal and also local.

The contrast to schism is found in the last part of verse 25 and in verse 26. The members of the human body take care of one another. Each hand washes the other. If one member suffers, all suffer with it (see also Hebrews 13:3).

Suppose you are going to drive a nail into a board. One hand holds the nail; the other grasps the hammer. Your eyes are on the nail. Now, if all the members are acting together under the direction of the head, you will hit the nail.

But suppose something goes wrong and you hit the wrong “nail”—your thumbnail (I speak from personal experience!). What do you do? Do you look at your throbbing thumb and say, “Ah, hah! I’m glad that happened to you. I knew it was going to happen! You had it coming. That’s the judgment of God on you. I hope you learned your lesson. I hope you pray through and act right!”

Oh, no! You let out a yell. Your hand drops the hammer and grabs the hurting member. You pop it into your mouth and begin dancing around in agony. Your whole body feels the trauma and gets involved. Why? Because one member is in pain. Just so it is in the body of Christ.

If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. That is what love does. Selfishness is proud, jealous, envious. Love not only “feels” and empathizes with the pain of the fellow believer but also identifies with the joy the other is experiencing. Such is the economy of love, the economy of God. Selfishness shrivels the soul; love enlarges it so that its joy is multiplied by experiencing the joys of others.

In the human body what honors one member makes the others feel good, too. Wear a new dress; step out of the beauty salon; receive a compliment on how you look; walk out of the doctor's office with a good check-up and a clean bill of health—and you feel good all over. Just so it is in the body of Christ. The joy of one is the joy of all.

In verse 27 the apostle directly applies to the church, the body of Christ, everything he has just written about the human body. In fact, he has been referring to the church all along.

Ephesians 1:15 - 23

¹⁵Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. ²²And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

We move now to Ephesians 1:15 - 23. In going from 1 Corinthians 12 to Ephesians 1 we transition from the local church to the universal Church (of which the local church is a functioning unit). This passage contains the first of two inspired prayers of the apostle Paul for the Church in this epistle. The second is in chapter 3:14 - 19. Please read and compare these two profound prayers.

Paul begins by assuring them of his unceasing thanks to God for them because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and their love to all the saints. He tells them that he is praying that God will give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of their

heart being enlightened to see three things: (1) the hope of His calling; (2) the riches of the glory of His inheritance (His glorious inheritance) in the saints; and (3) the exceeding (surpassing, immeasurably great) power toward us who believe. We are focusing our attention on the last of these three interrelated objectives. God wants us to have a full spiritual knowledge of the “exceeding greatness of His power” toward His Church in general and to each believer in particular.

Look at the power of God that is directed toward us, available to us, and working for us! We see it in full action in Christ’s resurrection and exaltation. It is the power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is the power that exalted our Lord to the right hand of God in the heavenlies. It is the power that established Him “far above all principality and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” *That* is where the Head of the Body, the Church, is now positioned in the fullness of Christ’s glory, authority and power.

“He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (Colossians 1:18, 19 NKJV). Our exalted Head is seated right now in the highest possible throne of authority and power.

Believers have “connections in high places.” We are vitally connected to our Head, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and in whom we are complete (Colossians 2:9, 10). “And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16 KJV). God wants us to be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 2:19).

The power of God that accomplished all of this in our Lord Jesus Christ is now directed from Him to believers—to His Church. The fullness of the Head flows throughout His Body. Jesus did not retire to a seat of inactivity. He ascended to the throne of dominion and power. God has put all things under the feet of Christ and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all!

“The fullness of Him” is an appositional phrase. It refers to His Body, the Church. *The Church is the fullness of Jesus Christ on earth.* The Church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. The Church is the fullness of His love, of His holiness, of His truth, and of His power on earth.

As human beings, whenever our “head” (mind, will) chooses to do something, it puts our body into action. Life, energy, and communication are flowing throughout our physical body. Our body is mobilized. Instructions go out. Immediately our body goes into action. The artist picks up his brush. The musician plays the instrument. The writer’s hand grasps the pen. The secretary’s fingers make the computer keyboard dance. The surgeon skillfully moves the scalpel and makes the precise incision. The equipment operator pulls the levers and huge machines move.

There is action everywhere. Creativity abounds. *Things get done.*

We see an arm or a leg that is paralyzed or injured and out of action; so we mend it, heal it, restore it if possible. If not, we provide structures to help it function and overcome its disabilities—prostheses, elevators, handicap parking. We want our bodies to function as they should. We see possibilities and reach for them. We cannot run sixty miles an hour; so we design and build automobiles. We do not have wings; so we design and build airplanes. Our “head” is creative, and it is constantly motivating us to achieve our full human potential.

The same is true in the Body of Christ. When our creative, glorified, omnipotent Head wills to do something on earth, He puts His body into action. Everything is under His *feet*. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to give us life, to fill us, to anoint us, to strengthen us, to motivate and energize us. Life and power are flowing through the Body. There is action everywhere: the word of God is spoken; hands are laid on the sick; demons flee; the harvest is reaped; the hungry are fed; the brokenhearted are healed; captives are set free; the crushed are liberated and made whole. The kingdom of God is upon us wherever the power and authority of the King is established in us and among us (Luke 11:20).

If we see a fellow member of the Body that is spiritually paralyzed, injured and out of action, we mend it, heal it, restore it if possible. We lift up the hands that hang down and we strengthen the weak knees (Isaiah 35:3; Hebrews 12:12). We want the members of Christ’s Body to function as they should and to realize their full potential in Him.

We see the possibilities in God and we reach for them. Our Head is infinitely creative and He is constantly inspiring us to realize and fulfill our unlimited possibilities in Him (Ephesians 3:20).

Think what Jesus Christ wants to do in your city, your community, your neighborhood. He is able, ready and willing to accomplish it by putting His loving, Spirit-filled, gifted, faith-filled Body into action. And every believer has a part in the action. The result is “great joy in the city” (Acts 8:8).

Ephesians 4:11 - 16

Some of the parts and resources of the human body enable the body to function outwardly. The purpose is action and accomplishment. Some parts and resources are directed to sustaining the health and developing the life functions of the body itself. The purpose is growth and maturity. The same is true in the Body of Christ.

We turn our attention now to the *internal* development of the members of the Body of Christ in our relationship with the Head and with one another. The Body of Christ grows as all the members grow. This is the theme of Ephesians 4:11 - 16.

What immediately precedes this passage establishes its context. Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of God. From that exalted position He “received gifts among men” (Psalm 68:18 NASB). Jesus had already stated, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me . . .” (John 6:37). Believers are a gift to Christ from the Father. Paul reveals that from among those who are given to Christ, Christ in turn gives leadership gifts to the Church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The purpose of these ministry gifts is to “mend” (prepare, equip) the saints for works of service in order to build up the Body of Christ.

The Church is still growing, not only numerically but also maturely. This process will continue until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the full and thorough knowledge of the Son of God. Meanwhile, those who are in the Body of Christ are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (verse 3) until the unity of the faith becomes a reality.

The portrait before us is of a perfect (mature, full grown) man, head and body. Christ is the Head—perfect, fully developed, possessing the fullness (*pleroma*) of divine glory, truth, attributes, character, authority, power. Likewise, the Body (Church) is portrayed in its full maturity in connection with the Head. The fullness of the Head is seen in the fullness of the Body, the Body having received its fullness from Him.

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (Colossians 1:19).

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

John also affirms it. “And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16 KJV).

Christ’s Body is not and will not be spiritually weak, emaciated, immature, anemic, diseased, uncoordinated, disabled, ineffective, lazy. Christ’s Body is the fullness of Himself, the Head. Because it is vitally and totally connected with the Head and receives its fullness from Him, the Body is destined to come up to the full measure of the spiritual, positional and moral character stature of Christ’s fullness.

The purpose of this is that we no longer be spiritual infants, “tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning [“dice-playing”] and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming” (NIV). Stability in our relationship with Christ and His Body, the Church, in accordance with His word will keep us from the victimization that many immature Christians suffer at the hands of religious charlatans. We must stay connected to the Head and to His Body.

“But speaking (sharing, demonstrating) the truth in love...” (verse 15). Some people do not speak the truth until they get mad. That does no good and a lot of harm. “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another” (verse 25 KJV).

Our physical bodies grow by being fed. We must eat in order to live and grow. A 200 pound man weighs far more than a 20 pound child for one simple reason—he has been eating much longer. First it was milk; then that stuff they put in jars; then eventually solid food.

The same is true spiritually. We grow by being fed. We must eat in order to live and grow. A person who is “grown up” in Christ is far more mature than a recent convert for one simple reason—he has been feeding on truth all of his Christian life.

We grow by being fed truth. And what is truth? Jesus said to the Father, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17 KJV). The Bible is the truth. We feed ourselves by assimilating the truth into our minds, building it into our character, incorporating it into our lifestyle, and putting it to practice in our behavior.

We also feed one another by speaking, demonstrating, sharing truth with one another. Yes, we must be truthful by not lying to one another. We must also be “truthful” in the sense of being full of truth and communicating it with others by word and example.

All of this is done in love, for without love a church is not a living organism; it is only an organized corpse. Like the church in Sardis, it might have a name that it is alive, but it is dead (Revelation 3:1).

“May grow up into Him in all things.” The head of a baby is proportionally large for its body. The infant’s head literally has a “head start” on the rest of its body. As the child grows, its body has to catch up with its head. That is the idea behind “growing up into Christ.” We have a lot of “catching up” to do to mature fully in the fullness of Christ, our Head. Nevertheless, that is God’s sovereign purpose in believers and it is our glorious destiny (Romans 8:28 - 30).

Christ is perfect. He cannot possibly improve. Our Head is complete and we find our completeness in Him (Colossians 2:10). As we remain connected with Him and communicate truth with one another in love, we grow up into Him in all things. This is not growing from sin into holiness. It is growing *in* holiness, growing “in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18 KJV).

Until now the emphasis has been on our growing *up* into Christ, our Head. In verse 16 the order is reversed. There the emphasis is on what proceeds *from* the Head (Christ) *to* the Body (the Church).

The head is so named for a reason. It *is* the head of our physical body. Thoughts, plans, purposes, directions, actions all flow from the head and are all coordinated by it. Our central nervous system with its efferent and afferent nerves permeate the whole body, sensitizing it, mobilizing it, energizing it, activating it.

Just so it is in the Body of Christ. The Son asked the Father to give us the Holy Spirit. The Father granted His request; so from the Father through the Son (the Head) the presence and power of the Holy Spirit flows throughout the entire Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells, fills, anoints, energizes, activates the Church as a whole and each member in particular.

That is why it is essential, vital, that we stay connected to the Head, Jesus Christ. Paul wrote that some “plugged” themselves into philosophical speculation and false “spirituality.” By so doing they became disconnected from Christ and therefore from His Body. “Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow” (Colossians 2:18, 19 NIV).

If we lose connection with the Head, we die spiritually, no matter how “spiritual” or “secure” we might imagine ourselves to be.

So in verse 16 we read that, like the physical body, the Body of Christ is “fitly framed and put together through every contact of the supply” (Driver, Plummer, and Briggs). The “supply” comes from Christ. Every member of His Body is in contact with that supply and works effectively in relationship with the other members “according to the proper working of each individual part” (NASB). The result is the steady and progressive growth of the Body of Christ, building itself up in love. The emphasis is on the growth of the whole Body. We function together and we grow together as we stay in contact with Christ and with one another. “This is

the way the body grows by cooperation under the control of the head and all in 'love'." (A. T. Robertson).

Chapter 5

The Church: The Temple Of God

God created human beings uniquely in His image, according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26). We are unlike any other of God's creatures. God is a person and He created us as persons.

Personhood in the true sense includes the ability to have conscious fellowship with God. For this reason personhood in the true sense does not belong to animals. In a general sense all nature glorifies God. Everything that has breath is called on to praise the Lord (Psalm 150:6). Although this scripture refers to the audible vocalizations of the animal kingdom and although animals are sentient beings, it does not indicate personal, conscious, intelligent awareness of God and communication with God. Any attempt to attribute personhood to animals only degrades the definition of personhood and therefore demeans real persons. Degrading the definition of personhood makes it meaningless. It demeans human beings without raising the status of animals. The result in society is dehumanization.

Even angels, who are "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14), do not share in the uniqueness of being created in God's image, according to His likeness. That uniqueness belongs only to human beings.

God's purpose in humanity is to create (and redeem) beings with whom He can communicate and who can communicate with Him on a deeply personal level. God is worthy of utmost love

and devotion. Love defines the character of God, and love must have an object. As we know, not everybody God loves loves God. Most people do not love God—they do not care about His well-being, His feelings and His honor; they do not hallow His name, seek the advancement of His kingdom, or care whether or not His will is done on earth; they do not obey Him or seek to glorify Him. They might assume some kind or degree of religion so long as God keeps His distance, does not interfere with their lives, or require honest and immediate and complete obedience. They believe that a little religion is good for everybody (just enough to “inoculate” them against the real thing), but the last thing they want is a personal loving relationship with God or with people who *do* have a personal loving relationship with God.

Nevertheless, God will have and does have a massive spiritual structure made up of people who have repented, who are reconciled to Himself by faith in Jesus Christ, who live in loving obedience and devotion to Him, and who share the same common faith and devotion. God is fulfilling in them His eternal purpose to have a people who are conformed to His character, with whom He will dwell in full and eternal relationship, and in whom to reveal His name, His mercy, and His glory.

God began with Adam and Eve. When Adam sinned, God called “Adam, where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). Of course God knew Adam’s location. What God was calling for was the relationship Adam’s sin had broken. Adam was alienated from God and therefore from himself. God was asking Adam to find *himself*. All of Adam’s morally accountable descendants except Jesus Christ have sinned and live in the same alienation until they personally turn to God and become reconciled to Him through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Tabernacle And The Temple.

To call to Himself a covenant people among whom to dwell was God’s purpose in Israel and was symbolized by the erection of the tabernacle (tent) in the wilderness. God said to Moses, “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8 KJV).

The tabernacle embodied God’s presence and glory. Its sacrificial system portrayed God’s plan of redemption that would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Eventually the tabernacle gave way to the magnificent temple in Jerusalem. The temple embodied the same presence and glory and portrayed the same divine plan of redemption. It was a house of sacrifice and prayer. God stated His purpose regarding the temple in 2 Chronicles 7:12 - 16. "For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name might be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually" (verse 16).

Through time, spiritual decline, and physical neglect, the temple deteriorated. It was repaired during the reign of Joash (2 Kings 12:5) and later during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22:5).

The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord. He was "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1 NKJV). That temple was later destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:9).

The second temple was built by Jews who returned from the Babylonian captivity (Ezra, chapters 3 - 6, also Haggai and Zechariah).

Much later, several years before the birth of Jesus Christ, King Herod began an ambitious expansion of the temple. When Jesus declared to some Jews who were present at the temple during the Passover, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," they retorted, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" John explains, "But He was speaking of the temple of His body." (John 2:18 - 22).

At the time of this encounter, the expansion of the temple that began under Herod ("the Great") had been in process for 46 years. It was impressive, prompting Jesus' disciples to exclaim, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" (Mark 13:1 KJV).

Jesus honored the temple, twice cleaning out the money changers and merchants. "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?' But you have made it a 'den of thieves'" (Mark 11:17).

When Jesus Christ was crucified, the veil of the temple that separated the most holy place from the holy place was ripped in two from the top to the bottom (Matthew 27:51). This signified that

the way into the true holiest of all (the presence of God) was opened by the sacrifice of Christ's flesh on the cross (Hebrews 10:19 - 22).

Just as Jesus had predicted (Mark 13:2), the temple in Jerusalem was razed by the Romans in A.D. 70.

So what are God's people to do without a central locus of His presence among them? God's answer is found in Isaiah 66:1 and 2, quoted later by Stephen (Acts 7:49, 50) during his defense before the Sanhedrin: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist,' says the Lord. 'But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.'"

When Jesus lived here on earth in the flesh, *He* was God's true temple among the people. John affirms: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled, pitched His tent] among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14 KJV).

Then Jesus returned to the Father, and the Father and He sent the Holy Spirit. To whom? To the disciples—*the Church*. Now the Church is the true dwelling place—temple—of God on earth. So it will be forever, as we read in Revelation 21:3 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

We go now to 1 Corinthians 3:9 - 17.

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a

reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." See also Matthew 21:42 - 44 and Acts 4:11, 12.

"We are God's fellow workers." God grows the harvest. God will build His temple. But He does not do it alone. We are fellow workers with Him.

Wherever Paul introduced the gospel to a city and region, he laid the foundation of the church in that place. That Foundation is Jesus Christ. Ministers and other Christian workers build on that Foundation. Every such laborer must be careful what he or she builds: gold, silver, precious building stones, not wood, hay, stubble (straw). The contrast pictured here is between an ornate marble edifice and a thatch roof hut. The extreme contrast is in the quality of the materials and the kind of workmanship.

Every true worker in the kingdom of God builds on the same Foundation—Jesus Christ. If someone builds on a different spiritual foundation, that person is not a worker in the kingdom. Such a person is not building even wood, hay and straw but spiritually toxic materials that will poison people's souls.

Some workers in the kingdom build diligently according to the supreme quality of the Foundation. They build truth, faith, holiness, Christlikeness, mature saints, a strong structure of solid spiritual relationships and order.

Some build carelessly. Almost anything goes; little or no discipleship and discipline; keep everybody happy and getting along; emphasize the social over the spiritual; shallow saints; a weak structure of surface social programs and secondary relationships.

Still others build nothing. In fact, they are a wrecking crew. They leave behind damaged churches and hurt people.

The quality of every Christian worker's product is revealed by the testing fire of divine scrutiny at the judgment seat of Christ. Some build diligently and will be rewarded accordingly. Some build carelessly and the Inspector will order everything torn down to the Foundation and burned. Their own salvation is salvaged by the same fire of divine scrutiny because, although they were sloppy workmen, they are nevertheless honest believers saved by grace.

The third ones are in real personal danger. Verse 17 warns that God will wreck the person who wrecks the church. All Christian workers, especially ministers, need to regard this with utmost seriousness and be very careful how they treat the church. We are ordained to build the church, not tear it down.

Many people assume that verses 16 and 17 refer to our physical body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Indeed that is stated in 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20. But here in 1 Corinthians 3 it is the *Church* that is the temple of God.

The Rock.

We go now to Matthew Chapter 16.

In answer to Jesus' question to His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus in turn said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (verses 17 – 19 NKJV).

In 2 Samuel 22:32 (Psalm 18:31) and in Psalm 62:2 and 6 the Scriptures declare that God alone is the rock. As God the Son, Jesus Christ alone is the rock on which the Church is built.

Earlier (John 1:42) Jesus informed Simon that he shall be called Cephas, that is, a rock (*Petros*). So here in Caesarea Philippi Jesus calls Peter a rock (*petros* a piece of a rock).

Jesus goes on to say that upon this rock (*petra* a rock ledge or cliff) He will build His Church. “This rock” is not Peter (notice the change from “you” to “this”). “This rock” is a reference to Christ Himself as the Son of God, as Peter had just confessed. Remember, there is no rock except God.

We saw in 1 Corinthians 3:11 that Jesus Christ is the only foundation of the Church. God used the apostles and prophets in laying the foundation of Christ in various places; that is, they exercised a foundational role and ministry at the beginning of the Church. In that sense, Christ is the cornerstone of that foundational act of God in which the apostles and prophets participated (Ephesians 2:20 and Revelation 21:14). God said through the prophet Isaiah, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily” (Isaiah 28:16 NKJV). Peter himself quotes this very passage in stating that Jesus Himself is the foundation stone, specifically the cornerstone. He states that believers also are living stones, built together on Jesus Christ as a holy temple where God Himself dwells by His Spirit and where He reveals His holiness, truth, power and glory (see 1 Peter 2:4 - 8).

Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, not the keys of the Church. The kingdom of heaven is God’s redemptive work and eschatological purpose in the world. This work and purpose is established in the Church and through the Church in the world. Peter used these apostolic keys when he introduced the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2), when he with John confirmed the disciples and established the church in Samaria following the evangelistic ministry of Philip (Acts 8), and when he opened the door of the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). Peter took the lead in laying the foundation of the Church among the Jews; Paul took the lead in laying the foundation of the Church among the Gentiles.

Jesus did not establish a permanent, perpetual episcopacy built on Peter, to be passed on to the bishops of Rome. The other apostles present at Caesarea Philippi did not regard Jesus’ words to Peter to mean the supremacy of Peter or any permanent episcopacy built on him. In fact, later the apostles (including Peter) argued among themselves who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Mark 9:33, 34), a conversation that would not have taken place if Jesus had settled the issue at Caesarea Philippi. Also, Jesus would have handled the apostles’ dispute in Mark 9:33 and 34 differently.

Paul did not regard Peter as the rock of the Church. Paul referred to Peter as a pillar (Galatians 2:9); then in verse 11 he referred to the time in Antioch when he opposed Peter to his face over an issue that was vital to the nature of the gospel itself.

Peter writes that believers also are living stones built together as a holy temple on the foundation of Jesus Christ, a temple where God Himself dwells by His Spirit and where He reveals His holiness, truth, power and glory, as we read in 1 Peter 2:4 - 8.

The Building.

We go now to Ephesians 2:19 - 22.

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom also you are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”

In this passage we find three names of the Church: citizens (of a holy nation—1 Peter 2:9), a household (family), and a temple. We will address the first two later. Our subject of interest now is the last of the three—a temple.

We have just addressed the foundational role and ministry of the apostles and prophets in the Church, with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief Cornerstone. A foundation is not carried through the rest of the building. A foundation is not present in the walls or the roof. It remains where it was placed. Once a foundation is laid, the rest of the structure is built on it and conforms to it. For that reason we do not have apostles and prophets (in the strict Ephesians 4:11 sense) in the superstructure of the Church. Their role and their ministry remain firmly established historically and theologically at the foundation of the Church, joined and aligned with the Cornerstone. That foundation is firm, permanent, immovable, unchangeable, irreplaceable, untransferable, determinative. To that apostolic and prophetic foundation God revealed His

word, and that once-for-all revelation is integral to the foundation itself. Their foundational ministry and foundational message are inseparable.

“In whom,” that is, in Jesus Christ Himself, the whole building is joined together. “Joined together” is a translation of a Greek word that is found in Scripture only here and in Ephesians 4:16. This unique building grows (“rises” NIV) into a holy temple in the Lord. As the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ is the ultimate reference point of the whole foundation and also of the entire building and every “structure” in it. It is all in Him.

Just as in a body so also in a building we find interconnectedness. In a body the interconnectedness is largely functional and dynamic; in a building it is largely structural and stabilizing.

In the Temple of God every “structure” (floor, walls, roof) of the building is firmly in its place. Each is essential and integral to the integrity and strength of the whole building of God. Just as in the Body of Christ every member (believer) has a function, so in the Temple of God every living stone (believer) has a place in the stable and magnificent structure of God’s House. In a real sense, believers are never “out of church.” The integrity and stability of God’s House depends on each “stone” remaining firmly in its set place in Christ and His Church—“steadfast, unmoveable” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Stable stones, strong temple. Stable saints, strong church. That is how God’s building “rises to become a holy temple in the Lord” (NIV).

At its beginning, God’s new covenant sanctuary was not an impressive “structure.” A handful of disciples, 500 plus “brethren,” 120 in an upper room, gatherings of believers here and there. No imposing buildings, no elaborate programs, no impressive rituals, no political influence. Nevertheless, it was the dwellingplace of God by the Spirit. It kept rising up, and it is still rising up. The Church has been under construction since its beginning, and it will continue to be under construction until Christ returns. No “occupancy permit” is needed because God has been occupying it from the start. Believers are being built together continuously in Christ, a holy place where God dwells by His Spirit.

The Temple Is Holy.

Here again it is emphasized that the Temple of God is holy. Just as a material house of worship is set apart from the profane to a sacred purpose, so the Church, including all of its individual local entities, is set apart from the moral pollutions of the world to a most sacred purpose. It is holy; therefore, every component of it, every "living stone," must be holy. A holy God will dwell only in a holy Sanctuary.

We remember that in 1 Corinthians 3:17 Paul writes, "the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." Because the temple of God is holy, and we *are* the temple of God, we are declared holy. In other words, you *are* holy; so live up to what you are declared to be. You are holy; *be* holy.

Following up on what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 3, the inspired apostle emphasizes the purity of God's Sanctuary again in 2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1. There he asks a series of five questions with obvious answers. Here is the last one: "what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God" (verse 16. Some Alexandrian and western manuscripts read "we" instead of "you").

The apostle draws from several Old Testament passages in formulating the divine appeal (see Leviticus 26:11, 12, 32, 38; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 37:27). Because believers have these marvelous promises, we are urged to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God (7:1). These are among the "exceeding great and precious promises" that motivate believers to conform ourselves in holiness to the moral nature (character) of God (2 Peter 1:4). That is, these promises motivate us to be holy as He is holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15).

As the Temple of God, the Church is to remain pure and holy, separated from the selfishness and the sinful practices that pollute the ungodly world, and set apart to a holy God. It is to remain morally clean, repaired when damaged, kept free from spiritual "dry rot." The "termites" of false teaching, immorality, pride, strife, division, and every other evil infestation must be "exterminated" by love, truth, humility, discipline, repentance, and restoration. Again, God will dwell only in a holy Temple.

This applies to each and every believer, to every “living stone” in God’s Temple. Because the Church is the Temple of God, the physical body of every believer in it is also a sanctified temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19. See also Jesus’ statement in John 2:20).

The Fortress Of The Truth.

Another feature of the Church related to a building is found in 1 Timothy 3:15. There the Church is described as “the pillar and ground of the truth.” A picture comes to mind of a large cathedral that is held firm and stable by its massive flying buttresses. That describes the Church’s unyielding support and protection of the truth. Every institution of society is morally obligated to function according to the truth. In the midst of them all stands the true Church, God’s “Fort Knox” where the truth is securely preserved and protected.

Other institutions might fail to uphold the truth, and some have failed to do so. When that happens the true Church must stand firm and remain a place where the truth is secure. If the Church fails to be firm in upholding the truth, the world has nowhere else to look for certitude.

We go now to Hebrews 3:1 - 6.

God said concerning Moses, “My servant Moses . . . is faithful in all mine house” (Numbers 12:7 KJV). The writer of the Epistle To The Hebrews alludes to this in Hebrews 3:1 - 6. The word “house” in the passage in Hebrews clearly refers to a building, not a household (family). The passage talks about a structure that someone *built* (verses 3 and 4).

Moses was faithful *in* all of God’s house (Israel). So Christ also was faithful to God. The big difference—the one that shows Christ’s superiority over Moses—is that God through Jesus Christ built the house; thus Christ is Lord *over* the house, His own house (the Church).

Believers are that house (temple, sanctuary) “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (verse 6 KJV).

Our hope in Christ is real. It is not a hoax, a religious myth. Remember, “hope” is the anticipation of what is absolutely certain. It is based on God’s word and His works. It has been firmly established by God’s great historical redemptive acts in Jesus Christ. Our hope is the “anchor” of our souls (Hebrews 6:18, 19). We have absolute confidence, courage, and boldness in our hope. We glory and rejoice in it. So we are urged to get a firm “bulldog” grip on it and hold on to it tenaciously.

We believers are God’s house (building, temple, sanctuary) *if indeed* we hold fast in our souls. Here (and also in verse 14) we have the great contingency (“if”). It is to be regarded with utmost seriousness. God’s house—His Temple, His Church—is elect. The Church cannot and will not fail. The contingency applies to individual believers; so does the warning. To be a permanent part of that house (verse 6) and to become eternal partakers of Christ (verse 14), we must hold fast to the end (see also Jesus’ statement to Peter in John 13:8). They who do are the elect parts that make up the elect whole of God’s building. Let us make our individual calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God . . . (Revelation 3:12).

Chapter 6

The Church: God’s Sheep

From ancient times God has called His people His sheep and has revealed Himself to them as their Shepherd. This definition of God's chosen people was especially relevant to people in regions where shepherding was a major part of the culture. Understood in those terms, the designation is highly meaningful for believers in every culture and age, including today.

When we think of a flock of sheep being tended by a faithful shepherd, a tender and meaningful picture emerges. In the sheep we see helplessness and vulnerability; total dependence on the shepherd for protection, survival and well being; close relationship with the shepherd, trust and obedience; security, peace and worry free contentment; total fulfillment.

In the shepherd we see faithfulness; watchful care and protection; full responsibility for the well being of the sheep and a commitment to fulfill that trust; self sacrifice for the sake of the flock; diligence in disciplining the sheep; providing everything needed for the health and growth of the flock; special attention to the lambs and to the sick and injured of the flock; keeping each sheep close to himself and to the rest of the flock.

No wonder God's people are called His sheep!

God Called Israel His Flock.

In the Old Testament God called Israel His flock. "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" wrote the psalmist (Psalm 100:3 KJV).

The psalmist prayed, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock" (Psalm 80:1).

God led His people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron (Psalm 77:20). Moses had to learn to be a shepherd. In the court of Pharaoh he was trained to rule, to exercise political and military power. That is how he thought he would deliver Israel. When he tried it, it backfired and he moved completely away from Egypt. For the next forty years he had to learn, to be trained, to be a shepherd. He did so by tending someone else's sheep. Then and only then was he

prepared to lead Israel, not with political and military might but as a shepherd faithfully and patiently tending someone else's sheep—God's sheep.

Later, when God chose a king to rule Israel, He prepared a shepherd boy by the name of David. Like Moses before him, David spent many hours in solitude with the sheep. Unknown to him, it was his schooling for a much greater assignment. At least twice during those days David risked his own life as he depended on God to save the sheep under his care, once from a lion and once from a bear (see 1 Samuel 17:34 - 37). The life of a faithful shepherd had its moments of high drama as well as quiet solitude and contemplation. He came to experience the power as well as the presence of God.

When David sinned in numbering the people, God gave him the option of three days of pestilence as his punishment. During that horrible three day period David interceded before God for the nation. "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done?" (1 Chronicles 21:17 KJV). Only God knew the answer to that last question as the angel of the Lord executed God's selective judgment among the people, which He curtailed in answer to David's humble confession and intercession. The pertinent point here is that David showed his shepherd's heart for Israel.

Out of David's shepherd heart God gave us the beautiful Twenty-third Psalm.

At times murderers ravaged God's flock and false shepherds exploited and scattered them. This is a recurring theme of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. God warned that He would judge the hirelings who posed as Israel's shepherds (see Ezekiel 34:1 - 10). He promised that He would give His flock true shepherds who would lead them and feed them (see Jeremiah 23:1 - 4). This promise is fulfilled in shepherds (pastors) Christ has called and ordained to lead and feed His flock, the Church.

Christ Is The True Shepherd.

All of this applies to and is fulfilled in Christ and His Church. Jesus Christ is the true Shepherd prophesied in The Scriptures. Isaiah 40:10 is one of the prophecies of the coming of the

Messiah. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (KJV).

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them because they were as sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36).

John 10:1 - 5 records an illustration Jesus gave about a shepherd and his sheep: "Most assuredly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Verse 7 records that Jesus' hearers did not understand what He was telling them in the illustration.

Jesus spoke to them again: "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." The "other sheep" (verse 16) are the gentile converts whom Christ said He will bring into His fold.

Here Jesus calls Himself the good shepherd. Jesus applies to Himself all the qualities of a good shepherd, even to laying down His life for the sheep. He is the perfect fulfillment of Isaiah 40:11.

In Hebrews 13:20 Jesus is called “the great shepherd.” In 1 Peter 5:4 He is called “the chief shepherd.”

John 21:15 - 17 records the conversation that took place between the risen Lord and Peter, and the solemn charge Jesus gave his apostle (and to all true ministers):

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ He said to him again the second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep’.”

John’s record of Christ’s charge contains two different words for “feed.” In the first and third charge, the word is *boske*, from *bosko*. It means feed, supply food and nourishment. The word in the second charge is *poimaine*, from *poimaino*. It has the wider meaning of tending in general. Trench suggests that in going back to *boske* in the third charge, our Lord emphasizes that feeding the flock is the shepherd’s primary function and responsibility. The shepherd of Christ’s flock must not become so busy “managing” the flock that he/she neglects the essential responsibility to feed them the word of God.

What Jesus said to Peter that day He meant for all the disciples, and it is recorded in the Gospel as Christ’s charge to all who shepherd His flock in all generations.

We hear it in Paul’s final charge to the elders of the church at Ephesus, recorded in Acts 20:28 and 29.

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

We find it again in the general charge that Peter himself gave to all elders of the Church, then living and those in the future.

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:1 - 4).

Characteristics And Qualities Of Christ's Sheep.

We return to Jesus' words spoken to the Jews, recorded in John 10. We left off at verse 16; we pick up the narrative in verse 25 and follow it through verse 30. The Jews surrounding Jesus asked Him to tell them plainly if He was the Christ. Here is the Lord's reply: “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father [literally, the Father] are one.”

It is very important that we examine verses 27 through 29 very carefully. They describe some essential characteristics of Christ's sheep.

First, Christ knows His sheep. He did not become acquainted with them through a learning process, that is, through experience. He has known them from all eternity. He knows them in the sense of recognizing them, owning them, and affirming that they are His. He also knows them personally and intimately in a continuing relationship.

Also, Christ's sheep hear His voice (present active indicative, continuous action: "continue hearing His voice").

"And they follow Him" (also present active indicative, continuous action: "continue following Him"). Remember verses 3 - 5.

Jesus Christ has no sheep who do not follow Him. A person who is not following Christ is not one of His sheep, regardless of past prayers or past or present experiences, associations, affiliations, or religious knowledge and feelings. This is the test to determine if you are one of Christ's sheep: *are you hearing His voice (in His word) and following Him?*

Then, as a result, Christ gives His sheep eternal life. Here again the tense of the verb is present active indicative, continuous action: "I continue to give them eternal life."

Eternal life is not a self-contained package that we accept from Christ and then carry away. Eternal life is a relational gift that is given the moment a person believes on Jesus Christ and then continues as a conscious, living relationship with the Father and the Son (John 17:3). We must "abide in Christ" to remain spiritually alive, just as a branch must "abide in the vine" to remain biologically alive (John 15:4 - 6).

All of this Christ's sheep will do, and all of this He will do for His sheep. The result: "they shall never perish." People who are hearing His voice and following Him are enjoying eternal life now and are secure now and forever in that shepherd-sheep relationship.

Also in verse 29 we read that Christ's sheep are a gift of the Father to Him in the eternal purpose of God. That gift was not given without Christ's own action and participation. In fact, Christ was vitally active and participated fully in bringing to Himself the Father's gift of His sheep. Christ gave His life for the sheep (verses 10 and 11). He purchased them with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Christ will not lose His sheep. They are being kept through the Father's name (John 17:11), just as Jesus kept them through the Father's name while He was with them in the world (verse 12).

He keeps them from the guilt and penalty of sin by keeping them from the power and practice of sin. The Father has the power to do both.

Another feature of sheep is that they are productive. Sheep are not pets to be kept as mere entertainment. Shepherds put a lot into their sheep and they expect something from their investment. Sheep reproduce and thus perpetuate, develop and expand the flock. Sheep provide wool and other products. So it is with Christ's sheep. We are to "reproduce" spiritually and expand the "flock" by making our own children disciples of Jesus Christ and bringing others to Him. Christ has invested His life for us and in us. Our love for the Shepherd should motivate us to be as fruitful and productive as possible in and through our living relationship with Him.

The Blessings of God's Flock.

For this we go to the familiar Twenty-third Psalm.

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

³He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Because the Lord is our Shepherd and we are His sheep:

- (1) We lack nothing;
- (2) We rest and feed in green pastures and beside quiet waters;
- (3) He restores our souls;
- (4) He leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake;

- (5) We fear no evil because He is with us;
- (6) His rod and staff provide protection and discipline;
- (7) He provides for us in adversity;
- (8) He provides the healing anointing when we are sick or injured;
- (9) We have an overflowing abundance of grace and provision;
- (10) He gives us a lifetime of His goodness and mercy;
- (11) We have a glorious eternal future in the house of the Lord.

Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32 KJV).

Lost Sheep.

When the Bible refers to "lost sheep," it is using the term in a broad sense as a simile for people who are not obeying God. These lost sheep might have wandered away from Christ, or they might never have known Him. At one time in our lives we were all lost sheep. Thus the prophet Isaiah declares, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him [Christ] the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6 NKJV).

It was also in the broad sense of a simile that Jesus is said to have been moved with compassion toward the people "because they were as sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6:34).

In this same sense the apostle Peter wrote, "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25 NKJV). This reminds us of David's familiar words in Psalm 23:3, "He restoreth my soul" (KJV). If you have wandered away, return to the Shepherd now. He will restore your soul. Then stay close to Him. The wolf attacks the stragglers, not the sheep who stay close to the shepherd.

It was in a *covenant* sense that God referred to ancient Israel as His sheep (see Psalm 79:13; 95:7; 100:3; Jeremiah 23:1; 50:6, 17; Ezekiel 34:6, 11, 12). In this same covenant sense Jesus said that He was sent “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

It was in the context of His relationship with His disciples as His sheep in a *new covenant* sense that Jesus spoke to them about His imminent crucifixion. Referring to Zechariah 13:7, He said “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered’” (Mark 14:27 NKJV).

Jesus said that one day He will separate the “sheep” from the “goats” (Matthew 25:31 - 46). To the righteous He will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” To the others He will say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (verses 34, 41, 46 NKJV).

These are some of the most solemn, soul-searching words spoken by the Lord. The question is: which are you? Are you one of His sheep, or are you a rebellious “goat”?

If you are not listening to Christ and following Him, He urges you to come to Him now and let Him make you one of His own. In John 10:9 Jesus says “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

We are familiar with Jesus’ tender and compassionate Parable of the Lost Sheep. My article on this parable was first published in the April 20, 1975 issue of The Pentecostal Evangel (now known as Today’s Pentecostal Evangel). It is included here because it speaks directly to our theme.

THE LOST SHEEP

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

-Luke 15:4-7

One of Jesus' most beautiful parables portrays the concern of a shepherd over one wayward sheep.

Never having been a sheep, none of us can say for sure just what fancies stimulated that one sheep to leave the flock and strike out on its own. But we have seen people behave like the wooly rebel in the parable. So perhaps the impulses are similar.

Like its human counterpart, perhaps the sheep looked over the fence at what seemed to be greener pastures.

"There's a world of exciting experiences out there, and here I am, stuck with ninety-nine boring duds. We go only where the shepherd leads us, eat only what he feeds us, and do only what he says.

"Follow here'. 'Don't go there!' 'Come!' 'Go!' 'Wait'. 'Rest'. I've had it with taking orders. These conformists can stay in their rut if they want to. Me? I'm born free. I don't need anybody to tell me what to do, and I don't want any responsibilities to tie me down.

"I've been repressed by the reactionary rules of the shepherd long enough. It's time I discovered life for myself. I'm going to do my own thing. I'm going to be free!"

So as the flock headed home, our independent-minded friend began drifting toward the rear. When they rounded the next bend, his chance would come! Tailing along behind, he let the rest of the flock turn and disappear from sight.

This was it! With a bound he left the trail and was gone, his heart beating wildly with excitement.

Over the foothills he scampered, climbing higher and higher. What a view! He saw things he had never seen before.

He paused only a moment, because the strange new thrills that rippled through his little spirit drove him on.

So this is freedom, he thought. What a heady experience!

Once ignited, his reservoir of volatile impulses quickly exploded. But once the initial eruption was over, the anti-climax set in.

"That's over; so what's next? More, more, I want more!"

Meanwhile, our self-seeking friend had been too busy to notice his own lengthening shadow. The sun disappeared behind the hills. Clouds gathered. The sharp air stung his nostrils.

Suddenly he sensed something else he had never experienced before. He could not define it, but he felt the sharp torment of it. We human beings call it *fear*.

Satiated desires suddenly lost their attraction. Once they had appealed to him as liberators, but now they mocked him as masters that had betrayed him.

Darkness drew its shroud around him. Howling wolves taunted him. Thunder crashed over his head. Fleeting fingers of lightning reached out for him from a dozen directions as icy blasts of wind drove sharp pellets of sleet against his shivering flesh. Cocky self-confidence surrendered to despair.

What he had dreamed would be an exercise of freedom turned out to be a nightmare--an aimless, senseless, irresponsible plunge into confusion and loss. He had started out with no real sense of direction, and now he had arrived at where he was going--nowhere. He was alone, completely lost, and his bleating cries were being carried away by the laughing wind.

Just so it is with people who wander though life without Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. They are lost--lost to the cause of Christ here on earth, lost to the great opportunities for service in the kingdom of God, lost to God forever, lost to the eternal blessings that would have been theirs to enjoy had they obeyed, lost souls in eternal darkness!

For one person who is without Christ forever, all the combined misery and woe of all time cannot begin to equal the tragedy of that one word--*lost!*

It is no wonder Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36, 37).

Meanwhile, as dusk painted subdued tones on the landscape, the flock in the valley prepared for the night. Safe inside the sheep-fold, they were content. Everything good was theirs, for they had stayed close to the shepherd.

But the shepherd was troubled, deeply troubled. He counted his sheep once; then twice. There were only ninety-nine. One was missing! Out there in the darkness and danger, one sheep was stumbling in confusion.

So, leaving the comfort and safety of the fold, the shepherd committed himself to the dangerous rescue operation.

Into the mountains he went, wind and rain lashing his flesh, branches tearing at him, wild animals snarling nearby.

On he stumbled, all the while calling to his sheep. Oh, what the shepherd had to suffer because of the foolish disobedience of one sheep!

So it was with Jesus. Our rebellion cost Him everything, including His life! "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," He said (John 10:11). The prophet had foretold it: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

All at once the shepherd heard a faint, pitiful cry. With quickened step he pressed on toward the advancing sound.

Then he found it! Caught and held fast in a thicket, the exhausted, trembling sheep had come to the end of its wanderings. Gone were the rebellious impulses. Gone was the ambition to live its own life to please itself. It was back in the arms of the shepherd, and that was all that mattered.

One night many years ago at the close of D. L. Moody's sermon on the lost sheep, Ira Sankey sat down at his organ and began to sing a poem he had recently found, written by Elizabeth C. Clephane. Publicly composing the music as he went along, he sang:

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay

In the shelter of the fold,

But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold:
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?'
But the Shepherd made answer:
'This of mine has wandered away from Me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep'.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry--
Sick and helpless, and ready to die.

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?'
'They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back'.
'Lord whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?'

'They are pierced tonight by many a thorn'.

"But all through the mountains, thunder-riven,

And up from the rocky steep,

There arose a cry to the gate of heaven,

'Rejoice! I have found my sheep!'

And the angels echoed around the throne,

'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!'"

As the song ended, the congregation was hushed. Tears flowed, and wandering sheep surrendered to the Good Shepherd. Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Surrender to Him now. He will save you and give you true freedom.

Chapter 7

The Church: The Bride Of Christ

Masculinity/Femininity.

To understand the Bride Of Christ as a definition of the Church, we must first understand the concept of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity mean more than gender

and/or sex. The basic meaning of masculinity is *that which acts upon; provides*. The basic meaning of femininity is *that which receives the action, processes it, and presents it back*. In this primary definition, God is masculine and the creation is feminine.

God is the source, the creator, the provider, the initiator, the protector, the sustainer, the controller. The creation, including the human race, is the recipient, the responder, the processor, the producer, the dependent, the co-operator.

We see this masculine/feminine principle in operation in nature. Jesus said that God “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Paul said to the pagans at Lystra, “He [God] did not leave Himself without witness, in that He gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). In this action God is masculine and the earth is feminine. The earth receives the sunshine and the rain, processes, refines, produces, reproduces, gives back life out of life—all in the will of God, for His glory and the highest benefit of all.

This masculine/feminine model operates in the male/female relationship in general and in marriage in particular. According to his ability the husband/father is the main provider, protector, governor, initiator. The wife/mother is the main recipient, processor, producer, responder. In reproduction the husband provides and the wife produces. It is all in harmony with the plan and purpose of God for His glory and the highest well-being of all.

God And Israel.

Although this masculine/feminine principle applies directly and in its highest sense to the relationship between Christ and the Church (and the individual believer), it applied also to the relationship that God established between Himself and Israel under the Old Covenant.

Speaking to Israel through the prophet Isaiah God declared, “For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name . . . (Isaiah 54:5). “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5).

Through the prophet Jeremiah God plead with Judah, “Return, O backsliding children,’ says the LORD; ‘for I am married to you” (Jeremiah 3:14).

Through Hosea God declared, “I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD” (Hosea 2:19, 20).

Many see a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church in the account of Abraham’s search for a wife for his son Isaac, recorded in Genesis 24. In this typology Abraham represents God the Father; Isaac represents Jesus; Rebekah represents the Church; the servant represents the Holy Spirit. As Abraham sent his servant to find and bring a wife for Isaac, so God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to win and bring a Bride to His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a beautiful type; however, as in all typology (as well as in all parables) one must not press the details.

The Song Of Solomon is full of parallels between Solomon’s love for the Shunemite girl and God’s love for Israel (and the Church). The Song Of Solomon is far more than a passionate description of Solomon’s “love life.” If it were so, it would neither deserve nor have a place in Holy Scripture. Its oriental language transcends the natural. Its highest meaning and message is embodied in the holy love bond between Jesus Christ and His Church (and each believer in particular). Here are just a few of the familiar passages from the Song:

“Your name is ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you” (1:3).

“He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love” (2:4).

“His mouth is most sweet, yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved. And this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem” (5:16).

“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine” (6:3).

The Bridegroom And The Bride.

John the Baptist spoke of the relationship between Jesus and himself in terms of a wedding party. "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled" (John 3:29). Jesus is the bridegroom; John the Baptist was the "best man"; the bride is present, though not identified.

Jesus spoke of himself as the bridegroom in His response to the question of the disciples of John the Baptist regarding fasting. They asked Him why they and the Pharisees fasted often but His disciples did not. Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15).

The Bride of Christ as a definition of the Church is developed fully in the Pauline epistles. Remember, the full revelation of the Church was given to Paul.

In Romans 7:4 we read that believers "have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God." Our "marriage" to Jesus, the risen Lord, is a life giving bond that brings forth the fruit of holiness, praise, worship, glory, honor, and service.

In 2 Corinthians 11:2 and 3 Paul says to the believers, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent beguiled Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity [some manuscripts add "and purity"] that is in Christ."

When we think of a person who is truly in love, we picture a person whose devotion to the object of his or her love is single-minded and pure. "True blue," as we say. That person is faithful. He or she is not interested in anyone else. The love letters, emails, text messages, phone calls flow back and forth freely. Their eyes meet often. There are smiles and gentle touches,

kindnesses and courtesies. So it is with the person who has truly “fallen in love” with Jesus Christ. The Bible is a treasury of 66 “love letters” from our Bridegroom. Just as a lover delights in reading and re-reading the love letters he or she receives, even so believers delight in getting alone with Christ’s “love letters” to His Bride with renewed pleasure every time we re-read them. We delight in being in His presence in prayer and worship. The Holy Spirit introduced us to Jesus and thus began the eternal romance of the soul.

We find the full exposition of this “mystery” in Ephesians 5:22 - 33. The parallels are close and profound.

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot of wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

As the apostle states, the main subject of this passage is the deep love bond between Christ and His bride, the Church. All of the features of this divine love bond are modeled by the husband/wife relationship. They are also the divine standard for the husband/wife relationship itself. Sin (selfishness) mars the earthly model so that the image of the heavenly is distorted rather than reflected. Complete happiness in marriage is realized only when the same love bond that exists between Christ and the Church also unites the husband and the wife.

First is mutual submission (verse 21). Christ submitted Himself to the will of the Father on our behalf. He submitted to becoming a servant for our sake (Philippians 2:7), including giving His life for us. In love He is fully and eternally committed to us and our good. This is His joy (Hebrews 12:2). In turn, our willing submission to our totally self-giving Bridegroom is a supreme joy.

The husband is the head (not “bullhead”) of the wife just as Christ is the Head of the Church (verses 22, 23). The head does not repress or enslave the body; rather it coordinates it, directs it, enables it to function, “saves” it from harm. So Christ does for His Church. Christ is the Savior of His body.

Wives are to be subject to their own husbands in all things just as the Church is subject to Christ. Husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loves the Church, even to giving Himself for her (verses 24 - 27). A wife has no problem submitting herself to a wise, self-giving, courteous, thoughtful husband, one who loves her just as Christ loves the Church. Her deposit of trust is wisely invested and fully safeguarded in that kind of love. She is safe, liberated, fulfilled.

Marriage is a “one flesh” unity (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5). Therefore a man who loves his own wife is also loving himself (verses 28 - 30). He stays in touch with her feelings. Her concerns are his concerns. He shares her joys. Together they bear life’s passing sorrows, and together they share life’s happy days.

No sane man ever hated his own flesh. The man who abuses his wife is abusing his own flesh. Christ never abuses His Bride. With unfailing love He nourishes and cherishes us. He stays in touch with our feelings. Our concerns are His concerns. He empathizes with us in our sorrows. He shares our joys. He is our Head; we are the members of His body. He saved us from ourselves and thus from our sins, our misdirections, our “malfunctions,” our self-inflicted wounds, our self-destruction.

In verse 31 the apostle quotes verse 24 of the divine “founding document” of marriage, recorded in Genesis chapter 2. “This is a great mystery” (verse 32). That is, “this mystery is great.” The earthly “mystery” of marriage is great because its mystery is derived from and is a model of the profoundly great heavenly mystery of Christ and the Church.

Both in Matthew 25 and in Revelation 19 we have the promise and also the warning that the Bridegroom (Christ) is coming. It is a promise to those who love Him; it is a warning to those who hate and refuse Him.

Some years ago Pat Boone was interviewed on KMED-TV Channel 5 in Medford, Oregon. During the interview Pat spoke extensively and enthusiastically about the future return of Christ. Immediately following the interview, one of the hosts remarked to the other, "What a depressing thought!" Although she did not realize it, her remark said a lot about herself. It was obvious that she was not a believer. Had she loved Christ, the thought of His return would have been uplifting, not depressing. She had no hope and was without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). Perhaps she has found Christ since then and is rejoicing in the hope He brings.

Christ's return is the "blessed hope" of the believer. We are eager for His coming, just as a bride is eager for her wedding day.

Does Jesus have your heart? If not, what does?

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'" (Revelation 22:17).

Chapter 8

The Church: The Family Of God

Family (household) is another definition of the Church found in The Scriptures. It is one of three (fellowcitizens, household, temple) in the ecclesiological passage in Ephesians 2:19 - 22. It is found in verse 19:

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”

As “fellowcitizens with the saints,” our spiritual culture as God’s redeemed family is not of this present worldly age. More about this later. Right now our attention is on the Church as the Family of God.

By creation and by sovereignty, God is the Father of all mankind (Deuteronomy 32:6; Malachi 2:10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; Hebrews 12:9). Nevertheless, only believers in Christ are the true children of God, not by creation or physical generation but by the new birth and the Spirit of adoption (“sonship” huiothesia). Adoption is a choice; it is a commitment; it is full inclusion in the family with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities thereof. The Church is God’s “forever family.”

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:14 - 17).

Please see also Romans 9:2 and 26; and Galatians 3:26 - 4:7.

In Ephesians 3:14 and 15 Paul states that every family in heaven and upon earth is named from the Father. In this passage he is not speaking specifically of the Church as the family of God. He is referring to all the various classifications of moral beings, angelic and human. They all receive their being from Him (see Acts 17:26). The common relationship of all believers in Christ transcends all of these national, racial, tribal, linguistic and cultural differences. It unites us not only with all other believers now alive on earth but also with all those who have gone on

to be with Christ. In its fullest sense it unites us even with the vast host of elect angels and also with all of redeemed creation (Colossians 3:11; Revelation 5:9, 10 and 7:9, 10).

In a very essential and profound way our brothers and sisters in Christ are closer to us than those members of our natural family who are not born of the Spirit. We have a relationship, a family unity, that the unregenerate do not have unless and until they come into a right relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ. That is why we refer to each other as “brother” and “sister.” If we meet a fellow believer from somewhere miles away, the family bond in Christ is sensed immediately.

Qualities And Characteristics.

The Bible describes the qualities and characteristics of the members of God’s family.

First, they do God’s will. Jesus said, “Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:48 - 50 KJV).

The members of God’s family have separated themselves from the moral pollution of this present age and are committed to live holy lives. They do not just “talk the talk,” but also “walk the walk.” How they talk is how they act. As we just read in Romans 8:14, the sons of God are led by the Spirit. They do not follow the desires of the flesh.

“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18). Paul is referring to a combination of Old Testament passages that contain this appeal (see Leviticus 19:2; 26:12; Isaiah 52:11). He continues in chapter 7, verse 1: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

In Ephesians 1:3 - 6 the apostle states that they who have been predestined "to adoption as sons" are also chosen to "be holy and without blame before Him." Election to sonship is also election to unblemished holiness. The two are inseparable. Personal holiness is an essential quality of spiritual adoption. Please read also 1 John 3:1 - 10.

God's children are also peacemakers. Jesus said so. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). Peacemaking and peacekeeping must happen first within the family of God. The Church must be the model and showcase of peace before a strife ridden world. God forbids division in the Church (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25). We are commanded to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). As we live in peace within the family of God, we can be God's agents of peace in our world. So, "let the peace of God rule [umpire] in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15).

According to Romans 8:29, the sons of God are predestined to be conformed to the moral character image of the Son of God, our "elder Brother" (see Hebrews 2:10 - 13).

As one studies through the epistles of John, particularly First John, one sees that love is the basic motive and spiritual principle that rules the family of God. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). As is the Father, so is His family. His spiritual children are like Him.

Take a "tour" of the love passages in the first epistle of John. Here are the "points of interest." Spend some time "viewing" each one. First John 2:9 - 11; 3:10 - 17; 4:20, 21; 5:1, 2.

Love is what defines Christ's disciples. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

We go next to the first epistle of Peter. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22). "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

Family Attitudes.

Family attitudes include:

- no murmuring and disputing (Philippians 2:14, 15);
- consideration of the consciences of weaker brothers and sisters, and no judging of the stronger ones (Romans 14:10 - 15, 21; 1 Corinthians 8:9 - 13);
- not going to law with one another before the secular courts, but settling disputes with one another within the church family (1 Corinthians 6:18);
- not speaking evil of one another (James 4:11);
- treating the older women as mothers and the younger women as sisters with all purity (1 Timothy 5:2);
- doing good to one another as we have opportunity (Galatians 6:10; see also Matthew 25:34 - 40; James 2:15, 16).

Of course at times families disagree, bump heads, have misunderstandings, get hurt. They also forgive, refuse to hold grudges, stick together and stick up for one another, sacrifice for one another, share things and share common values, grow together and mature together.

Family Discipline.

Please read 2 Thessalonians 3:6 - 15. The family of God must be accountable to God. It must be accountable to The Scriptures, the written word of God. It must also be accountable to church leadership and to one another. If and when necessary, scriptural discipline must be exercised among the members of the family of God. The family of God has responsibilities and accountability as well as privileges and benefits. See Paul's charge to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:3, 4, and his charge to Titus in Titus 3:10, 11.

Of course, this has to be done in love and for the greatest good of all. Thus we notice that 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 6 emphasizes discipline (“withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly”), and verse 15 emphasizes restoration (“Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”). Please read also 2 Corinthians 13:1 - 10, especially verses 2 and 10.

Paul had to exercise discipline in the church at Corinth. Thus we see that Divine revelation was not given merely as a list of instructions or a technical manual. It was given in the flow of practical human experience and relationships.

The problems at Corinth were many: strife, divisions, pride, immorality, believers suing each other in the civil courts, inconsideration of others’ consciences, abuse of the Lord’s Supper, misuse of the gifts of the Spirit. Still, Paul wrote to the church as a whole as “them who are sanctified, saints by calling,” and he thanked God always on their behalf for the grace of God that was given to them by Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:1 - 9). At its core, the church at Corinth was made up of a solid body of “saints,” even though the divisions touched all of them (1 Corinthians 1:12).

In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul described a form of sexual perversion that even the surrounding immoral pagan society abhorred. Paul commanded the whole church to disfellowship the offender. The very integrity and survival of the church itself was at stake, as well as the soul of the offender himself. The effect was positive and redemptive. In his second letter to them the apostle commends the church for their obedience and the successful outcome of their disciplinary action. He also urges them to restore the repentant offender (2 Corinthians 2:1 - 11; 7:12). See also 2 Corinthians 13:2 - 10; Titus 3:10, 11.

One time Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus replied, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21, 22. See also Luke 17:3, 4). Of course, if the repentance were genuine, the offense would not be repeated seven times in one day or 490 times overall. However, that is not the point. The point Jesus was making is that where repentance is professed, forgiveness is unlimited. One might not know if the person’s professed repentance is genuine or not. So don’t take any chances; go ahead and forgive. Forgiving in response to insincere “repentance” is far better than refusing to forgive when the repentance just might be sincere. Also, if you forgive someone 490 times, why not forgive the 491st time? If you do not, the other times were wasted. This is how God treats us; it is how we are to treat one another.

So, family life has its privileges, its responsibilities, its discipline, and its joys and blessings. Believers are being changed (*metamorphoumetha*—"transformed") into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; also Romans 8:28 - 30). Christ's character, His values, His mind-set, His personality, His behavior—this is our "family likeness."

Family members who love one another want to be together with one another. They will not "forsake the assembling of themselves together" (Hebrews 10:25). A real Christian wants — yes, is determined — to be with his/her family, and will find a way to do so if possible.

The Forever Family.

What a future awaits the family of God!

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God [many ancient manuscripts add "and we are"]! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:1 - 3).

God invites you to become part of His "forever family."

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

Chapter 9

The Church: God's Field

We were introduced to the Church as God's "field" (farm, garden, vineyard) when we looked at the Church as God's temple ("you are God's field, you are God's building." 1 Corinthians 3:9). In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul wrote about the Church as God's field (verses 6 - 8) before writing about the Church as God's temple (verses 10 - 17). Verse 9 connects the two and transitions from field to temple. We go now to verses 6 – 9:

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building."

Paul planted it; Apollos watered it; God grew it. And, of course, we are involved in the harvest (John 4:35 - 38). In all of this God does not work alone. We work with Him.

Who are God's field? The Church is. We believers are.

We find passages in the Old Testament that speak of the godly as trees. The great messianic passages in Isaiah 61:1 - 3 express eloquently the saving, liberating, life-transforming work of the Messiah. It climaxes with these words: "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified" (KJV).

The preface to this is in Chapter 60:21. “Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.”

Also, here are the first three verses of Psalm 1. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”

On His way to the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus spoke to His disciples about this very subject. He said to them (and us), “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch in Me that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:1 - 8).

God is growing a vineyard in the world in this present age. God’s vineyard (the Church) has only one Vine—Jesus Christ. Believers are branches in that Vine. We receive our common spiritual life and bear fruit together from that Vine as we remain in living connection with Him. God has already cleaned out His vineyard through the spoken word of Jesus Christ (verse 3). His word is the instrument (tool) God uses to keep the Church clean.

We notice here a common feature with the Church as the Body of Christ. Just as the members of the Body receive their life, unity, and function by their connection with the Head (Jesus), so the branches in the Vine receive their life, unity, and function by their connection with the Vine. The Head and the Body form a living unity; just so the Vine and the Branches form one living unity.

God carefully tends His Vineyard, nourishing each branch as it remains in the Vine (Christ), strengthening the weak branches, and pruning us so that each branch (you and I) will produce more fruit. He directs our time, energies, and resources toward “fruitbearing” by eliminating wasteful habits, distractions and diversions from our lives. God wants us to produce the fruit of character and service, not pretty but fading leaves.

Branches that do not remain in the Vine die and are thrown away and burned. If we are living branches in the Vine, we will produce the fruit of the Spirit and not the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19 - 23).

Chapter 10

The Church: God's City

The New Testament graphically portrays the Church as God's holy nation, His eternal “city-state,” His kingdom. The picture of a holy city and a holy nation recurs in The Scriptures.

Jerusalem was central to the Old Covenant polity. It was “the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:2). Without Jerusalem there was no nation, no kingdom. Jerusalem was the location of the temple and the spiritual gathering place of the nation and of all who worshiped the true and living God. Jerusalem was the theme of the songs that the people sang as they traveled to Jerusalem at the annual feasts (Psalms 120 through 134).

When Israel as a whole rejected their Messiah and King, Jesus made this startling statement: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43).

In Romans 11:16 - 24 Israel is described as an olive tree. The Jews who rejected the Messiah became cut off branches. Believing Gentiles were grafted in. Unbelieving Jews who do not remain in unbelief God grafts in again. The result is "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16).

In Ephesians 2:11 - 13 Paul reminds the gentile believers that they had been excluded from the "commonwealth of Israel" ("excluded from citizenship in Israel"—NIV). They were derogatorily termed "Uncircumcision" by those who were the "Circumcision" in the flesh. They were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." They had been far off from God and His covenant people and covenant blessings. Now in Christ they "have been made near by the blood of Christ." They are "no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (verse 19).

Fellowcitizens of what? Of God's new covenant people, His new nation, His new Israel (see Matthew 21:43; Galatians 3:29; 6:16; Romans 9). Galatians 4:26 says "the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all." A "mother city" is a center of national and cultural identity and solidarity. It provides protection. It nourishes and nurtures all within its sphere of influence and care. So it is with our heavenly Jerusalem above, where Christ sits enthroned in power and authority at the right hand of the Father.

The Epistle To The Hebrews states clearly that believers in Jesus Christ are citizens of a heavenly "father-land" centered in a heavenly Jerusalem. Referring to Abraham and his family, Hebrews 11:13 - 16 records, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they seek a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."

Like Abraham and the patriarchs, we look for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). Believers desire a better country—that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city (verse 16). We have no continuing city, but we seek one to come, “the coming one” (Hebrews 13:14).

Hebrews 12 graphically pictures the giving of the Old Covenant law as the people stood in fear before the awesome events at Mount Sinai (verses 18 - 21). In contrast, it says to those under the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (verses 22 - 24).

Philippians 3:20 says that “our citizenship is in heaven.” Believers are more than “a colony of heaven.” We are temporary strangers here passing through on our way home. Heaven is where *our* heart is, where *our* values and culture derive; it is *our* destined home. Though we live in this hostile unregenerate culture and though we interact with it and influence it as its salt and light, we are citizens of another world, a realm ruled by God and His principles. For that reason we live and behave like the inhabitants of our “mother country.” No wonder unbelievers think that we are “out of this world.” *We are*. Everything about us—our attitudes, values, tastes, behavior, speech—reflects our “homeland.”

In faith we have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. The Church is the holy nation with the heavenly Jerusalem as our eternal city of God. Our hearts and our citizenship are already there, as we read in Ephesians 2:19 and Philippians 3:20.

In hope we look for our “continuing city.” It is coming. Soon we, too, will be there.

Jesus promised, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name” (Revelation 3:12).

The approaching drama was revealed to the apostle John on the island of Patmos.

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God’” (Revelation 21:2, 3).

“Then one of the angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. . .” (verses 9, 10).

The angel said to John, “I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” The Lamb is Jesus Christ. The bride, His wife, is the Church. What, then, did the angel show John? “*The great city, the holy Jerusalem.*”

A city is more than buildings and streets. It is *people*. A city without people is a “ghost town.” People make it a city.

Suppose a man says to you, “Let me show you a picture of my wife.” He pulls out his wallet and shows you a photo of his house. There in the front doorway stands his lovely bride. Is it a picture of a house? No. It is a picture of his bride *in* her home.

Just so, the angel did not show John merely a picture of the place. The angel showed John a picture of Christ’s Bride, the Church, in her eternal home.

The New Jerusalem is forever fully populated by a company that no man can number (Revelation 7:9, 10). *They* are the Lamb’s wife. *They* are the heavenly Jerusalem. They make the new Jerusalem what it truly is. It is “the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26). We are her “children,” born of the Spirit, destined for the throne, to rule and reign with Jesus Christ forever as kings and priests [or, a kingdom and priests]” (Revelation 1:6; 5:10).

So who are believers in Christ? “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Chapter 11

Other Definitions Of The Church

The Scriptures contain other descriptions of the Church. They are not as prominent as the ones we have considered; nevertheless, they are significant. Some might be considered metaphors rather than descriptions. Either way, they merit our attention and due consideration. Without them we would not have a complete biblical delineation of the Church.

Bread.

The Church is described as “bread” in 1 Corinthians 5:7 and 10:17. This connects with the Old Testament references to the “showbread” in the tabernacle. “Showbread” means “bread of the face,” that is, “bread of the presence” (Exodus 25:30); “memorial bread” (Leviticus 24:5 - 7); “continual bread” (Numbers 4:7); and “bread of arrangement” (2 Chronicles 2:4). The twelve loaves of “showbread” represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Together they expressed the national unity of Israel before God.

This is fulfilled in the Church. Though believers are many and diverse, we are united in Christ. The unity of the Church as one “loaf” of “bread” is the result of our feasting together continuously on the one Bread, Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

In His response to a challenge to demonstrate a sign that would equal the miracle of the manna in the wilderness, Jesus revealed Himself as the true Bread of Life that came down from Heaven (see John 5:32 - 58).

“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? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17).

The bread and the fruit of the vine that we share in the Communion of the Lord’s Supper (also called The Eucharist) does not in itself create our unity with Christ and with one another. Nevertheless, it nourishes that unity and provides a powerful graphic witness to Christ’s redemptive work and our unity with Him and with one another in Him.

Earlier in the same epistle Paul sternly reprimanded the church at Corinth, “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6 - 8).

With the exception of Jesus’ parable of the leaven as one of the parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:20, 21), in the Bible leaven (“yeast” NIV) is a type of sin and evil. Paul tells the church that because of Christ’s sanctifying sacrifice as our Passover Lamb, as a church they are unleavened—sanctified, purged from sin (see 1 Corinthians 1:2). Because they are a holy and uncontaminated “lump” (batch of dough), they must not allow any sin in the church. If they do, it will permeate and pollute the whole.

Because Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us once and for all, we now live in the true “days of unleavened bread.” We must make sure that all leaven (sin) is purged out of our personal lives and out of the church itself. We are to purge out the old leaven of malice and wickedness and feast continuously on the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

A Crown Of Glory And A Royal Diadem.

“You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God” (Isaiah 62:3).

The Grand Finale.

“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

A chosen generation—the new humanity in Christ.

Royal priesthood—kings and priests to God (Revelation 1:6; 5:10).

A holy nation.

A special people—a special acquisition, possession, treasure (Malachi 3:17).

The purpose: to declare, proclaim, display His praises (excellencies, virtues, perfections) forever and ever.

Chapter 12

Servant Leadership

As we have noted, God has two purposes in His Church here on earth. One purpose is *external*. God's external purpose is mission: evangelistic (to call out and gather in a people for His name) and societal (to be "salt and light" in the world by example and service).

God's other purpose in His Church here on earth is *internal*. God's internal purpose is to build up believers into full maturity in Christ. In this purpose everything works to conform believers to the character image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28 - 30). This is our destiny. It is a process that takes place in relationships, not in isolation. It is rooted in our relationship with Christ and nourished by Him in our relationships with one another in His Church. That is why we must not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25).

God's purpose in believers is embodied in detail in the inspired prayers for the Church inscripturated in the New Testament. Please study these prayers thoughtfully and prayerfully. Start with our Lord's great high-priestly prayer in John 17. Then go through Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:15 - 23; 3:14 - 19; Philippians 1:9 - 11; Colossians 1:9 - 12; and 2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12. Imbed them into your mind. Feast on them. Assimilate them into your character and lifestyle.

In our previous study of the Church as the body of Christ, we noted that Christ "gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the

unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11 - 13).

Christ established a called and anointed spiritual leadership in His Church for the purposes listed in Ephesians 4:11 -13. They are gifts of Christ. Through the action of the apostles (Acts 6:1 - 6), the office of deacon was also established for the expressed purpose of taking care of the material matters of the churches. These two functions, spiritual (elders/bishops) and material (deacons), form the biblical leadership of the Church (Philippians 1:1). They embody authority, discipleship, discipline, and accountability.

Elders.

The spiritual leadership and ministry functions are divinely called, gifted, and appointed. This gifting and ability come from God (2 Corinthians 2:16b and 3:5, 6). Their spiritual authority with its responsibilities is derived from Christ by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). Church ordination recognizes and confirms divine ordination.

Jesus personally called and ordained the twelve. He charged Peter, “Feed my sheep...feed my lambs” (John 21:15 - 17). Jesus Christ also personally chose and ordained Paul (Acts 26:16; Romans 1:1; Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:11). The Holy Spirit commanded, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul [Paul] for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

The apostles and elders in turn appointed other elders in the churches (see Acts 14:28 and Titus 1:5).

A church does not “hire” a pastor; it *calls* a pastor. True shepherds are not “hirelings” (see John 10:12, 13).

In 1 Timothy 3:1 - 7 and Titus 1:5 - 9 Paul laid down the qualifications for ministers (“bishops,” overseers). See also 1 Timothy 1:12.

The Christian ministry is an awesome responsibility with heavy accountability. It must not be treated lightly. James warns, "Not many of you should act as teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1 NIV).

How does one know that he or she is truly called of God to the ministry? First, there is a God-given longing, a desire that will not be denied (1 Timothy 3:1). Also, the desire will be accompanied by a developing gifting for the ministry. Convergent with that will be a growing recognition of that gifting by others. This will lead to opportunities to exercise and express that gifting.

A person who is experiencing a call to the ministry must establish a firm foundation in The Scriptures. Paul wrote to Timothy, "from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15 NIV).

Along with all this is the diligent development of solid Christian character, keeping the heart right and the life pure. Paul wrote, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:1, 2).

The classic personal essay on the ministry is Paul's farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, recorded in Acts 20:17 - 35. In it the apostle speaks of his dedication (verses 18 and 19), his message (verses 20 and 21), his purpose (verses 22 - 24), his record (verses 25 - 27), his charge and his warning (verses 28 - 31), his confidence (verse 32), and his example (verses 33 - 35). A parallel passage is found in 2 Corinthians 6:3 - 10.

The apostle Peter also urges elders "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly [some ancient authorities add "according to God"], not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:2 - 4).

Our Lord's charge to Peter to feed His sheep and His lambs (John 21) applies to all shepherds of Christ's flock.

Ministers are to pray faithfully for their flock. The prophet Samuel set the tone for this when he said to Israel "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way" (1 Samuel 12:23). Peter set prayer as a primary function of ministers when he announced the need for deacons. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). Prayer and the ministry of the word of God are the two foundational functions of ministers.

Paul made prayer for believers an on-going personal priority (see Romans 1:9; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3, 9; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:10; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4).

Elders are to anoint and pray for the sick (James 5:14).

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are rich in references to the qualifications and responsibilities of ministers. Paul himself was an example of the self-giving love Christ's true shepherds have for the Church (see 1 Thessalonians 2:5 - 12; Philippians 4:1). Numerous times he expressed his pastoral care of the churches (Acts 20:31; 2 Corinthians 7:12; 11:1 - 3, 28). Paul is truly an example to follow.

Remember the reward: "...and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:4).

The Responsibilities Of Churches To Ministers.

Pray.

The Bible teaches that churches have definite responsibilities toward their ministers. First is the necessity and the obligation to pray for them. Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Romans 15:30). He asked the Corinthian church to “help together by prayer” (2 Corinthians 1:11). He asked the church at Colosse to pray for him and his co-workers “that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak” (Colossians 4:3, 4).

Earlier, he had appealed to the believers at Thessalonica, “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thessalonians 5:25). And again in his second letter to them he asked for their prayers. “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2).

The author of the Epistle To The Hebrews also asked for the prayers of believers (Hebrews 13:18).

Ministry is essentially a spiritual function. It is accomplished by spiritual means. Any attempt to accomplish ministry goals only by natural means will fail. It is God’s work and it is accomplished only by God’s enabling and blessing. This comes through prayer as believers uphold their spiritual leaders by earnest and consistent prayer for them. If the prayers of the saints were necessary for the success of the apostles, they certainly are for the success of ministers today.

“I am praying for you.” These are some of the most encouraging words a minister can hear from believers, particularly from those of his or her own congregation.

Support.

As they are able, churches are required to support their ministers financially. This is the primary purpose of the tithe, both under the old covenant and under the new covenant. God did not change His established method of supporting spiritual leadership. God’s method—the tithe—is

rooted in His timeless stewardship principles. The tithe has always belonged to God. It always will.

As was stated earlier, the true shepherd is not a hireling. He does not preach and pastor so he can receive a salary. He receives a salary so he can preach and pastor.

When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples, He said, “a worker is worthy of his food” (Matthew 10:10).

Paul addressed the subject of ministerial support in 1 Corinthians 9:6 - 14. Verse 14 concludes, “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”

Galatians 6:6 instructs believers, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”

Later the inspired apostle instructed Timothy, “Let the elders [ministers] who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain*’ [Deuteronomy 25:4], and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages’ [Luke 10:7].”

Honor.

Ministers are not to be dictators. Paul said, “Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand” (2 Corinthians 1:24. See also 18:8 and 13:10). Peter said that ministers are not lords over God’s heritage, but examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Pastors who are dictators are taking unauthorized advantage of their spiritual authority. They are guilty of spiritually abusing God’s flock.

Nevertheless, true shepherds of God's flock do have a spiritual authority conferred on them by Christ and exercised by the power of the Holy Spirit according to the word.

Believers are to esteem and honor their ministers, both personally and in their office. This includes honoring and obeying their scriptural authority. Even if a minister loses personal respect and credibility, believers are to maintain respect for the pastoral office he or she occupies. In such cases the person and the office are to remain distinct. Never undermine the position and authority of the pastorate.

“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13).

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow . . .” (Hebrews 13:7 KJV). “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” (verse 17 KJV. See also verse 24; 1 Corinthians 16:16; and Philippians 2:25 - 30).

In 1 Timothy 5:1 Paul instructed Timothy, “Do not rebuke [“beat up” verbally] an older man, but exhort him as a father. . .” This most certainly includes “elders” (ministers). Later (verse 19) the apostle laid down the rule that an accusation against an elder (minister) is not to be received except from two or three witnesses. He then commands (verse 20) that elders who are sinning are to be rebuked (confronted for the purpose of correction) before all the rest of the elders so that the rest will keep a healthy fear.

Your minister is first of all your brother or sister in the Lord. That is basic to your relationship. Do not separate yourself from your pastor by putting him or her into a separate professional category. Love your pastor. Submit biblically to your pastor's spiritual authority, all the while regarding and treating your pastor as essentially a fellow believer. Neither worship at your pastor's feet nor trample your pastor under your feet.

A minister is human (!) He has common human temptations. He also has temptations that go with his position. He must not “touch” the three “g’s”—the girls, the gold, and the glory.

Always honor the position of the pastor, even when you disagree with him or even if you lose respect for him personally. The person and the position are not the same. Sometimes the person enhances the position; sometimes the position enhances the person. The person might change; the position does not. The person will leave eventually; the position remains.

“Catch” your pastor’s vision for the church and support it wholeheartedly. The pastor is not called to do the work of the whole church. The shepherd does not bear the lambs; the sheep do. It takes the all the church to accomplish all the work of God. Be sure to keep your expectations of your pastor realistic. Encourage him while helping him to “keep his feet on the ground.”

Your pastor’s wife (spouse) and family are also human. They also are your brothers and sisters in Christ. Do not impose unrealistic expectations on them. Give them the same room to live, breathe, and grow that you give yourself and your family. Surround your pastor and pastoral family with an accepting, caring Christian atmosphere.

Deacons.

The office (function) of the deacon came about out of a practical need. The situation is recorded in Acts 6:1 - 6. At first, much of the apostles’ time was taken up with serving tables, distributing food to the widows in the church at Jerusalem. The Grecians (Hellenists, not Greeks but Jews of Greek culture) complained that *their* widows were being neglected in the daily food distribution.

So the apostles called a general meeting of believers (the first “church business meeting”) and instructed them to choose seven men whom the apostles would appoint over the business of distributing food to the widows).

We notice particularly the qualifications these men were to meet: good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Although their responsibility was essentially a practical one, they were to be Spirit-filled. We notice that being full of the Holy Spirit and being full of wisdom are closely joined. They were not merely serving tables; they were serving people, God's people. Cultural differences existed and a lot of murmuring was going on. These deacons had to do more than dish out and distribute food. They were working with people, believing widows—pentecostal ladies—and believers of their Hellenistic culture. "Ruffled feathers" needed smoothing. Any favoritism had to be corrected. This required Spirit-anointed sensitivity and people skills on the part of these seven deacons. No wonder they had to be "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." They also needed the backing of the congregation as a whole and the delegated authority of the apostles themselves.

This brings up a "springboard" for discussion. Does the authority of the deacons come only from the congregation? or does the authority of the deacons come also and ultimately from the spiritual leadership (elders)? Did the action of the apostles and the church meet only a need at that time and in that situation? or, did it establish a principle and pattern to be followed in the Church? Food for thought.

From the biblical record there seems to be no evidence that the apostles tried to interfere with or "micro-manage" the work of the deacons. The deacons did their work and the apostles did theirs. This does not mean that the deacons were not accountable to anyone. Delegated authority always implies accountability in some way to the source or sources of the delegated authority.

Deacons are responsible to manage the practical, business, and physical needs and concerns of the church, *and to make sure they are taken care of*. They are to do so in relationship with the church body as a whole and individual believers in particular. Thus the work of deacons is a ministry to the Lord and to the people.

The first deacons were to be chosen from among the *men* of the church. Perhaps this requirement was stipulated because the immediate situation called for the stabilizing influence of masculine maturity and also the respect that was given at that time to the leadership role of men.

This masculine requirement did not extend universally in the Church. In Romans 16:1 we are introduced to Phoebe, “a servant of the church in Cenchrea.” The Greek word is *diakonon*, the feminine form of the word for deacon.

Whatever connotations might be associated with the word for “deacon,” the underlying meaning of the word is service and servanthood. Deacons and deaconesses are servants, whether they are feeding widows, taking care of the church’s business and financial matters, or repairing the church’s leaking roof or plumbing.

Besides the initial qualifications laid down by the apostles in Acts 6, we find another list in 1 Timothy 3:8 - 13. These qualifications were given by the apostle Paul. They are general and not situation specific; therefore they are universally binding in the Church. The apostle writes: “. . . deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Verse 13 implies that faithful service in doing the work of a deacon leads to larger opportunities of ministry. Such was the case with Stephen and Philip. Stephen preached the gospel with “great wonders and signs” (Acts 6:8). He certainly had “great boldness in the faith” when he addressed the Sanhedrin (Acts 7). Even though it resulted in his martyrdom, his bold witness contributed directly to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Paul).

Philip entered the ministry and became an evangelist, preached the gospel in Samaria with great power, casting out demons and healing many who were paralyzed and lame (Acts 8:4 - 8).

Church Governance.

Other than elders and deacons, the New Testament does not specify a particular form of church governance. We are familiar with the western form in the churches that Paul founded. This

developed eventually into the Roman Catholic system (see Appendix A: The Influence Of Roman Law And Political Organization On The Organization Of The Church). It became hierarchical, top-down. Modifications of the hierarchical system developed elsewhere and are with us to this day in the Orthodox, Anglican and Episcopalian, and other “top-down” denominations.

At the opposite end of the scale is the congregational form of church governance. It is democratic, “bottom-up.” It is the form followed by the Baptist and independent, “non-denominational” churches. In between are the Presbyterian and other blendings and modifications along the episcopalian-congregational continuum, including many pentecostal and other evangelical bodies.

All forms of church governance are valid as long as they preserve the basic elder/deacon structure. Every form has its strengths and its weaknesses. All forms work, some better than others. What is essential is “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

Chapter 13

One Another: Our Mutual Commitments And Blessings

During the Last Supper Jesus said to His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35).

The relationship that believers in Christ have with one another is different from any and all other relationships. It is far deeper than a mere human social system. Believers are not just a crowd attending an event. Although a local church tends to reflect its socio-economic milieu, it is not based merely on shared social values or composed of a stratified class.

All true believers in Jesus Christ are essentially one. We do not live in personal detachment and isolation. Each is a vital part of the whole. Though one's relationship with Jesus Christ is personal, it is not private. One's personal relationship with God is lived out in fellowship with others who have that same relationship.

When people come to Jesus, they come together. He is where we are joined. As long as we are in Him, we do not get away from one another. *We are united at the highest level.* Christ is our point of fusion.

Most human relationships are secondary and are usually based on one role or at most a few associations: postman, doctor, dentist, teacher, clerk, employer, employee, coach, team-mate, club member. Very few human relationships are primary: parents, spouse, children, siblings, close family members and very special friends.

The fellowship of believers in Christ is the deepest of primary relationships. It is the deepest because it is an extension of our very relationship with God Himself through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in His Church. Certainly our relationship with God is in a class by itself; therefore, the essence of that unique relationship extends throughout His Church. It transcends even natural family ties. Believers are God's "forever family."

We are a fellowship in the light, as the Bible states in 1 John 1:7. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Primary relationships have shared core values. In the covenant community of the church, the *price* defines the values. Believers were purchased by the same blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:14).

Core values demand commitments. Commitments are fulfilled in attitudes, words, and actions. Primary relationships impose responsibilities. Primary relationships cost something. Primary relationships create privileges and produce rewards. Primary relationships establish identification, evoke loyalty, motivate involvement, and foster interdependency.

A story is told (true or not) of a boy who attended a baptismal service. Afterward he decided he would do some baptizing. He gathered and boxed up as many cats in the neighborhood as he could capture. With a bucket of water handy he “baptized” the first cat. His mother heard the yowling and ran to the door. Seeing the drenched feline, she called, “Johnny, those cats don’t like that!” Just then another cat went into the bucket. “Johnny! I said those cats don’t like that!” As he reached for his third “candidate,” Johnny replied, “They should’ve thought of that before they joined this church!”

According to Jesus’ words in John 13:34 and 35, love is the bond of our relationship with Christ and with one another. This love goes beyond social boundaries, personal preferences and repugnancies. It is not a balancing of mutual self-interest. Though we are to love one another fervently with a pure heart (1 Peter 1:22), it is more than a sentiment. It is an unconditional commitment to one another’s good and well-being.

Christ loves the Church. So then, if we love Christ, we also must and will love the Church. His love will be in us, including His love for His Church.

This is embodied in the divine command in John 13:34 and 35. We read it in John 15:12 and 17. “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” “These things I command you, that you love one another.” In verse 12, “as” in the Greek is *kathos*—“just as, precisely as.” Christ’s love for us defines the kind of love we are to have for one another. His love for us establishes the standard of our love for one another. And how did Christ love us? Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives just as [*kathos*] Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.” The apostle John writes, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16 parallel each other.

This love abounds in the writings of the apostle Paul (see Colossians 2:2; 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3).

As was mentioned earlier, it is commanded in 1 Peter 1:22, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart."

It saturates the epistles of the apostle John (see 1 John 3:11, 14, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5).

One Another.

One of the most important words in the New Testament is the Greek word *allelon* (pronounced al-lay'-lone). A reciprocal pronoun, it denotes reciprocity and mutuality. It is usually translated "one another" and occasionally "each other."

Someone has said that *allelon* is the opposite of "all alone."

So, what does it mean to love one another? What are the biblical "one another" obligations of Christian love?

To love one another means to accept one another.

Four times the New Testament instructs us to greet one another (see Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14).

We are not to judge one another (Romans 14:12, 13).

We are to be likeminded toward one another, accept one another, and live in unity and harmony with one another (Romans 12:16; 15:5 - 7).

We are to receive one another just as Christ received us—with unconditional love. This means acceptance, reconciliation, restoration of relationships. The Church is the fellowship of the reconciled in a world filled with alienation. Rejection and alienation have no place in the Church. According to 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19 God has given us the ministry of reconciliation and the word of reconciliation. Ministry refers to relationships; word means content. We are reconciled to God and to one another. Only a reconciled Church can speak to an alienated world.

The more spiritual a church becomes, the less it is socially stratified.

To love one another means to commit ourselves to (be devoted to) one another.

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10). “Kindly affectionate” means to have fond family feelings.

To love one another means to be subject to one another.

Ephesians 5:21 teaches mutual submission: “. . . submitting to one another in the fear of God.” We read also in 1 Peter 5:5, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility . . .”

This principle applies to the marriage relationship (see 1 Corinthians 7:5). It is to be practiced in the Lord’s Supper (see 1 Corinthians 11:37).

To love one another means to show forbearance toward (bear with) one another.

“. . . with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as [*kathos*] God in Christ forgave you” (verse 32). How did God forgive us? Freely and without merit.

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as [*kathos*] Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Colossians 3:12, 13).

To love one another means to pray for one another and treat one another right.

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

“. . . through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” (verse 15). Save the pieces! Stop biting and devouring one another; otherwise you will all be eaten up by one another! “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (verse 26).

Believers must not go to law against one another (1 Corinthians 6:7).

“Do not lie to one another . . .” (Colossians 3:9).

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren” (James 4:11).

“Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned” (James 5:9).

Jesus said, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another" (Mark 9:50). We are to have the preserving, flavoring "salt" of Christ's love and character in us. If we do, we will have peace with one another.

To love one another means to admonish one another.

Paul wrote to the church at Rome, "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14). The word "admonish" is *nouthetein*, the infinitive of *noutheteo*. It means "to put in mind," hence, warn, instruct with seriousness, counsel.

The church in Rome was a mature church, in contrast to the immature believers addressed in The Epistle To The Hebrews (Hebrews 5:12).

It takes maturity to admonish one another. We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Some people will not speak the truth until they get mad. That does nobody any good. Biblical admonition involves an accepting, affirming approach. Validation. Encouragement.

"Jim, I'm so glad to see you growing in the Lord. I was praying for you, and here is a scripture that came to my mind. I want to share it with you. I think it will help you in an important area of your life."

Instead of, "why doesn't the pastor talk to Jim about . . . ?" *you* talk to him. Mature believers have a responsibility to admonish one another. Do not leave it up to the pastor to counsel younger women. That is the responsibility of older women (Titus 2:1 - 5).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16. See also Hebrews 3:13 and 10:24).

To love one another means to strengthen one another.

This follows from and is closely related to what has just been said.

“Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing” (5:11).

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Romans 14:19).

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2. Remember James 5:16).

To love one another means to serve one another.

Jesus said, “If I, then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). Grab a towel, or a paint brush, or a hammer, or whatever else you can get your hands on to help others, especially those who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10. See 1Thessalonians 5:15).

“ . . . that there should be no schism in the body [of Christ], but that the members should have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:25).

“ . . . through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8).

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:8 - 10). Jesus said that giving only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple will have its reward (Matthew 10:42).

Let us remember what our Lord Jesus will say to those on His right hand, recorded in Matthew 25:34 - 40. “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and fed You, or thirsty and gave you drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothed You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

The church where all the “one another” relationships are firmly established and fully functioning in love—*that* church is irresistible!

Appendix A.

The Influence Of Roman Law And Political Organization On The Organization Of The Church:

How The New Testament Church Developed Into An Ecclesiastical System

by J. W. Jepson, D.Min.

Introduction

Because our subject is the early development of church organization and government, we will not inquire into the general history of the church during that era except as it relates to our immediate exploration.

The organizational development of the ancient Christian church falls into two general categories: pre-Constantinian and post-Constantinian (keeping in mind the importance of the reorganization of the Roman Empire under Diocletian immediately prior to Constantine). These two broad categories are further divided into sub-periods; however, the lesser categories must be considered as components of the greater ones.

Pre-Constantinian Structure

First Century Church Polity

Two broadly divergent historical views regarding the form of first century church organization have long divided students of church history and government. One view holds that Christ and the apostles founded a hierarchy, an episcopacy of apostolic authority that was to continue through an unbroken chain of successors. In this view the authority of the apostles was not only charismatic and functional but also official and ecclesiastical. This hierarchy became the indispensable structure for a sacerdotal sacramentalism. In general this is the view and practice of the episcopal and liturgical communions, such as: the Roman Catholic, Eastern Catholic, Anglican, United States Episcopal, among others.

The other view holds that the apostles exercised a personal charismatic ministry but did not occupy ecclesiastical offices or administer an episcopal hierarchy. This view holds that the apostolic function was temporary by its very nature. This is the view of the non-liturgical

churches, such as: the Baptist groups, Congregationalists (United Church Of Christ), most Pentecostals and other Evangelicals, among others.

It is evident from Scripture and from external evidence that the New Testament order of church government is basically congregational, with some variations from what is usually associated with the modern usage of the term. This form is everywhere seen and accepted in The Acts Of The Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation.

From Jerusalem the gospel spread and the Church grew. The Jerusalem church became the mother church. In it we find the first form of church administration: apostles and deacons. The Church was originally made up of Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah. As Jews, they were accustomed to a leadership of "elders," and so it was natural to carry this form of leadership into the Church.

The gospel spread from Jerusalem like fire. The believers were scattered by persecution and went "abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1 KJV). They "went everywhere preaching the word" (verse 4). Before long the apostles themselves had so much evangelizing and church establishing to do that they could no longer spend their time supervising the Jerusalem church. The Jerusalem oversight became the responsibility of James, the Lord's half-brother, and the other local Jerusalem elders. Peter was busy traveling around the country (Acts 9:32). When Peter and the other apostles went back to Jerusalem for the first Council, it was James, the local presiding elder, who had the responsibility of summing things up and giving the "sentence."

The work spread to Antioch in Syria, where a strong church was established. Paul's missionary journeys opened up vast areas to the gospel. The other apostles and early preachers labored diligently and effectively. Local churches sprang up, autonomous yet vitally interdependent. The apostles and prophets (Ephesians 4:11) provided general oversight, and ensured purity of doctrine and practice. The Church regarded itself as a single universal body, and inter-communion among the churches was carried on vigorously by correspondence and personal contacts. Believers everywhere were concerned about one another and sent relief when others were in distress. Hospitality was encouraged. Ministers and other believers traveling from one place to another found a common bond of love and acceptance of ministry.

The congregational form of church governance was the pattern of the early apostolic Church. However, this does not mean that each congregation was an independent unit, especially in population centers. *The sovereign unit was the sum total of believers in Jesus Christ residing in a given place or community*, whether they all worshiped in one local congregation or formed multiple local congregations. In the New Testament when the term “church” is applied to an individual congregation in a city, it denotes part of the whole rather than an independent unit (Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15). Each believer considered himself/herself to be a living part of the Church, both universal and local.

In each city the congregations (churches) were watched over by the elders individually and collectively. The elders (presbyters, “bishops”) considered themselves to be one unit and of one rank. This was true so long as they followed both the letter and the spirit of Jesus’ command (Matthew 23:8 - 12). The apostolic Church also had deacons, who managed and served in material matters under the supervision of the elders.

In the early Church the broadest (rather than to say highest) ministry function was that of the apostle. This breadth of ministry, authority and responsibility was temporary for two reasons: (1) the ones exercising it had seen Christ in the flesh and/or in His risen state and therefore were first-hand witnesses (Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 9:1); (2) it was a founding ministry (Ephesians 2:20). The apostle introduced the gospel into the general area of his apostleship. It was necessary that he supervise the general area of his founding ministry until each local church was able to govern itself by its elders. It is evident that the apostolic ministry in an area would soon disappear, as only one person could sustain the relationship of founder to the churches in that area (see Paul’s statement in Romans 15:23).

Evangelists, pastors and teachers also existed in the New Testament order of elders. Pastors and teachers were primarily local ministries; apostles, prophets, and evangelists were broader in their scope of ministry.

Critical Second Century Developments

In the apostolic Church the terms presbyter (*presbuteros*) and bishop (overseer: *episkopos*) were used interchangeably (compare Acts 20:17 and 28; compare also Titus 1:5 and 7).

Although at the beginning all elders (bishops) were of equal rank, it was to be expected that the presbytery in each city would have a moderator, a peer of outstanding leadership ability, perhaps even possessing apostolic associations. Around the beginning of the second century this moderator came to be looked upon as possessing a higher honor than that held by the other presbyters (elders). In time the honor became an office. The term “bishop” became distinct from “presbyter” and was reserved for that person. The congregational episcopacy was evolving.

The development of the monarchical or congregational bishop was more accelerated in some regions than in others. In fact, early church government varied from congregation to congregation, with the rise of the monarchical episcopacy taking place earliest in Asia Minor.¹ It is asserted that no monarchical episcopate is found in Rome before ca.150 A.D.² It is noteworthy in this regard that although Ignatius of Antioch lauds the monarchical bishops of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, and Smyrna, he makes no mention of any such at Rome.³

The monarchical bishop must have come into existence, at least at Ephesus, sometime between Paul’s conference at Miletus (Acts 20) and the time of Ignatius of Antioch. It is obvious that some changes took place between Paul and sixty years later.⁴

Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 67 - 116 A.D.) believed in the office of the monarchical bishop and was its aggressive advocate.⁵ He contributed much by his influence to the establishment of the monarchical episcopacy by the middle of the second century.

The evolution of the monarchical (congregational) episcopacy was occasioned by various factors. Human ambition must have been involved, as the apostle Paul had forewarned would happen (see Acts 20:30). Also, strong pressure was being exerted on the Church, creating a situation that called for strong leadership. Christians who were being subjected to imperial persecutions naturally looked for a leader in the church who would be an example and champion of courage and faithfulness. Heresies, particularly gnosticism, caused pastors and people to look to their leading elder to defend orthodoxy. The receiving and disbursing of charities enhanced the prestige of the leading elder. The Greeks called their financial officers “*episkopoi*,” and a parallel of this in the church seemed quite fitting.

It was also natural that the churches would look for some visible representation of the Church, especially as spiritual perceptions declined. The visible leader became the natural object of these desires and expectations; and his person, work, position and authority gradually became the visible symbol of the Church.

Perhaps no factor contributed to the rise and prestige of the monarchical bishop as much as the controversies over the early heresies. Judaizers were at work; gnosticism in its various forms was gaining influence; later in the second century Montanism flourished. The faithful looked to their visible leaders for guidance and expected them to rise to the defense of orthodoxy.

As a result, Christians and Christianity became more organized. Bishops increased their contacts and conferences with one another. Bishops of churches that had strong apostolic foundations took on new prestige and authority as the conservators of apostolic doctrine. By the middle of the second century the bishops were regarded as the repositories of the truth and the people had long heard the appeal to rally around the bishop. "Wherever the bishop is found, there let the people be . . ." ⁶

During the last half of the second century, as the Church was getting the upper hand over gnosticism and was struggling with Montanism, the congregational episcopacy experienced further strengthening. The first recorded synod of bishops took place in Asia Minor to deal with Montanism. ⁷

The most influential advocates of the episcopacy and the hierarchy were in the Latin west, where Roman emphasis on organizational efficiency was the strongest.

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons during the last part of the second century, held that to get the true doctrine taught by Christ and His apostles one must go to churches with direct and strong apostolic beginnings and connections (e.g., Rome, Ephesus, Smyrna), and see what is taught there. He claimed that one will find no gnosticism in these churches. The inference is that truth is transmitted through the episcopate. ⁸

The Primacy of Rome

The development of the episcopacy led to the primacy of the church at Rome. Several factors contributed to this. By 100 A.D. the church at Rome was probably the largest of the churches;⁹ it was a very generous church; Rome was the capital of the Empire and as such symbolized pre-eminence and authority; its early apostolic connections were being emphasized by influential writers of the time. Irenaeus stated that Peter and Paul had founded the church at Rome and that it was necessary that every church agree with it on account of its pre-eminent authority;¹⁰ it had taken the lead in opposing heresy; it was the direct object of the first imperial persecution under Nero and had become one of the earliest contributors to the list of martyrs; one of Paul's most weighty letters had been addressed to it. Also, it had contributed directly to establishing a number of churches, especially in the peninsula and southern Europe, and each of these churches looked to Rome as the mother church.¹¹

So the situation stood at the close of the second century. Four ideas were developing together over the century and needed only the process of time for their fruition: episcopacy, sacerdotal sacramentalism, apostolic succession, and the primacy of Rome.

"If a primitive Christian had returned to earth at any time after the second century, he would not have found anywhere the simple brotherhood of believers that he had known . . . unless . . . with the Montanists."¹²

It was Cyprian, bishop of Carthage ca. A.D. 248 - 258, who took the four concepts just mentioned and synthesized them into a systematic philosophy of church government and polity. It is claimed that Cyprian did more than any other one man to develop the hierarchical view of the Church.¹³

Cyprian taught that the Church is in the bishop and that outside of the bishop there is no salvation because whoever is not with the bishop is not in the Church.¹⁴ Being careful to guard the autonomy of Africa, he taught the primacy of the bishop of Rome, but not his supremacy. In this he was in disagreement with the prelate of Rome.¹⁵ In general Cyprian expressed the prevailing ideas of the mid-third century.¹⁶

Councils And Other Organizational Developments

One reason for the development of the episcopacy was the desire to determine and preserve apostolic doctrine. If the bishops were the repositories of the truth and the reliable interpreters of The Scriptures, it was expected that they would be in agreement. However, this was often not the case. Therefore, it was imperative that the bishops confer on vital matters and arrive at a consensus.

At the time of the rise of the early provincial synods, universal unity was still largely considered to be spiritual. Unity meant to be in fellowship with the bishop. Cooperation among bishops was still a voluntary matter. As the bishops came together in provincial synods, general unity developed into official unity.

By the middle of the third century the congregational episcopacy was losing its autonomy to the collective provincial episcopacy and its presiding bishop. After A.D. 250 provincial synods were held annually.¹⁷ These were presided over by the bishop of the church in the major city of the province, usually the capital city. During the third century the office and power of what became known as the metropolitan bishop evolved in much the same way as did the monarchical bishop a century earlier. It was at the Council of Antioch, A.D. 341, that it was decreed that in each province the bishop of the metropolis had authority over the rest of the bishops in the province.¹⁸ Again, imperial persecutions contributed to the acceleration of the development of ecclesiastical organization.

Provincial organization came about naturally. In his missionary journeys the apostle Paul thought at times in terms of provinces. He addressed his epistle to the Galatians to the churches of the whole province.

It seemed logical to follow the civil divisions in developing the organization of the Church. The Greeks had followed the city-state concept and this pattern had its influence on the Roman system. "Roman political institutions were based on the cities, on which the surrounding country was dependent, and Christian organization followed the same rule."¹⁹

At this time we find also the beginnings of the parochial system. Before his death in A.D. 250 bishop Fabian of Rome laid out seven ecclesiastical divisions, each corresponding to two of the fourteen regions of the city of Rome.²⁰

In all of this the Church was patterning its ecclesiastical organization after the structure of the Empire, both geographically and administratively. It was Diocletian, however, who set up the pattern that the Church was later to follow in perfecting its organization.

Diocletian's Reorganization Of The Empire

Diocletian ruled the Empire from A.D. 284 to A.D. 305. During this time he completely reorganized its governmental structure. He had two objectives: imperial stability and administrative efficiency. In the second year of his reign he associated Maximian with himself and gave him the honor of an Augustus. Later, Constantius Chlorus and Galerius were made Caesars.²¹ Diocletian reserved supreme authority for himself.

The four rulers were placed in four new capitals: Nicomedia, Milan, Trier and Sirmium.²² Each was given command over a portion of the armed forces. The army of the Rhine went to Constantius; the Danube forces went to Galerius; Maximian was given charge of the army in Italy and Africa; Diocletian retained command of the army in Syria.²³

The civil was divided from the military. The officers of the Praetorium now became the "great officers of the state."²⁴ In both the civil and the military, continuous chains of direct command were instituted, each paralleling the other.²⁵ Provinces were grouped together into dioceses, with several provinces to a diocese.²⁶ In this the provinces tended to lose their individual distinction as local autonomy in general disappeared, displaced by a huge bureaucracy.²⁷ The last traces of republicanism gave way to an absolute monarchy, one that included the whole elaborate ceremonialism of the East.²⁸

The titular supremacy of Italy disappeared. The Private Council became the public Consistory (supreme court).²⁹ Emperor worship was brought into the Senate,³⁰ a body that had now become a non-entity.³¹

Much of this had a profound effect on the developing ecclesiastical structure in that it provided the pattern for the completion of the organization of the Church under Constantine. To a great extent both Church and State were conforming to geographical realities. In Aquitaine the Church simply copied the Roman administrative divisions. The Church in the East seemed to adapt its organization to the new political divisions more readily than did the Church in the Latin West.³² This is evidenced by the earlier development in the East of the Patriarchate as an office above that of the provincial metropolitan.

Constantine

The rise of Constantine and the subsequent union of Church and State marked the beginning of a new era for the Church. Imperial persecutions ceased; Christians were granted official favors; to be a Christian became fashionable; the Church became an agency for carrying out the objectives of the State and vice versa; and the organizational structure of the Church became official.

Constantine saw in the internal discipline and the universal organizational scope of the Church the one cohesive force that he believed could give new solidarity and life to the Empire. To Constantine, Christianity was part of the unifying process.³³ The place and mission of the Church in the world gave the State a new and dynamic sense of world-purpose. One writer described Constantine's purpose to be "to create a world fit for Christians to live in and to make the world safe for Christianity."³⁴ ". . . the conversion of Constantine served to initiate a fresh cycle of historical development by suggesting the project of a Christian Empire."³⁵

In A.D. 319 the clergy were exempted from certain public obligations. In A.D. 321 the Church was granted the right to receive legacies, its corporate status thereby being recognized.³⁶

Constantine aligned Church government with Imperial government. The parallels were: Emperor/Pope; Senate (Imperial Council)/Church Councils; Imperial Governor (vicarius)/Patriarch; Provincial Governor/Metropolitan; Civitas/Bishop; people/laity.³⁷

In A.D. 318 Constantine recognized the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of bishops in matters involving suits between Christians. In A.D. 333 the bishops were put on equal standing with the civil magistrates.³⁸ In some cases the bishops were given the power to protect people from the civil tribunals. From the pagan temples the Church inherited the traditional sanctuary rights. In pagan days the custom was to exempt the priests from certain obligations, including taxes; now those exemptions were transferred to the Christian clergy. Later the clergy were paid from funds from the confiscation of pagan property.³⁹

The multiplying of orders of the clergy is said to have followed the pattern previously set by the pagan state cult hierarchy.⁴⁰ It is said that in Gaul every city that had been the headquarters of the person in charge of the worship of Augustus became the seat of the Christian bishop. In Asia, Christian counsels replaced the pagan ones even in the number of members. The growing aristocracy in the Empire found its parallel in the Church. In many ways the *ecclesia* was analogous to the *civitas*.⁴¹

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, did more than any others of his day to mold the philosophy of the Christian State. To Eusebius, God had raised up the emperor and the Christian State as the agency by which righteousness would rule the earth. Christianity had become the religion of success, of victory, and in its dominions the emperor ruled by divine right.⁴²

It is said that Christian social theory under Constantine “pointed to the reconstitution of the *familia* as conceived by Roman pagan law.”⁴³ It is stated also that “to the fourth century Church, the Kingdom of God was a vision of a spiritual aristocracy.”⁴⁴

The Church was controlled by the State. It changed its stand on military service and matters of doctrine were matters of state concern.⁴⁵ Synods were called by the Emperor and were presided over by him or his delegate. Synodical proceedings were modeled after the Roman Senate and the Emperor kept order and conducted the deliberations. The Roman legate voted first (according to the prerogative of the *princeps senatus*). Church-state council resolutions did not become law until they were confirmed by imperial edict. The Emperor issued theological edicts. The Council of Chalcedon closed the “epoch of ‘parliamentary constitutionalism’.” Another general council was not called for over one hundred years.⁴⁶

Constantine had made the Church an institution of the State and Caesaro-papism followed as a matter of course. "The *sacerdotum* was united with the *imperium* in the person of the monarch, just as in the pagan state."⁴⁷

Church discipline was a strong and efficient system in itself. Roman organizational and juridical genius systematized and utilized it.⁴⁸ From Constantine on the history of the Church is enmeshed in the affairs of society and state policy.⁴⁹

Constantine personified the absolutism which became the prevailing system both in Church and State for centuries to come.⁵⁰ His great error is said to be that he mistook the form of Christianity for the substance.⁵¹ ". . . the military spirit of imperial Rome had entered the Church. The Church had conquered the Roman Empire. But in reality the Roman Empire had conquered the Church by making the Church over into the image of the Roman Empire. . . . The Imperial Church of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries had become an entirely different institution from the persecuted Church of the first three centuries."⁵²

Post-Constantinian Structure

The death of Constantine in A.D. 337 was followed by a struggle for power among his three sons. By A.D. 350 Constantius emerged as the victor. Constantius considered himself to be supreme in both Church and State.⁵³

The western Church was not happy with this turn of events because of Constantius's favorable disposition toward Arianism. This forced the Latin Church to reevaluate the Emperor's role in the Church. In A.D. 355 Constantius ordered Hosius, bishop of Cordova, to communicate with the Arians. Hosius refused to do so, adding that Church and State should stay out of each other's affairs, a clear assertion of the dualist theory.⁵⁴

Under Constantius Arianism flourished in the West and orthodox Nicene bishops were exiled. In the diplomatic struggles that had taken place between Constantius in the East and Constantius in the West between A.D. 337 and A.D. 350, Arianism versus Nicene orthodoxy had become a prime issue. This further widened the growing breach between these two segments of the Empire and consequently of the Church. Orthodoxy closed ranks in the West. At the same time

western Arianism decayed internally and by A.D. 360 Nicene Christianity had gained the ascendancy.⁵⁵

Julian allowed the orthodox bishops to return from exile,⁵⁶ but upon the death of Julian the old struggle that had raged between East and West in the days of Constans and Constantius was renewed.

In A.D. 364 the pro-Nicene Valentinian was elevated in the West and the pro-Arian Valens was given control in the East. In the West, Valentinian was reluctant to depose the Arian bishops. Valens had no such reluctance toward orthodox bishops in the East, persecuting them with expulsions, banishments and confiscation of property.⁵⁷

Evidently Valentinian attempted to loosen “the alliance between religion and politics which had transformed emperors into bishops and bishops into politicians.”⁵⁸ Valentinian did not associate Christian goals with the goals of his reign.⁵⁹ In this we see the further reinforcement of dualism.

Valentinian was succeeded in the West by Gratian, and when Valens was killed at Adrianople in A.D. 378, the eastern half of the Empire was offered to him also. Fearing the responsibility of opposing the barbarians in the east, in A.D. 379 he gave the government of Constantinople to Theodosius. Gratian was influenced greatly by Ambrose, the statesman-like bishop of Milan. Gratian banned pagan worship in Rome and some pagan funds were confiscated. On August 3, A.D. 379, in Milan, he proclaimed that heresy was prohibited. The decree of Theodosius from Thessalonica on February 27, A.D. 380, had the same effect in the East. This, along with the Second Council of Constantinople in May of A.D. 381, sounded the death-knell for decayed Arianism in the Empire.⁶⁰

The efforts of the secular powers in suppressing heresy led in A.D. 383 to the execution by secular authority of Priscillian, who had been accused of heresy. This event set a precedent and also precipitated a reaction. Martin of Tours denounced the execution as a breach of dualism.⁶¹

After the murder of Gratian in A.D. 383, Theodosius tolerated for a time the presence in the West of Maximus, the usurper. In A.D. 388 Theodosius overthrew Maximus and placed

Gratian's son, Valentinian II, on the throne. Two years later Valentinian was murdered and again Theodosius had to intervene. In A.D. 394 he placed his own son, Honorius, on the western throne and gave the eastern throne to another son, Arcadius. After this he returned to Milan and shortly thereafter died.⁶²

Theodosius put the finishing touches on what Constantine had begun by officially declaring Christianity to be the state religion. The philosophy of Church and State that developed in the time of Theodosius and the part that Ambrose of Milan had in its formation merit consideration.

Ambrose's influence on Gratian has already been mentioned. He was a most powerful force in molding the Church/State philosophy of his time. Himself a Roman statesman-turned-cleric, Ambrose opposed Caesaropapism and taught instead that the Emperor, as part of the Church, is subject to the discipline that God gave to the Church alone. The Church is the guardian of the Emperor's conscience.⁶³

Theodosius had inherited the bureaucratic despotism of his predecessors,⁶⁴ and did not acquiesce readily to Ambrose's philosophy, a philosophy that contained in itself the seeds of ecclesiastical independence and perhaps eventually western autonomy. It took the events surrounding the "massacre of Thessalonica" in A.D. 390 to bring the matter to a test.

In A.D. 388 the "Christians" of Callinicum burned a Jewish synagogue and a gnostic church. Theodosius ordered the local bishop to rebuild the buildings at the bishop's own expense. Ambrose intervened and the Emperor offered to pay the costs from state funds. Again Ambrose refused to sanction it on the grounds that in a Christian State public money should not be spent on non-Christian worship. He also asserted that the maintenance of true religion is more important than the maintenance of public order.⁶⁵

In A.D. 390 a popular charioteer in Thessalonica was imprisoned for a moral infraction. Anti-government rioting broke out and was followed by an order from Theodosius for a secret massacre. Before Theodosius could end it, several thousand were killed. Ambrose excommunicated Theodosius and restored him only after seven months of penance.⁶⁶ Ambrose's philosophy had prevailed.

Theodosius viewed the State as a sacred institution that existed by divine authority; hence, defrauding the State amounted to defrauding God.⁶⁷ New sanctions were created to protect the clergy and church property, and an attack on church property was considered to be a most serious crime.⁶⁸

Theodosius's edict of A.D. 380 declared that all heretics are madmen and subject to divine and state punishment. At least one writer states that this was the beginning of what has been termed the "Orthodox Empire,"⁶⁹ an agency for the stamping out of heresy and paganism as treason. Theodosius's campaign against heresy was intensified during the reign of his sons.⁷⁰

To Ambrose the State is autonomous, but not independent. Its authority exists as a divine mandate and it is subject to the Church, which alone is the ultimate agent of the divine.⁷¹ Considering Ambrose's personal political background it is no marvel that his views carry with them the authoritarian tone of the Roman.⁷²

One writer states that the reign of Theodosius brought to an end the genius of imperial Rome.⁷³

The Empire in the West disintegrated rapidly before the invaders, resulting in A.D. 476 in Odovacar putting an end to even the pretence of imperial authority.

The Papacy

As the Empire weakened, the Church tended to take on local racial, national, cultural and even doctrinal characteristics.⁷⁴ Ecclesiastical solidarity waxed and waned according to the ebb and flow of imperial solidarity. Imperial factionalism, sectionalism and fragmentation were felt and reproduced in the Church. Through it all the see at Rome continued to grow in importance.

Some reasons for the development of the primacy of the church at Rome have already been noted. These conditions fostered a continuous growth in the importance of the Roman episcopate; however, the process was not automatic and uncontested. The Council of Nicaea gave the bishop of Rome authority over the bishops of Italy only, and as late as A.D. 418 a

council at Carthage threatened with excommunication anyone who appealed from the bishop of Carthage to the bishop of Rome.⁷⁵

Constantine largely ignored the bishop of Rome and the imperial presence overshadowed his importance. The removal of the capital to Constantinople in A.D. 330 eliminated much of the imperial competition and his prestige and power widened. Six years after the death of Constantine the Council of Sardica recognized the bishop of Rome as possessing certain legal powers and provided (canons three and seven) that appeals could be made to him in certain cases. In A.D. 354 the Liberian Catalogue dropped Paul's name and listed Peter alone as the first bishop of Rome.⁷⁶ In A.D. 383 the emperor Gratian ordered that accused bishops under the patriarchate of Rome must be tried at Rome.⁷⁷

As the rift between East and West widened, it was natural that people in the Latin West would look toward the ancient capital. Its name had always inspired awe; it was the symbol of Roman law, order and unity; it had an immense prestige.⁷⁸

After the western imperial residence moved to Ravenna in A.D. 404, the bishop of Rome was left as the most important man in the city,⁷⁹ and a series of strong and able men made the most of the situation. Innocent I (A.D. 402 - 417) was very active in ecclesiastical matters; however, a successor, Leo I (A.D. 440 - 461), went much farther than any of his predecessors in promoting the supremacy of the Roman see and the doctrine of Petrine succession.

Called by some the first real pope, Leo asserted Roman primacy and obtained from Emperor Valentinian III an edict commanding all to obey the Roman see.⁸⁰

Leo was fully convinced of the authority of his office. He wrote several letters to several bishops and metropolitans, giving orders and summoning synods, among other actions. His words leave no doubt about his adherence to the assumptions of the doctrine of Petrine succession: ". . . he [the Lord] has placed the principal charge on the blessed Peter, chief of all the apostles: . . . anyone who dares to secede from Peter's solid rock . . . has no part or lot in the divine mystery."⁸¹ "For since the most blessed Peter received the headship of the apostles from the Lord, and the church of Rome still abides by his institutions, it is wicked to believe that His holy disciple Mark, who was the first to govern the church of Alexandria, formed his decrees on a different line of tradition. . . ." ⁸² ". . . the whole Church . . . ever finds Peter in Peter's see . . ." ⁸³

“As that remains which Peter believed in Christ, so that remains which Christ instituted in Peter.”⁸⁴

The Roman episcopate had no real ecclesiastical competition in the West, even though Carthage was reluctant to surrender its prerogatives to it. The churches of Gaul were young and had little or no claim to great antiquity; in fact, many of them had been evangelized from Rome and looked to Rome as the mother church. Besides, pressed by Huns and Germans, the churches of Gaul were dependent on Rome for protection. In A.D. 452 Leo dramatically persuaded the Hun not to continue his march on Rome.⁸⁵ No doubt such intervention was widely appreciated.

In matters of Church doctrine and procedure the bishop of Constantinople valued highly the support and approval of the bishop of Rome, but not his authority.⁸⁶

In the west the collapse of the imperial power left the bishop of Rome as the chief defender and representative of cultural and political unity and continuity. He succeeded the Emperor as the *Pontifex maximus* and thus inherited the position of supreme sacrificial priest so familiar in Roman tradition.⁸⁷

Augustine had embodied in his *City Of God* the Latin emphasis on law, sovereignty, and Roman form and system,⁸⁸ all of which expressed the Christian political philosophy of the day. From Leo I onward the *civitas dei* merged with the *imperium mundi*.⁸⁹ The process reached its full development in A.D. 590 as Gregory I (“the Great”) virtually took over political power.⁹⁰

East - West Struggle

The struggle between the eastern and western sections of the Empire had its roots deep in the history of Roman political power and organization. This struggle continued as the Church, perpetuating in itself the Roman political structure, continued and intensified the old jurisdictional controversies. The final split came in A.D. 1054, formalizing the fact that the old Roman Empire had broken up.⁹¹ East and West went their separate ways.

East and West were different, different in Church/State relationships, different in doctrine and culture. In the East the Emperor continued to control the Church, making it an instrument of the State. In the West, Church/State dualism became the accepted philosophy. Also, the disintegration of an imperial political entity in the West virtually left political power to the bishop of Rome, who by now had truly become the pope.

Concluding Observations

The Church in the Latin West never ceased to be Roman. Its orientation was Roman. The official status it attained was Roman. Its organization was Roman. Its law and philosophy, its self-image, its culture, its world view, its genius—all were Roman. Barbarians could overlay it with a Gothic veneer, but just below the surface it was still Roman. Even when its constituency was largely Gothic, Hun, Lombard, Vandal, Frank, and whatever else, it maintained its essential Roman characteristics and succeeded not only in “Christianizing” its constituents but also in Latinizing them to a great degree.

It applied Christian discipline and Roman law and order with an efficiency worthy of its heritage; and when in the Twelfth Century it regained its position of full authority, it set out again as the *civitas dei* with the same old crusading imperial spirit and vigor to mold the western world into its Roman image of the Kingdom Of God.

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Appendix B.

The Biblical Function Of The Evangelist

by J. W. Jepson, D.Min.

Introduction.

Of the ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11, perhaps the one that is least understood and that suffers most from both abuse and neglect is the evangelist.

Instead of giving definitive study to the biblical function of the evangelist, most believers are content with certain assumptions regarding evangelists and the conclusions and attitudes that follow from those assumptions.

Attitudes toward evangelists fit into distinct categories. Some consider evangelists to be outside of the “regular clergy,” fervent but unschooled lay preachers who are not qualified to undertake the serious work of the settled ministry. For example, Billy Sunday was considered to be essentially a converted baseball player. Sometimes the person in demand as an evangelist is not the person who entered the ministry for that reason, but the Christian entertainer, athlete, or other celebrity, perhaps recently converted.

Some regard the evangelist as a messianic person, a unique individual who appears providentially once each generation to bring revival to the Church and the world.

Others associate the term evangelist with sensational and even unethical practices. A reflection of this is found in Baker's Dictionary Of Practical Theology, where only one column is given to the subject of the evangelist and most of that consists of warnings against abuses.¹ It is true that some who have been labeled as evangelists have brought the name into disrepute. It is also true that much of the problem has been due to the Church not properly understanding the ministry of the evangelist and therefore not providing adequately for the evangelist's training, utilization and accountability.

Still others regard the evangelist as an autonomous minister operating through a para-church organization that has been established for the evangelist's own ministry and that is maintained by sales and independent fund raising.

Evangelism is no longer regarded as essentially the work of a few "professional" specialists, but as every believer's responsibility. This is as it should be. Nevertheless, it would be a great loss if the evangelist were dismissed and his ministry obscured because his function has not been properly defined and utilized.

Feris Daniel Whitesell speaks well to the point. Referring to Ephesians 4:11 he writes, "If the listing of these divine gifts means anything, then evangelists are next in importance to apostles and prophets, and are more important than pastors and teachers. We would regard the work of the evangelist as built upon the foundations laid by the apostles and prophets, and as preparatory to the work of pastors and teachers. The evangelist may also supplement the work of pastors and teachers by joining with them in the work of perfecting the saints unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). ". . . evangelists are God-chosen and Spirit-gifted men to lead out in the work of evangelism. They are God's firebrands to kindle evangelistic fires in the churches, to inspire pastors, to teach and to lead others in the work of evangelism. . . . Evangelists are Christ's key men in His mighty evangelistic program for the world, and it is a sin to ignore them."²

The person and ministry of Billy Graham did much to restore the honor of the evangelist and of united proclamation evangelism. During his ministry some definite principles were reaffirmed that placed united proclamation evangelism on a much higher level. Nevertheless, the Graham ministry embodied much of the tradition of American "mass evangelism" and functioned on some of its presuppositions. Included are the assumptions that mass evangelism is largely the product of a special evangelistic ministry, that the "crusade" is built largely on the evangelist's name and fame, that the evangelist is not part of the eldership of a local church, and that his ministry functions largely through a para-church organization.

The Church And Its Ministry.

The importance of biblical principles concerning the Church and its ministry is expressed succinctly by G. Campbell Morgan. He writes, "The doctrine of New Testament ministry lies wholly within that of the Church."³

This being true, whenever we consider any form of evangelism, including proclamation evangelism, the entire body of New Testament revelation regarding the Church becomes our doctrinal and practical context. What, then, is the doctrine of the Church as that doctrine applies to our subject?

The New Testament clearly teaches that the Church is God's agency in this present world for carrying out the Great Commission. It was (and is) to His Church that the risen Christ issued His command, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15); "Go therefore and teach all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19).

G. Campbell Morgan continues: "We must hold to the very highest doctrine of the Church, or our evangelism will be weak and one-sided."⁴

The Church is made up of all true believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is invisible in the sense that its membership includes only those whose names are written in Heaven (Hebrews 12:23). That is, its constituency is not co-extensive with or exclusive to any religious organization on earth. At the same time the Church is visible because it is made up of real people who are in corporate fellowship in visible local assemblies with Scriptural doctrine, order and discipline. To be part of the Church is to be part also of a visible local assembly of believers (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Earl Radmacher states the principle this way: ". . . the New Testament assumes that every Christian will take the necessary steps to give outward evidence of his relationship to Christ and His Body. The New Testament knows of no believer who does not submit himself for baptism and join the local church."⁵

According to Ephesians 4:11, God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Essentially these are all "elders" (*presbuteroi*), with specific functions. Accordingly, although not all elders are evangelists, all evangelists are elders and function as an integral part of their

respective local assembly. This seems to be the sound conclusion from the Biblical data. For example, Philip the evangelist resided at Caesarea with his family and was in fellowship with the Caesarean church (Acts 21:8, 9).

The Scriptures seem to bear out the principle of inclusion of functions of elders. That is, the apostle's ministry included that of the prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. This is exemplified in Peter and Paul. The prophet's ministry did likewise. Accordingly, the evangelist's ministry includes that of the pastor and teacher. Each has its primary function, but not to the exclusion of the others within its scope. We can reasonably assume that Philip exercised some degree of pastoral and teaching ministry whenever he was home in Caesarea.

All elders are commanded to feed ("pastor") the flock (Acts 20:28), indicating that the pastor and teacher functions are essential to all elders. (See also 1 Peter 5:1, 2.) If this is true, it would establish the conclusion that evangelists also, being elders, are to exercise a pastoral and teaching ministry. Evangelists must not overlook or neglect these dimensions of their ministry if they are to "make full proof of" their ministry (2 Timothy 4:5).

With these perspectives in mind, we turn to an examination of what the New Testament says specifically about the evangelist.

The Evangelist: Etymology.

The word "evangelist" comes from the Greek word *euangelistes*. The word means "one who proclaims good news," that is, the *euangelion* (gospel, good news).

"Except in ecclesiastical literature this [*euangelistes*] is a rare word. In a non-Christian sense it is attested only on a poorly preserved inscription from Rhodes, I G, XII 1, 675, 6, where it means 'one who proclaims oracular sayings'."⁶

The word is not found in the Septuagint or the other Greek versions of the Old Testament. Neither is it found in the Apostolic Fathers or in the *Didache*.⁷

Closely related to the etymology of the word is its development and use by early Christian writers. Eusebius states that in the time of Trajan many believers “traveling abroad . . . preferred the work of evangelists, being ambitious to preach Christ, and deliver the Scriptures of the Divine Gospels. Having laid the foundations of the faith in foreign nations, they appointed other [*heterous*] pastors.”⁸

Eusebius says also that the evangelists were regarded as successors of the apostles.⁹

“Theodoret (Ad Eph. IV:11) was the first to restrict the term [*euangelistes*] to itinerant preachers, and Ecumenius applied it for the first time strictly to the authors of the gospel.”¹⁰

Although the *Didache* does not mention *euangelistai* by name, it does refer to certain whom it terms “apostles” who were traveling among the churches. Probably these were evangelists of some sort. The churches were advised not to allow these itinerant preachers to settle among them, but to let them stay only a couple of days.¹¹

On the other hand, these “apostles” (evangelists ?) were very highly honored (*Didache* 4). They were referred to as “your high priests” (*Didache* 13). They were not to stay more than one day. But they were permitted to stay two days if necessary; if they stayed three days, they were to be considered “false prophets” (*Didache* 11). They were not to prophesy that people should give money to them.¹²

Eusebius is again cited (*H. E.* 5. 10. 2.) as saying that in the second century there were “still many evangelists of the word eager to use their inspired zeal after the example of the apostles.” See also *H. E.* 3. 37. 2.¹³

Origen might have had evangelists in mind when he said that some Christians made it “the business of their lives” to proclaim the gospel.¹⁴

So we have strong evidence that the function of the evangelist extended and continued well into the second century. At the same time, the evangelists seem more and more to have been looked on as a mixed blessing to be regarded somewhat with suspicion. Perhaps some who took the name contributed to the problem then even as now.

The Evangelist: Biblical Data.

The term “evangelist” is found only three times in the New Testament. In Acts 21:8 it is applied to Philip. In Ephesians 4:11 it is listed as one of the ministry gifts of Christ to the Church. In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul urges Timothy to do the work of an evangelist.

In Ephesians 4:11 the evangelist is listed after apostles and prophets and before pastors and teachers. The evangelists are among those who are given “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12 NKJV).

Three strong inferences can be drawn. First, the evangelist is not one of the foundational ministries of the Church (Ephesians 2:20) but comes next in order after them (assuming that the order in Ephesians 4:11 is significant). Second, the ministry of the evangelist is continuing and age-long in the Church, just as are the ministry of the pastor and teacher. Third, although evangelists are “tellers of good news,” they also serve in equipping the saints for the work of ministry so that the body of Christ will be built up. This leads to the conclusion that the Biblical function of the evangelist is more inclusive than the role that has traditionally been assigned to him/her.

At this point we pause to remind ourselves that in studying evangelists, we must always keep our Lord Jesus Christ clearly before us. He is our perfect example in all things. “We know that Jesus was an evangelist. All virtues and gifts found their perfect realization and manifestation in Him.”¹⁵

In the New Testament more evangelists might be found than is generally thought. For example, Acts 11:19 -21 records that the persecuted believers of Jerusalem were scattered abroad,

preaching the word. These early proclaimers of the gospel might have included some evangelists in the Ephesians 4:11 sense.

Also, in 3 John 5 - 8 we read of some “brethren” and “strangers” who for the name of Christ “went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” Believers were exhorted to receive these peripatetic believers and so be “fellowhelpers to the truth.” It is highly possible that these were late first century evangelists. If so, they “went forth” to evangelize; that is, they went out from a local church. Also, they reported to the local church (verse 6).

Philip.

Philip is the only concrete New Testament example of an evangelist who was so identified. It is important to our study that we examine what The Scriptures say about him, his message, and his ministry.

In Acts 21:8 we read, “. . . and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven”

Acts chapter 8 describes Philip’s ministry in Samaria. Persecution was the occasion for Philip leaving Jerusalem and going to Samaria (verse 5). His preaching was evangelistic and Christ-centered (“the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”—verse 12). His preaching was directed to the public (verse 5). The crowds paid attention to his message because they heard and saw the miraculous signs that he did (verse 6; verse 13 says “signs and great powers”). These signs featured exorcising demons and healing the paralyzed and the lame (verse 7). This implies that the miracles mainly involved the restoration of motor functions. The result was “great joy” in the city.

The people believed and were baptized in water (verse 12). Still, the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon any of them. This happened only when Peter and John arrived, prayed, and laid hands on them (verses 15 and 17).

Philip did personal evangelism, being directed by the angel of the Lord to go to the south, where he led the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ (verses 26 - 39).

Philip was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord. He itinerated through the cities preaching, and settled at Caesarea (verse 40).

On the basis of the biblical data, let us analyze the ministry of this evangelist, particularly at Samaria.

First, the designations. Philip's role expanded from deacon to evangelist. This calls to mind 1 Timothy 3:13, "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (NKJV). Philip must have served well as a deacon, for he certainly demonstrated "great boldness in the faith."

Second, his message. Acts 8:5 says that he "preached Christ." Verse 12 says that he preached "concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." Philip's message was Christ-centered. We do not know all that he preached "concerning the kingdom of God." That he did so implies that his message consisted in the fundamentals of the faith; that is, it was soteriological. Preaching "the name of Jesus Christ" implies that he preached Christ's person, redemptive work, resurrection, ascension and present authority and session. It is likely that he also preached a Christ-centered soteriology, as Paul did in Athens (Acts 17:31).

Third, his mode. Philip's preaching was accompanied by dramatic "sign" gifts. The display of the miraculous was the singular reason for the eager attention of the community to Philip's *kerygma*. It must also have facilitated belief.

By exorcising evil spirits in the name of Jesus, Philip demonstrated that the doctrine of Christ is not merely another mystery religion to add to what they already had. The Holy Spirit confirmed the sole lordship of Jesus by confronting and overcoming the power of Satan that energized their occult practices. The people were delivered from sin, sickness, and demonic power. No wonder there was "great joy in the city."

The record leaves some questions unanswered. How long did Philip stay in Samaria? Where in the city did he preach and how often? Before Peter and John arrived, what did Philip do, if anything, to organize the new believers into a structured body? What teaching, if any, did he give them in addition to his proclamation “concerning the kingdom of God?”

The fact that he baptized the new converts would seem to imply that they constituted the body of Christ in that place.

From the references to Philip’s later life and ministry in Acts 21, we observe that he settled in Caesarea and raised a family. He lived in a house that was large enough to accommodate Paul and his group. The context indicates that Philip was in full fellowship with the church at Caesarea, probably as an elder and possibly as the leading elder. He received Paul into his house and also into full contact with the local church.

That he was still referred to as an evangelist indicates that he continued in that ministry, both in Caesarea and wherever else he had opportunity.

Timothy

In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul urges Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist.” Immediately this raises a question. Was Timothy essentially an evangelist, or did Paul urge him to do the work of an evangelist as an auxiliary function? That is, is “do the work of an evangelist” equivalent to “be an evangelist”?

Timothy traveled with Paul (Acts 16:1f). Paul refers to him as “our fellowlaborer in the gospel of Christ” (1 Thessalonians 3:2), and as “my workfellow” (Romans 16:21). He says concerning Timothy, “as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel” (Philippians 2:22 NKJV). From this it is evident that Timothy’s work with Paul included a great amount of evangelistic preaching and ministry.

However, was Timothy essentially an evangelist, or was he a prophet in the Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11 sense?

After Timothy joined Paul's party "*they* delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4, KJV, emphasis added). The probability that Timothy was a prophet in the Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11 sense is reinforced by the fact that in so many instances he was Paul's personal and authoritative representative to the churches in matters of foundational nature and importance (Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19, 20).

So, from the Biblical data we see that Timothy's ministry extended *at least* to the functional breadth of an evangelist. If that was the perimeter of his ministry, we would place him alongside of Philip as an evangelist. On the other hand, if Timothy was a New Testament prophet (which is likely), we would view his evangelistic ministry as an auxiliary gift that was included within the scope of his function as a prophet. In that case, doing "the work of an evangelist" at Ephesus (as he had done in his travels with Paul) would be part of fulfilling (*plerophoreson*) his total ministry, just as feeding the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2) is part of "fulfilling" the total ministry of the evangelist.

It would seem that the injunction, "do the work of an evangelist," in 2 Timothy 4:5 is not given to all believers nor to all ministers. All believers are to be soul-winners and all ministers are to preach the gospel; however, the work of an evangelist in the biblical sense is to be done by God-called and gifted evangelists *as their primary work*. In apostolic times it was also done by apostles and prophets as directly pertinent to their foundational ministries.

"[T]he phrase *ergon poieson euangelistou* is too marked and peculiar to be satisfactorily interpreted as merely equivalent to 'preach the gospel'."¹⁶

Ephesians 4:11, 12 states that there were evangelists in the New Testament Church. Paul refers to his traveling companions as "the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ" (see 2 Corinthians 8:18 - 23). It is probable that at least some of these were evangelists sent on assignment ("messengers, representatives") from their churches to labor with Paul. Perhaps some were prophets, doing the work of an evangelist as they participated with Paul in foundational ministry.

Apollos

The activities of Apollos and the biblical references to him indicate the possibility that he was an evangelist. He traveled extensively, at times following Paul to water what Paul had planted (1 Corinthians 3:4 - 6; Titus 3:13). He was eloquent and "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24), gifts that are directly pertinent to the strong proclamation of the gospel. Aquila and Priscilla must have seen his potential as a genuine evangelist and therefore "explained to him the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26 NIV).

Observations

First, it can be stated with confidence that the evangelist is a full-fledged minister and one of the "ministry gifts" of Christ to the Church.

"There is, of course, no more a 'professional evangelist' than there is a 'professional pastor' or a 'professional missionary'."¹⁷

"A man to whom the proclamation of the gospel is the strongest force in his life has no choice. He must proclaim it! This is one of the foremost characteristics of an evangelist. The evangelist seems to be a man who, beyond most other men, has had his heart gripped with the inescapable realization that men without Christ are lost."¹⁸

"A man who receives the gift of the evangelist is one to whom there is given a clear understanding of the evangel, a great passion in his heart results from the clear vision, a great optimism fills his soul, born of his confidence in the power of Christ to save every man; and growing out of that passion and that confidence a great constraint seizes him to tell somebody, to tell everybody the glad news of salvation by Jesus Christ. Those peculiar qualities are not found in all men called to the ministry. Every man will have sympathy along these lines. But where this is the all-consuming fire, there you have an evangelist."¹⁹

“The ideal is to add scholarship to earnest conviction, then the effective evangelist of the best type is bound to appear.”²⁰

An evangelist must have a deep, abiding desire for the work, a desire that will lead him to read, to study, to learn all he can about the message he is to proclaim, the methods he is to employ, and the spiritual resources he must have. There must develop in him a God-given ability to point people to Christ. The love of Christ must constrain him so that his appeal is wooing, compassionate.²¹

The evangelist must be on his guard against the devices of Satan. As all ministers must do, he must leave the three “g’s” alone: the girls, the gold, and the glory.

The evangelist must be balanced, knowledgeable, at home among any company. He must be able eat with sinners, to be at home with the rich and poor, to relate to all classes and conditions, to bless and minister to the children.

As is true of all ministers, the evangelist must take good care of himself mentally and physically. He must guard his health.

“The moment one’s nerves are unstrung, he loses his hold on men. Coarse, rough and ready men have no appreciation of the fine sensibilities and overwork which break down a pastor. The common people have a great respect for tough clergymen. Revivalists must be able to endure hardness. A good digestion and capacity for sleep are needful. Beefsteak and sound sleep will save souls; but restless nights will not.”²²

Like every other minister, the evangelist must have a clear and defined understanding of himself and his ministry; otherwise, he will find himself in the frame of mind described by P. T. Forsyth: “the ancient prophets responded to the Divine call, ‘Here am I’, but so many of the modern ‘prophets’ speak out of confusion and despair, ‘Where am I?’”²³

When the evangelist understands himself and his function in the light of Scripture, he is better able to define the goal of his ministry.

“When a man has chosen his objective in life, the whole of his life must be concentrated on that objective, if he is to accomplish it.”²⁴

The evangelist’s ministry is *to* the Church; his ministry is *in* the Church; his ministry is *with, through, and by* the Church, reaching out to the community and the world. The Church is the true base of ministry. As with all ministry, only as the evangelist’s ministry is integrated into the evangelistic life of the Church will it find its true and complete fulfillment. This is true whether he is leading his own local church in evangelism as he participates in “the equipping of the saints for the work of ministering,” or preaching to crowds in some other city. As the limbs of a tree extend out from the trunk, what he is abroad must emerge from what he is at home.

Some of the great evangelistic *and discipling* churches are led by dynamic evangelists, even though their local title might be “Senior Pastor.” The deeper their roots go and develop in the local church and community, the farther grow the branches of their outreach abroad.

“. . . the local church minister who has gifts of evangelism has a very real, specialized contribution to give if he will conduct missions from time to time. In the place to which he goes the ministers will realize that he is one of themselves, that he understands the difficulties of the ordinary church and the ordinary congregation.”²⁵

As our understanding of the biblical role of the evangelist matures, so should our understanding of and appreciation for the place of united proclamation evangelism. An evangelist is both an evangelistic leader at home and a leader and resource person in proclamation evangelism abroad.

The evangelist has specific gifts and aptitudes given by God for his specific ministry. For this he needs specific training. When men and women enter Bible college or seminary with a call to be an evangelist, they join their fellow students in pursuing the basic ministerial curriculum. Yet, where do they find a course on the function and ministry of the evangelist, or the philosophy and methodology of united proclamation evangelism? Where is a standard textbook on the subject?

They will find courses on evangelism, and these are vital to them. However, they are usually broad and basic. They need specialized study aimed at the specifics of their function.

Pastors; missionaries; chaplains; ministers of education, youth, music; children's pastors—all receive specialized courses of study. So, too, should evangelists.

Often the young evangelist has to learn on his own, gaining what he can by reading books and observing other evangelists. He might try for years to formulate a methodology, struggling to acquire the requisite adjective “famous” before the name “evangelist.” It is curious that in our western culture it seems to be assumed that the evangelist must become “famous” to be effective. Thus we hear the term “big name” evangelist; on the other hand, “no-name” evangelist connotes mediocrity or failure. By contrast, we do not speak of “famous” or “big name” ministers of Christian education, youth, or music. They are trained and utilized within the on-going life of the Church. Why not evangelists?

If he lacks specific preparation and mentoring, the young evangelist goes out free-lance. Thus he gains the image of an independent operator. If he does succeed, his star might rise only to plummet because of some mis-judgment or failure. If this happens, the Church will likely point to him as an example of how evangelism should *not* be conducted and what an evangelist should *not* be and do. Perhaps instead it should be asked: who trained him? did anyone provide him with the early direction, mentoring, and accountability that he so greatly needed? was he given an opportunity to be placed in the body of Christ as God has desired (1 Corinthians 12:18)?

God does raise up outstanding evangelists, of course. He also raises up good evangelists who never become “famous.” Each evangelist should be trained, mentored, and utilized to his or her own potential.

Among the elders of the churches there might be more evangelists than we realize, yearning to realize and be utilized to their full potential.

Let them come forth!

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