

The Vast New Covenant Transition

What It Means to Assemble Together in Christ

By George Davis and Michael Clark

In a very unusual conversation with a Samaritan woman, Jesus spoke of a great transition that would utterly change the way that God is worshipped. She wanted an answer to an age-old rivalry that began when a tax revolt divided the kingdom of David and her forefathers moved to Samaria and constructed a second center of worship on Mt. Gerizim. "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship" (John 4:19-20 NKJV). Rather than take the party-line like his brothers of the tribe of Judah, assuming they were completely right and the Samaritans completely wrong, Jesus took a third position, telling her that both doctrines fell short of God's full intention.

That day in Samaria, Jesus told her of a great transition that would completely abolish the old carnal religious orders of men, making way for a higher order of worship that is in keeping with the very nature of God. "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father . . . But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4: 21-24 NLT). The status quo was about to make a drastic change! A new covenant between God and man was well on its way to becoming a reality in spirit and in truth.

A central part of this vast transition consists of stripping away the old religious trappings that bind men in fixed traditions and blind them to that new and living way that He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh (see Hebrews 10:20). God's will in this matter is clearly stated in Hebrews 10:7-9. "He takes away the first to establish the second." You do not construct a new house on the site of an old one without first tearing down the old house.

The time was fast approaching when no one would be able to worship God in the temple at Jerusalem. That hour came in 70 AD, just as Jesus had earlier prophesied. The Roman emperor Titus utterly destroyed the temple and not one stone of it was left upon another (See Matthew 24: 2). Though seemingly disastrous, this event was a sign

to the Jews of their sin, because it fulfilled Jesus parting words, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, you shall not see me again, till you shall say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, 'See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.'"(Matthew 23:38 - 24:2 KJ2000).

This was not only the sign of the end of the old order, but a witness of future blessings that were to come. After Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple, the Jews asked Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews answered, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" This is so characteristic of religious man. Because of his fixation on physical, religious trappings he cannot see beyond to the heavenly reality. What these myopic Jews did not know was that Jesus "was speaking of the temple of His body." (see John 2:15-21). Notice how Jesus used the words temple and body interchangeably.

Let's follow Jesus' logic very closely here. The temple on mount Zion was merely an earthly representation or shadow of the real temple or dwelling place of God, "One greater than the temple," was already among them (see Matthew 12:6). When the Jews destroyed the temple of His body, Jesus raised a new temple in its place. This clearly points to the spiritual house, the body of Christ. Two thousand years ago, the temple of Christ's body was a physical body that rose again on the third day. His natural body was key to the realization of God's full purpose in His Son because it was the single seed that was sown in the ground and raised a spiritual body unto much fruit.

"Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.'" (Hebrews 10:5 NKJV). Here is the divine template. Paul likened our physical bodies to wheat or some other grain that is sown in corruption and raised in incorruption. "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44 NKJV). The same is true of Christ's body. Christ's physical body or temple was sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.

Now, under this glorious New Covenant, the temple of His body is a spiritual house made of living stones, fit for God's own dwelling place.

Most of the early believers understood this mystery very well and were careful to give to God the worship He seeks in that house. Central to their faith was the knowledge that He is Spirit and as such can only be worshiped in spirit. Peter, the one who wanted to raise three equal tabernacles for Jesus, Moses and Elijah just a few years earlier, now understood that God in this new dispensation has taken up residence in a spiritual temple not made with hands. "You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Paul agrees with Peter, "Or do you not know that your bodies are a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is within you--the Spirit whom you have from God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19 WNT). "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (2 Corinthians 6:16 NKJV). And again, "In him (Christ) you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22 ESV).

John was in the Spirit when he caught a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem, coming down as a bride prepared for her husband. The first thing he noticed was the absence of what most of the religious world considers essential. "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Revelation 21:22 NASB). The closer we get to that heavenly city, the more the earthly trappings of religion fade away. Millions today are finding out once again that true worship is not dependant on a locale, special music setting the mood, or a special building, but it is a matter of the heart and happens everywhere His true body is found living in His truth.

In keeping with this great New Covenant reality, the early believers had no temples. A central part of their message was taken from God's words to backslidden Israel in Isaiah 66:1, "Heaven is My throne, and earth the footstool of My feet. Where then is the house that you build for Me? And where then is the place of My rest?" (See also Acts 7:49, 17: 24-28). The second century Christian apologist Minicus Felix gives us a sense of the depth of their understanding of this great transitional truth when he wrote to their skeptics,

You mistakenly think we conceal what we worship since we have no temples or altars. . . How can anyone build a temple to Him, when the whole world can't contain Him? Even I, a mere human, travel far and wide. So how can anyone shut up the majesty of so great a Person within one small building? Isn't it better for Him to be dedicated in our minds and consecrated in our innermost hearts--rather than in a building? (Minicus Felix, Octavius, 2nd Century A.D.).

Regarding this amazing quote, J.G. Davies wrote,

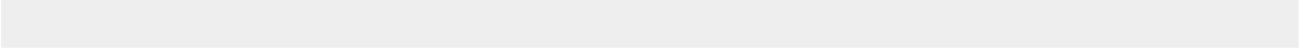
Throughout at least the first two centuries there were no church buildings as such, and this was so remarkable that to the pagan population, it was considered grounds for accusing the Christians of "atheism." In a world notable for the number of its holy shrines and the rivers of blood that flowed daily from the sacrificial victims, Christians were conspicuous in that they possessed neither the first nor engaged in the second" (*Secular Use of Church Buildings*, J.G. Davies, 1968: page 1)

Let's continue to explore this vast New Covenant transition, how it took shape in the early church and its direct bearing on our lives as New Covenant believers, individually and collectively. Considering the preoccupation with building larger and more ornate places of worship in Christendom today, it is painfully obvious that something has drastically changed. We believe that this is proof conclusive that Christians at large have yet to grasp the enormous significance of the truth that Jesus shared with that Samaritan woman, so long ago. "As was the case in ancient Israel, a structure has grown up in Christendom that proceeds from the flesh and does not represent the mind of God.... We certainly will not be deceived if, out of present events, we read the mind of God, the mind which leads out of the old system of the rule of the worldly church and into a new and fresh life of truth" (Blumhardt, *Thy Kingdom Come*). It is not enough for us to leave behind the old religious system of temple-worship and carnal sacrifices. We must press on, toward a full participation in the spiritual realities of this higher order of worship.

William Law explains,

Hence it plainly appears that the gospel state could not be God's last dispensation, or the finishing of man's redemption, unless its whole work was a work of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man; that is, unless without all veils, types, and shadows, it brought the thing itself, or the substance of all former types and shadows, into real enjoyment, so

as to be possessed by man in spirit, and in truth. Now the thing itself, and for the sake of which all God's dispensations have been, is that first life of God which was essentially born in the soul of the first man, Adam, and to which he died. But now, if the gospel dispensation comes at the end of all types and shadows, to bring forth again in man a true and full birth of that Holy Spirit which he had at first, then it must be plain, that the work of this dispensation must be solely and immediately the work of the Holy Spirit.



Chapter 2: Worship in Spirit, the *Pneuma* of God

"The primal element of all things, the first principle of being and life, is the Spirit."
(Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, V.10.)

Spiritual worship begins with the communion of the spirit of the creature with the Spirit of the Creator. As Jesus told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It was from that Breath that life began. What was it that made that pile of red dirt into the first Adam--a living soul? The Spirit of the living God separates the dead from the living! What was true of Adam is also true of the Church. Any person or gathering of persons that is not animated by the Breath of God is dead and cannot rightly be called the Church of Christ. As it was with Adam, so it is with the authentic Church. God formed Adam out of the dirt of the ground and breathed into that lifeless form the breath of life. God formed the first Church out of earthen vessels that were just as lifeless. He sent His Spirit to vitalize them and make them witnesses of His life, love and power. Only as a living organism, animated by the Spirit, could they walk in harmony with the living God. So the Spiritual birth of the church was God's first order of business. Of Jesus John wrote, "In Him was life and the Life was the Light of men." Where there is no pneuma, life, there is no light.

The prophet Joel also foretold this great transitional event. "And it shall be afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also I will pour out My Spirit on the slaves and on the slave-girls in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). This New Covenant seal fell upon the early believers as, in obedience to Christ's command, all 120 of them gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem, waiting for the promise of the Father. "And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them" (Acts 2:2-3 RSV). This harkens back to Jesus' description of those who are birthed anew by the Spirit. "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8 NKJV). After the Spirit fell

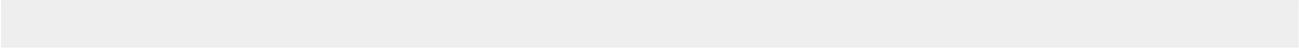
on these saints, the house they were in could no longer hold them. They broke out beyond its walls like a tornado.

Everyone born of the Spirit is like the wind? Isn't that what Jesus said here? That would be chaos, wouldn't it? Somebody has to supervise, somebody has to be in control or who knows what might happen. Believers running here and there, haphazardly, without so much as a by your leave from the presbytery? This kind of life will upset the whole neat applecart we have been building. That's the point exactly. If nature has taught man anything, it has taught him that he cannot control the wind. You cannot argue with a hurricane. It tests the structures and foundations of everything. What we just witnessed in New Orleans has proven that. It blows where it wishes and breaks down the walls that resist God's flood.

So it is that the Holy Spirit demands that place of absolute supremacy or He leaves to find those who will grant it to Him. We believe this is why the last outpouring of the Spirit during the early '70s was not in the churches, but out in the streets. You cannot confine the wind in buildings! You cannot dictate the wind's course and you can not fly your kite without it. As one dear brother we know wrote, "The opposite of the wind is bricks!" When will religious men ever learn that they cannot control where the wind comes from or control where it goes? When will they stop resisting the Holy Spirit and those who are led by Him? They often speak about the sovereignty of God, but if this was true, why do they act as if they were the sovereign ones? Stephen's final words are pregnant with meaning, "[However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me?' says the LORD, or 'what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?' You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.](#)" (Acts 7:48-51 NKJV).

Here in John three and Joel two we see worship in Spirit represented by the outpouring and sovereign leading of God's Spirit as opposed to the closed-system worship of the old order, where only a few favored individuals are considered anointed. Under this New Covenant, the prophetic Spirit that was once poured out on an elite company is now lavished upon everyone, even those who were in that day considered the lowest of the low--slave-girls. With no distinction of class or privilege, all are anointed. All are priests. All are taught of God (See 1John 2:27). All may enter the Holy of Holies because Christ has torn open the veil (see Hebrews 10: 19). All are given gifts of the

Spirit (See Ephesians 4: 7, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 & Romans 12:6-8). All minister to one another (see 1 Peter 4:10). In this glorious New Covenant, the God that is above all is now through all and in all (see Ephesians 4:6). There are no privileged priests in Christ's body. All are priests! (See 1 Peter 2: 5, 9). There is only one Head and each anointed, precious member is equally connected to Him! Before we address this great mystery of the Church, it is necessary that we look at those things that resist and hinder its full manifestation.



Chapter 3: Not Forsaking the Assembling--A New and Living Way

First we want to address a common judgment made by those within denominated Christianity against those who have gone outside their walls, seeking a true manifestation of the body of Christ.

George Barna rightly wrote of these revolutionaries in his new book, *The Revolution*:

“They have no use for churches that play religious games, whether those games are worship services that drone on without the presence of God or ministry programs that bear no spiritual fruit. Revolutionaries eschew ministries that compromise or soft sell our sinful nature to expand organizational turf. They refuse to follow people in ministry in leadership positions who cast a personal vision rather than God's, or who seek popularity rather than the proclamation of truth in their public statements, or who are more concerned about their own legacy than that of Jesus Christ. They refuse to donate one more dollar to man-made monuments that mark their own achievements and guarantee their place in history. They are unimpressed by accredited degrees and endowed chairs in Christian colleges and seminaries that produce young people incapable of defending the Bible or unwilling to devote their life to serving others. And Revolutionaries are embarrassed by language that promises Christian love and holiness but turns out to be all sizzle and no substance.”

As a proof-text for their criticism of all who do not meet in buildings the way they do every Sunday, those within Christendom quote the following passage: “. . . [not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some. . .](#)” Shouldn't we gather together as Christians? Certainly! This desire to gather together is rooted deeply in the hearts of all believers, but as to the conditions that govern Christian gatherings, we should pay careful heed to these words of Jesus. [“No man puts a piece of new cloth onto an old garment, for that which is put on to fill it up takes from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old wineskins: else the wineskins break, and the wine runs out, and the wineskins perish: but they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved”](#) (Matthew 9:16-17 KJ2000).

Great damage is done when God's children attempt to keep, patch up and use the garment of the old religious order. This old wineskin cannot contain or sustain the fresh wine! We are stating the obvious when we say it is very possible for our "Christian gatherings" to do more damage than good. Considering events in the recent past, and the thousands of cases of church abuse, few would deny this. Some of the most carnal things have been done in the name of Christ by men who amassed great congregations to themselves. The very nature of carnality is a party-spirit that is all about gathering. Paul wrote to the carnal Corinthians, "For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name" (1 Corinthians 1:11-15 KJ2000). Isn't this what a denomination is--a group gathered around a dominate leader (or leaders), claiming him as their own? Later on in this epistle Paul gave his assessment of their gathering, "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse" (1 Corinthians 11:17 KJ2000).

Three hundred people gathered together in a building no more constitute the church than twelve dead men make up a winning basketball team. The true *ekklesia* is "the fullness of Him that fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). It is assembled by Him alone! The old wineskin cannot contain this kind of fullness. Everything depends on the nature of the gathering. Any group calling themselves "Christian" that does not gather around Christ and God's purpose in Christ through the Spirit cannot rightly claim to be assembled together. Rather this is disorder and disassembly!

The words to an old charismatic hymn come to mind. ". . . We are gathering together unto Him. Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be. We are gathering together unto Him." Jesus spoke of this very important condition when he said to His disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst." All gatherings that are not in agreement with Christ's name, His very character and position, embracing the full implication of His finished work, are not assembled unto Him and are therefore not for the betterment of His kingdom.

So just what is the assembling together that the author of Hebrews is referring to here? The answer is obvious as we look at the context of this passage. Biblical error is often

the result of taking scriptures out of context and not seeing the whole council of God. This one is no exception. This exhortation to the Hebrew Christians can only be understood in the greater scope of the epistle.

To get the full impact of what it means to assemble together we must back up to the beginning of chapter nine and follow the writer's developing thought. The logic goes like this. The first covenant had ordinances and a worldly sanctuary (verse 1), a tabernacle called the holy place containing the lampstand and the table of showbread. Behind the second veil was the Holiest of all, which had the golden censer, the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold containing the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and the tablets of the old covenant. The cherubim of glory overshadowed the mercy seat on the lid of the Ark. The priests went continually into the first tabernacle (holy place), accomplishing the service of God. Only one priest (the high priest) could go beyond the second veil into the Holy of Holies, and not without blood, which he offered once a year for himself and for the errors of the people. In verse eight the author presents a great transitional truth and the purpose of all that he had written up to that point. "By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary [for all] is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age)." Why was the way into the holy of holies not yet open to all? The first tabernacle was still standing. This brings us to the true passion of Christ the Son and His work. "Then said he, 'Lo, I come to do your will, O God.' He takes away the first, that he may establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9 KJ2000).

This first tabernacle concerned only meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation. He goes on later in the chapter with this thought:

Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. (Hebrews 9:23-24 NKJV)

Christ has become our High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, not belonging to this material creation but in the heavens (vs. 8:1). By his own blood Jesus entered in once into the holy place,

having obtained eternal redemption for us. Paul was not crucified for you, neither was Peter, Jerome, Augustine, Luther, Calvin or Pastor Wonderful. Christ's perfect sacrifice is what makes Him and Him alone the Mediator of the New Covenant. If our blood was efficacious for the cleansing of sins then we also could also be mediators. But no, we are required to come before the Father purely on the merit of Christ's blood. "Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (see Hebrews 9:2-24). What shall we say if we neglect so great a salvation?

That time of reformation has come! God has torn the veil to the Holy of Holies and has issued a standing invitation to all, ". . . enter the Holiest . . ." Considering these great transitional truths, let's read our text about assembling together again once again.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:19-25 NKJV)

Here we read that Jesus consecrated for us "a new and living way." The old type is done away with in Christ's perfection. Regardless, men choose to bow before the residue of it. We find a perfect example of this in Israel today. Thirty-five years after Jesus died, the Romans invaded Israel in force and destroyed Jerusalem and leveled the old temple. To this day only an outer perimeter wall of Herod's temple (not the temple wall itself) can be seen, "the wailing wall." It is amazing the kind of devotion that is shown to this relic. People stand before it and bob their heads and shove written prayers into its cracks, yet God has moved into another temple!

Just before Jesus died, His disciples were pointing at this murder's (Herod) great structure which the Jews had turned into a den of thieves and Jesus said, "Tear this temple down and three days I will raise it up." What temple did Jesus raise up? Yes, He rose again, but did he instruct the disciples to break forth on that day with picks and

shovels, mortar boards and trowels and start building another physical, material temple for this new religion's denominational headquarters? No! He rose from the dead and consecrated a new meeting place for all believers in the heavenly holy of holies. He took away the first to establish the second. He invites us to gather with Him beyond the veil in the heavenly sanctuary and let our bodies be His extended temple here on earth. Only as part of this collective, living organism, holding to its Head that considers one another in order to stir up love and good works can we properly assemble together. This is the place of the gathering together for the true members of His body.

What is new and living about people meeting in earthly sanctuaries, all facing a speaker's platform in total passivity until a dominate leader looks down upon them from his pulpit and directs them to move, pray, sing or pay? Is this what Jesus consecrated for us to walk in? What is new and living about churches with earthly structures with their presiding priests and pastors? Even the pagans order their temples after this pattern. Is this what Jesus died for--to put a new patch on an old, worn out religious garment? Are we to enter through the veil of His torn flesh so we can sit passively on a pew for seventy years and then die? Is this what it means to assemble in that new and living way? Will our tombstone in the church yard read, "Here lies Joe. He was faithful to assemble in the old covenant way for seventy years and his pastor was proud of him"?

If it is not new and living it is not a New Covenant assembly, regardless of how many people are gathered under one roof. The epistle to the Hebrews is a warning and an exhortation. Its author repeatedly warns that those who draw back from this heavenly way to return to the old religious traditions risk failing to enter into the fullness of God's intention. The question is, do we have ears to hear this warning?

It's clear from this epistle that the early Jewish believers were dividing into two camps. Some were forsaking assembling in this new and heavenly way and were turning back to the earthly forms of the old religious order, refusing to heed the high calling of the sons of God. They were forsaking the assembling together as His living body, just as surely as unbelieving Israel at Kadesh Barnea grieved God and did not go in and inherit the land of promise.

T. Austin Sparks, writing about the Book of Hebrews, explains.

Well, all this constituted this crisis of whether they were going to choose this or that, the one or the other. Go back to something earthly from the heavenly, to something tangible from the spiritual, to something temporal from the eternal, something visible from the invisible. And it is quite evident I think, in this letter before you're through, that a division was coming about between these believers. They were dividing into two camps. That is the point of the exhortation "forsaking not the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is". Some were saying, "We're not going on with that any further" and they were having their own meetings and their own circle and not going on, not going on in this way. A division was taking place; two companies. Here were those who had seen the heavenly calling and the heavenly vision and were going on with it; here were those who, if they had seen it, were letting it go, were drifting away from it. And what a forceful word that is! It has a nautical meaning in the original, as you know. It's the picture of a ship approaching its moorings on the current and missing its moorings and drifting away and onto the rocks. Lest we come up to this and miss it and drift away and as Israel at Kadesh Barnea were wrecked, we should be wrecked. It's a warning, it's an exhortation.

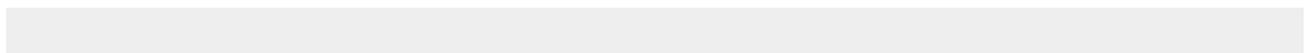
Those who refuse the new and living way by turning back to dead religious forms are forsaking the general assembly and church of the firstborn. Those who refuse to go on in this heavenly way and return to sitting mutely on a pew are the ones who are forsaking the proper assembly. The author of Hebrews later tells us of our heavenly calling and assembly, which should not be forsaken.

For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as an animal touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a spear: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from

heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:18-28 KJ2000)

Will we forsake this assembly, the assembly of the firstborn with the spirits of just men made perfect? God has a much higher standard than the religions of men. Will we embrace the new and living way? Will we allow God to shake all that can be shaken in our lives until all that is left is that kingdom that cannot be shaken? Will we cling to the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, or will we turn back to the shadows of earthly tabernacles and carnal ordinances with carnal men? Will we accept this vast New Covenant transition or continue to reconstruct old temples and block the way into the Holy of Holies, the heavenly Zion, with our dead traditions? Will we be guilty of the very thing that Jesus accused the Pharisees of? "...you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither allow you them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13 KJ2000).

Our meetings cannot be heavenly until we are first seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in the general assembly and church of the firstborn. All who do not first gather in that heavenly sanctuary which God pitched and not man, around God the Judge and Jesus the Mediator of the New and lasting Covenant, will be shaken and scattered by God. God desires His kingdom to be in earth as (or exactly like) it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10), that all things in earth should be after the heavenly pattern. Just as He did with Herod's temple, He will not permit anything but the heavenly pattern to continue in His name. He resists and scatters everything else in order to preserve the integrity of His work in His children individually, least they come into a unity that is earthly in nature and propensity having lost sight totally of the His eternal purpose.



Chapter 4:

The Babylon Principle:

The Primary Force against the Unity of the Spirit

Out of man's refusal to gather in the heavenly way and his insistence upon gathering around visible earthly principles and values comes another evil that stands in defiance to God's ever-unfolding purpose for mankind. We have chosen to call it "the Babylon principle of unity" which is without doubt the counterfeit of and the primary force against the unity of the Spirit.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men built. And the LORD said, "Behold, the people are one and they have all one language, and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be withheld from them which they have imagined to do. Come, let Us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off building the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel [confusion], because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. ([Genesis 11:1-9 KJ21](#))

We will explain by drawing from a story in the book of Daniel. Babylon was once again resurrected and had captivated the people of God. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, dreamed dreams about "what shall be in the latter days" and none of the Chaldean magicians, astrologers and sorcerers (worldly wise men) could interpret them. God revealed them unto Daniel in a night vision and He was called before the king. Daniel stood before Nebuchadnezzar and said,

["You, O king, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and its form was frightening. This image's head was of fine](#)

gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay..."

We can now see that the four levels or elements of the statue represented Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom with the head of gold, the Medo-Persian Empire with the chest and arms of silver, the Greek empire with the loins and belly of bronze and the Roman Empire with the legs of iron. But there was one more level which the king saw that was not natural and it greatly disturbed him, the feet of iron and clay mixed. These two elements will not naturally adhere to one another with any strength. The feet on which this great image stood of which he was the head were weak and the king knew it. In effect it was a house divided against itself. It is important that when the Stone not cut with hands strikes it hits the culmination of the kingdoms of fallen man at its weakest point--its feet.

This terrifying image (idol) represented the culmination of a single thought in the minds of the offspring of Noah, thousands of years prior. Instead of being obedient to God and dispersing over the earth to fill it with a godly seed, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and said one to another, "Come, let us make brick. . . ." Next on their agenda was to build something for themselves out of these counterfeit stones. And they said, "Come, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." They ceased to be pilgrims and sojourners and became campers. Pay heed to the phrases, "let us make . . . let us build . . . let us make ourselves a name . . . lest we be scattered." This is the seminal principle that begat, nurtured, brought to fruition and unified the five frightening kingdoms that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about, represented by the image. However, there is something in Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream about "the latter days" that is neither troubling nor frightening to those who believe.

Daniel continues,

"...You saw till a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image upon its feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that no place was found for them: and the stone that struck the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:31-35 KJ2)

Before we go on we must address a Divine principle that governs everything related to God's redemptive purposes--the principle of the Stone(s).

In both the old and new covenants, what is offered to the Lord must be presented on the altar of the sheer merit of what He has done, what only He can do and who He is. God was adamant that any altar built to Him must be built of natural whole stones and He told Moses, "you shall not lift up any iron tool upon them" (Deuteronomy 27:5-6 KJ2000). The stones of His altar cannot be shaped by the ingenuity and ambition of men. Many times in the Old Testament we find that God commanded that uncut stones, stones "cut without hands," be used when something that represented His eternal work was being constructed.

This is the principle that confounds Babylon's builders to this day. Men like the quick and easy. They prefer a four year degree in theology to a lifetime of being shaped by God. For this reason they like to build with concrete blocks and bricks. But it takes time to build with stones not cut with hands and what God is building takes a lot of time.

Quoting from Isaiah, Paul wrote, "[Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed](#)" (Romans 9:33 KJ2). Peter wrote of this precious Stone, "[Unto you therefore who believe he is precious: but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner](#)" (1 Peter 2:7 KJ2). Jesus is that precious, stumbling Stone that strikes at the very foundation of the idolatrous image of the builders. He is the Foundation; the Head of the corner, the First of many stones, cut without the aid of men's hands, rejected by those who would make a name for themselves. How does the Lord view all this? What does He see when He looks at the builders who make haste to build monuments to themselves?

When "the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built," He said, "[Behold, the people are one \[unified\] and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.](#)" Everything that the children of men built represented only one thing to God. When He saw their city and the tower, He saw beyond the architecture. He saw the very thing that most threatens and misrepresents His will for men. He saw a false unity, "the people are one," that keeps men from following on into His greater purposes, the unity of Christ. Man had once known this greater kind of unity long

before the founding of Babel, for "[Enoch walked with God and he was no more.](#)" True unity in Christ can only come with our decrease, our being no more. It will never happen as long as we are set on leaving a legacy and making a name for ourselves.

With rebellious Babel God introduced confusion as a stopgap measure. "[Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.](#)" So the Lord scattered them abroad from there upon the face of all the earth: and they left off building the city." We are told that there are over 200,000 Christian denominations and sects. It is not an overstatement to say that all of them speak a different doctrinal language and refuse to hear one another's speech.

We recently saw this play out with a brother. He was intent on pushing his doctrinal belief and refused to listen to the whole council of God in the scriptures. The doctrine was not centered on Christ and thus by arguing over it we would never come into the unity of the Spirit. He would not take our advice to lay it down and move on to the centrality of Christ. Alas, our time which started out in the sweet fellowship in the Spirit was soon shattered and the enemy succeeded in causing division among the brethren once again. The sad thing was, that this all happened in a public place. The gospel of Christ was once again made an offence to non-believers.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confuse the language of all the earth: and from there did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. ([See Genesis 11:1-9 KJ2000](#)).

Instead of heeding God's call to multiply and fill the earth with a godly seed the descendants of Noah came up with an agenda that stood defiantly in opposition to God's purposes, Babylon. It still does today. So many come together with an agenda other than Christ. Rather than living unto God and His purposes, they set out, in true humanistic fashion, to build a memorial to their own greatness, having a man as its head, "You, O king...are this head of gold." Not surprisingly, it eventually took on the image of a man. In contrast, the Head of the body of Christ is not man but Christ Himself. There is no mixture in this body; it is Christ, from head to toe.

They traveled to the plain of Shinar and there began to make brick and erect edifices to reach heaven. The history of this called out people perfectly parallels the history of the church from the first century until today. It was there at Constantinople in the middle of the fourth century that the church abandoned the unity of the Spirit and took on the

idolatrous unity of Babylon, becoming one in a massive building project under the leadership of iron, the Emperor Constantine. This was to be a city that was to have the combined power of Roman iron and the church's clay (See Isaiah 64:8 and Romans 9:20-21). Yes, the church of Jesus Christ with its priest-clergy/laity divisions, its massive building programs supported on the backs of the poor has been adhered to Romanism for the last 1600 years. The Great Reformation never succeeded in breaking the hold of this myth of iron and clay.

The sin principal here is the same, "Let us build . . . least we be scattered." There is nothing that so displaces the unity in the Spirit like a good building program. We would like to blame this division on the Devil, but this is not the case. Rather it is the lack of a right Foundation, the Stone rejected by the builders, that is our downfall. We might say, "God is not the author of confusion," which is a true statement when applied to the true church being built by Jesus aligned to the Cornerstone, built on that One Foundation (see 1 Corinthians 3:11). But it is a false statement when applied to the city and tower which the children of men have built.

We will here say something that might offend some, regardless of the fact that it is true beyond any shadow of doubt. Nothing has a greater propensity toward division than does denominated Christianity and that division is God's doing. Just as He confused the builders at Babel who said, "let us make . . . let us build . . . let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered," He, not the Devil, is behind the confounding of our languages. And it is not "rebellious men," because they do not join in our building programs. Man's illicit quest for unity, purpose and identity apart from the unity of His Spirit is still the root cause.

Just as Babel's once great endeavor ended in division and a project left unfinished, the end of divisive-denominationalism is confusion of languages (the doctrines of men) and a myriad of dead organizations begging for life. In his book One Body In Christ, Kokichi Kurosaki states that human methods will never unify the Church. ". . . unity of Christians is not a matter of human effort or cooperation. True unity must come solely from God, and when there is true fellowship with God, it will come natural of itself. The power of Christians does not come from human cooperation but from life-union with God. It is the power of God working in men. Therefore, the One Body cannot be created by human collaboration. It exists through simply removing the barriers and

having fellowship with God, a reality prevailing among those who obey Him and love each other. No other merely human method will avail."

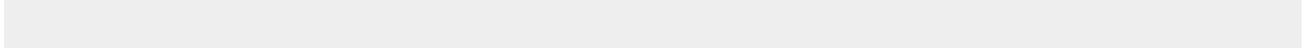
Such unity comes from a deep, abiding fellowship with God the Father and Christ, the Son. Our fellowship with God must be in Spirit and in truth. Becoming "one in the Spirit" is more than a cute little song from the early '70s. We must all be in the Spirit if we are ever to know the power of Christ's unified body. Why? Christ is Spirit. He is Truth. And in Spirit and Truth He is one with the Father. Our fellowship with one another is dependent upon this same condition.

This is why we immediately connect with certain Christians and feel as though we have known them all our lives. Yet and try as we may, we cannot connect with others. Either we are united in Spirit or we are not united in God's sight. Yes, we should love all men but when it comes to fellowship, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son." If two believers do not first unite with the Father and the Son, individually, they cannot possibly have fellowship together. They might be cordial. They might find things, even doctrines, that they have in common and talk about them for hours, but unless they are individually alive in vital union with God, they cannot possibly be unified.

The church today is in much the same condition as the apostate Israel God spoke of when He said, "[For Israel has forgotten his Maker, and builds temples; and Judah has multiplied fortified cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces](#)" (Hosea 8:14 KJ2000). Consider the end of Babylon in Revelation, "[And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of demons, and the haunt of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich through the abundance of her luxury](#)" (Revelation 18:2-3 KJ2000). How blunt does God have to be for us to see that we are poor, miserable, blind and naked in all our Laodicean opulence?

As long as religious men are busy reconstructing the first tabernacle they cannot take part in that sanctuary made without hands. If we are not willing to gather in the heavenly unity by the Spirit in that heavenly place beyond the veil, we are only building Babylon the Great and though thousands are gathered together in our name, we have forsaken the assembling together.

We have seen what the Church is not. Now let's examine, at greater length, what the Church is.



Chapter 5: Christ is the Church and the Church is Christ

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 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. (Ephesians 3:8-10 NKJV)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Ephesians 4:7 NKJV)

The Holy Spirit's gift to us collectively is Christ. Jesus' parting gift to the church is the Spirit of Christ Himself. After He was received up into heaven He gave "gifts" or graces--unique expressions of Himself to every believer. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure (*metron*, a limited portion or degree) of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7). Each believer is called to recognize both their portion and that of the other saints. We all are needed in His holy assembly to make up the whole, even Christ. When each one contributes their limited portion, Christ is seen. He becomes the sum and full manifestation of all His earthly parts. The fullness of the stature of Christ is only attainable by the cooperative sharing, (*koinonia*) partnership and participation in the Spirit that is poured on all. One believer who had an exceptional understanding of these things, referred to this cooperative participation as "Christ in Session."

This is a great mystery. May God open our eyes to see it! Before we can understand what Jesus has done for us we first have to see that it is not all about us! It is not about our giftedness or our ministry. Everything the Father is doing here on earth is about His Son, Jesus. We are endowed with Jesus. Paul wrote, "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And 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" (Colossians 1:17-18 NKJV). And again, "...for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28 NKJV). "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1:3-4 NKJV).

The Message Bible has a very direct interpretation of Ephesians that shows God's priority in His creation. "He [Jesus] is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this Christ rules in the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence" (Ephesians 1:22-23 MSG). It is not about the church, but rather about Christ having a body through which He can speak and act and fill everything with His presence. The ekklesia of God is an organism through which Jesus acts here on earth. It is all about Him manifesting His preeminence. We exist as a manifestation of His love for the world. We do not exist so we can carve out a niche for ourselves with His graces, or perhaps worse yet, bury them in the sand like good little pew warmers cowering under the preeminence of a mere man.

Thus Paul emphatically states, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. By Him, of Him and through Him do all things consist...yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live (1 Corinthians 8:6 NKJV).

We exist for Christ's sake. "For, even as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the one body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12 RYLT-NT). The presence of the word the in the Greek text implies the one and only or genuine article. The many-membered body of Christ, the fullness of Him, is the Christ on earth just as surely as Jesus the temple of God, was Emmanuel, God with us. Just as Jesus made no distinction between the earthly temple and the temple of His body, here Paul makes no distinction between the ascended Christ seated at the right hand of God and the multi-member body of Christ walking on the earth. He viewed them as one and the same: "so also is the Christ." This is a great mystery, but it is essential that we understand it if we are to go on in God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer explained this mystery as God revealed it to him.

Through his Spirit, the crucified and risen Lord exists as the Church, as the new man. It is just as true to say that this Body is the new humanity as to say that he is God

incarnate dwelling in eternity. (*The Cost of Discipleship*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.)

T. Austin Sparks put in plain words what so many of God's children are learning,

The Church is a Person and that Person is Christ in corporate expression. We must revise our mentality when we talk about the Church, the Body of Christ. What are you talking about? -not an it, a something, as though it were a something in itself, and a teaching in itself. No, it is this Man with a family; with children, brothers and sisters, begot-ten of God, that is the Church. Oh, how much ecclesiasticism we can have without the family life, but the Church after all, when you come to the final Word, is just the measure of Christ that there is in those who make it up- 'till we all attain unto the measure of Christ' -every one of us. That is the Body of Christ, that is the Church.

The fullness of Christ cannot be realized in a closed ecclesiastical system, but only in a body context as every joint contributes what they individually receive from the Head. Have you ever thought that our human bodies are a parable of a true spiritual reality? That God has made them this way so we can see how He sees His kingdom, hoping that we would participate? This is how it is, brothers! This is how the body is knit together (Ephesians 4:12-16). This is how we live out this glorious New Covenant reality. We cannot overstate the importance of every member's participation. ["A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part"](#) (1 Corinthians 12:19 TCEV).

Nowhere do the scriptures imply that Christ gave grace only to a few extraordinary members. God's Spirit has been poured upon every believer. ["Every one of us is given grace"](#) (Ephesians 4:7); ["every joint supplies"](#) (Ephesians 4:16); ["the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all . . . distributing to each one individually as He wills"](#) (1 Corinthians 12:7-11); ["As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"](#) (1 Peter 4:10, NKJV).



Chapter 6: Holding To the Head

Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using-- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:18-23 NKJV)

In this passage, Paul tells us of believers who are separated from the Head (Christ) and cheated out of their reward by going back to the rudimentary principles of the old religious system. The increase of God comes only as we denounce self-imposed religion, "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," according to the commandments and doctrines of men, and hold to the Head from whom all the body is nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments. Did you get that? Every member of Christ's body gets its nourishment as it holds to the Head, even Christ. It is then that we are all held together by joints and ligaments.

Very early on, men came in among the saints and started requiring them to hold fast to them as their head. Schisms in the body started forming immediately (See Acts 20:29-31 and 3 John 9-11). There is a great gulf fixed between the church with Christ as its Head and the church with men in command. We are bewitched and foolish if we think we can perfect by fleshly means what God has begun in the Spirit (see Galatians 3:3). He has promised us that He is not only the Author, but also the Finisher of our faith. If we have died with Christ, we have died to these basic principles of the world.

In Galatians 6:14 Paul speaks further of this deliverance. "But God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (KJ21). A look at the verses before and after this great declaration reveals that the world that Paul spoke of was the religion of his forefathers.

Perhaps like no other, Paul fully embraced this vast New Covenant transition. In fact, the observant reader will take note that virtually all his epistles deal with the religion vs. faith in Christ distinction. Nothing has changed. The choice before us is to either hold to the Head from whom all the body is nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, or return to the old abstinence and appeasement-based religious order in which there is neither life nor power (see Jeremiah 2:11-13).

A Change in Leadership

Ezekiel foresaw a vital part of this New Covenant transition to be a change in leadership. Where there were many shepherds under the Old Covenant, in this New and Living Order there is now one. ["And I will raise up over them one Shepherd. And He shall feed them."](#) (Ezekiel 34:23-34). This prophecy foretold the transference of all rule and dominion to One--Christ the seed of David. The government shall be upon His shoulders. Jesus said, ["And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd"](#) (John 10:16 KJV). These words of Jesus are true and binding. We twist them to our own peril! It is our responsibility to accept them and submit to them, not to twist them to fit our less radical and safer theological positions. Is there one fold or not? If so, how shall we then live? Is there one Shepherd or not? If so, there are many changes that must be made before the church starts to reflect the truth of it.

Someone said, "When a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth, he will either quit being mistaken, or cease to be honest." We have confronted individuals with the truth of the New Covenant. Some, at first, acted excited until they pondered the cost to their private ambitions and ministries. Then they rejected the truth, the New Covenant, and us. If there really is only one Head, Shepherd, Father, Master and Teacher as Jesus so clearly states, then where does that leave the paid professionals? It is one thing to be paid and another thing to sell out or be bought out. We did not say that obedience would be easy. It is usually at this very juncture that so many honestly mistaken individuals cease to be honest. Looking in the mirror and beholding what manner of men they are, they turn and conveniently forget what they saw.

When will we finally admit that no one, except Christ, is the Head of the Church and that, under this new covenant, God has no extra-favored children? The notion that God allows some to come closer to Him than others, that they might be the perpetual

teachers and governors of the less enlightened, is alien to the New Covenant and ought to be equally strange to the church.

Through the course of his life, Soren Kierkegaard denounced the inequality of the clergy/laity system. "Christianity implies, unconditionally, that every man, every single individual, is equally close to God." Kierkegaard's words agree with those of the prophet Jeremiah who foresaw the day when all, from the least to the greatest, would have an equal and firsthand knowledge of God.

"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the LORD: "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the LORD. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:33 NKJV. See also Hebrews 8: 8-11)

There is no room for any intermediary, other than Christ, in this great New Covenant. Just as there is only one God there is likewise only "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5 NKJV). Where once a priest cast did the work of interceding for the rest of Israel, now God has set up a kingdom of priests, where everyone is a member of His holy priesthood. When well-intentioned men try to function as intermediaries, they undermine both the headship of Christ and the priesthood of all believers. This results in something like what the medical profession calls frozen joint syndrome. I (George) learned about this the hard way. Due to a work-related injury to my right arm, I had to keep it in a cast; immobile for several months. I had to do everything with my left arm. Soon, I began to experience pain in my right shoulder. I asked the doctor what the problem was. He told me that due to the injury to my arm and the need to keep it immobile, I had acquired a secondary problem called frozen shoulder. This problem proved to be as painful and nearly as serious as the original injury. Why? God created every joint in my body to be active. Anything else is unnatural, leading to atrophy. The equivalent of this malady occurs in the body of Christ when one member's hyperactivity causes other body members to become idle, frozen and eventually to waste away to nothing.

Ironically, the very one responsible for this problem feels it is his duty to chide the inactive members for not doing enough. Some believers are so frozen that they cannot make the most personal decisions without first getting the permission of that one member. We have seen it happen many times. One man begins to displace the Head by becoming the originator and regulator of everything. Then he displaces the other members of the body by assuming the governance of every body function and nothing is allowed to be done without either his personal blessing or else him doing most everything himself.

Christ alone is the Head from whom the whole body is joined and knit together! Everything originates from and is regulated by Him. In Him we live, move and have our being. If He is not Head of our gatherings, then we are living far beneath our collective calling and will never know the increase that is from God, nor will the world ever see a true manifestation of God's only begotten Son. Jesus interceded about this in John 17 when He said, "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them" (John 17:9-10 NKJV).

When Christians asks one another, "What church do you go to?" or "Who is your pastor (shepherd)?" what an affront this is to all that Christ came to establish and set in order! Paul could not believe the Corinthians and how they were already dividing themselves up along party lines saying, "I am of Paul, I am Apollos, or I am of Cephas (Peter)." He rebuked them and finally sums up chapter three of his first letter to them saying, "Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:21-23 NKJV). Just what part of all are we having such a hard time with here? As we open up to the Spirit as Christ's body, all of Christ will show up in our gatherings. No one person will hog all of Him and no one will be left out.

Many Members - One Body

In 1 Corinthians 14:26 we find a crucial question regarding Christian fellowship followed by the answer. First the question, "How is it then, brethren?" Answered by, "When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." This is

how it is under this glorious New Covenant. One man cannot do all things because in this vast New Covenant, everyone has a viable part.

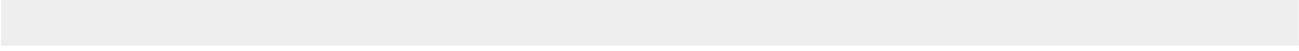
Let all things be done by every one unto the edification of all. Edification is what happens when every member has a part in both the giving and receiving of all spiritual things. This is how it is. This is how the body functioned nearly two thousand years ago, and if we are obedient to the Spirit, this is how our gatherings will function today. Not that we can do it ourselves. We can no more facilitate body-life through human energy than we can form a lump of dirt into the shape of a man, breath into it the breath of life and produce a walking, living, soul. The form and function seen in the book of Acts, which we Christians today are all too ready to make into a methodology, was simply divine life birthing, nurturing and bringing to fruition the corporate expression of Christ during that season in time. We cannot replicate this by conforming to a pattern. We need the life! Man cannot create life nor is he equipped to orchestrate the affairs of life. Only the Giver of Life can birth, nurture and bring to maturity that one new man that stands in the fullness of the stature of Christ. If a man attempts to set the members of the body in place and bring them to full stature, they all become replicas of him. The whole body becomes an eye, ear or nose, and the overall function is lost (see 1 Corinthians 12:17).

Once I, Michael, went to a church that was organized in "cells." The pastor had bought in a curriculum of a ministry out of Houston, Texas, that had only one ministry gift in mind, "pastoring" based on the Baptist model. He had a series of work books you had to complete starting with a sinner's prayer and going on from there. The goal was to make each person the leader of a cell of people under the pastor. It was a pyramid scheme consisting of many smaller pyramids with the man at the head office in Texas at the top.

I finally confronted the pastor and told him that in the kingdom of God, one size does not fit all. You can not fit God's people in a box any more than you can bottle the wind and release it on a hot and muggy day. All are not shepherds and there is more to bringing the saints into full maturity than saying a sinner's prayer, filling out notebooks, and attending endless meetings and training sessions.

The body of Christ consists of many unique, diverse and complimentary parts working in session, under the headship of Christ, empowered by the measure of the gift of

Christ given to each one by Christ. The body is an extension on earth of Christ in heaven. This is the only Church that is living in obedience to the power and principles of the New Covenant.



The Vast New Covenant Transition

Chapter 7: The Five-Fold Ministry

By George Davis and Michael Clark

Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; by which we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. (1 John 2:18-20 KJ2000)

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The extra-biblical concept of "five-fold ministry" taught in many Christian circles today violates the very spirit of the New Covenant by dividing God's people into two classes, the gifted and the not so gifted, the clergy and the laity, the elite and the unwashed masses. This false paradigm is the cause of great division among God's people, because it nurtures an excessive devotion to men that divides the body of Christ into personality cults. Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers that were claiming to be of him, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:13 NKJV). Christ is divided when certain men set out to posture themselves over the rest of God's heritage and get a cult following.

The attempt to justify a special cast of ministers, affectionately called "the five-fold," has resulted in the contextual murder and nullification of Ephesians chapter four in the lives of the saints of God. We hear solemn warnings from the learned ones today about keeping things in context but regarding this particular passage in Ephesians 4, most elect to focus on only a couple verses and ignore the rest of the chapter like it wasn't there. By doing so, they distort the overall message of the book. By emphasizing their place in the five-fold ministry, they fail to accomplish the very thing they say they exist to do--to bring every believer into full participation in the overall edification of the body of Christ. This system that claims to exist for the enrichment of the church, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith," perpetuates its overall poverty by making the members of Christ's body into passive spectators.

The reason for this is simple. Participation by every member is a threat to the special-ness of this special class. No one is special when everyone is special. So the sad truth is, believers who miraculously come to maturity under these adverse conditions are not treated like blessed members of Christ's body but like enemies. Instead of being considered viable assets to the whole body of Christ and examples to the others of what Christian growth is, they are considered loose cannons, not under covering, and are vilified as rebellious. We have received hundreds of letters from these very saints who are not bitter, but rather confused, wondering what they did wrong. The fault is not theirs for growing up in Christ and operating in their God given metron, but rather blame lies in this false paradigm of authority that is threatened by the working of the Spirit of God in the lives of all believers. If all are anointed and come to maturity then the few lose their special-ness.

This is not a new thing. Throughout history ambitious men came up with similar teachings that also had one design: to elevate a few and silence the rest. They hunted down and killed those who taught the priesthood of all believers, starting with the rise of the bishops in the early second century. For over a millennium they dumbed-down the people by translating the scriptures into a dead language that only the scholars knew, Latin. It is clear to us that this is what has been done with Ephesians 4:11 and 12 as well. In the midst of more than a chapter of scripture, dealing with God's graces given to all, men have superimposed, by the use of a little ecclesiastical sophistry, the notion of an elite and indispensable caste of ministers that are alone responsible for the perfecting of the saints.

The glorious truth of the New Covenant is that God has poured out His Spirit upon all flesh. In keeping with this glorious truth, throughout chapter four of Ephesians, Paul constantly points to "all . . . every one of us . . . every part." The basis of his reasoning is found in verse 6.

There is . . . One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. ([Ephesians 4:6 KJV](#))

Paul describes the full scope of God's involvement with His children by the use of three prepositions--above, through and in. Let's briefly look at these prepositions as they relate to all.

Above All

God is above (Greek *epi*) all. While it is indisputably true that God is above all, *epi* carries with it the idea of being not just over but actually upon and in. In fact, in the New Testament it is most often translated *on* or *upon* (see *Strong's Lexicon* [1909]). *Epi* was translated *on* 196 times, *in* 120 times, *upon* 159 times, *unto* 41 times, and *to* 41 times in the Authorized Version. *Epi* was translated *above* only 5 times.

God being above all is a thought that is embraced by virtually all religions. Certainly God is above every person, on earth and in heaven. The Greek Zeus, the Roman Jupiter and the Norse Thor were aloof gods, remote and often self-centered. Some dare to be more intimate in their thinking, viewing God as hovering over them, protecting and providing for them. However, this word *epi* carries with it the radical thought that God is on or resting upon all, anointing every believer.

As we mentioned earlier, in the old Covenant, God's Spirit descended and rested upon a blessed few and that only for a short time. But God's desire for a more perfect priesthood, a kingdom of priests, is well documented starting with Exodus 19:6. Like the anointing oil that ran down Aaron's beard to the hem of his garment, God desires to anoint the entire priesthood of believers with His indwelling presence and power. With the advent of Christ His will started to be perfected and made evident in His saints.

Through All

God moves through (Greek *dia*) all.

The word *dia* is a primary preposition that denotes the means, "the channel of an act . . . the ground or reason by which something is or is not done" (*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*). Simply put, the ground or reason by which things are done in the body of Christ is all. God chooses all, the entire body of Christ, as His channel of expression in this wonderful New Covenant.

In You All

God also is in (Greek *en*) all His Children!

1722 *en* prep. A primary preposition denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state), and (by implication) instrumentality (medially or constructively), i.e. a relation of rest . . . 2782 occurrences; AV translates as "in" 1874 times, "by" 141 times, "with" 134 times,

"among" 117 times, "at" 112 times, "on" 46 times, "through" 37 times, and translated miscellaneously 321 times.

En speaks of God's place among His children. He is the Source and Fountainhead of everything. Paul wrote to the Colossians,

In whom [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things are held together. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:14-18 KJ2000)

Christ is that Source that is available to all by virtue of His abiding relationship with each one of us. We cannot over-emphasize the word all throughout this passage (it occurs 32 times in the book of Ephesians alone). Paul opens in the first chapter of this letter by saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3 KJ2000). This sets the tempo of the rest of the book. In chapter 4 there are only a few personal pronouns. It is not about the one or even the few but us, we, every one, every joint, every part, all, the whole body of Christ.

Paul went on to explain what he meant by all in verse seven of chapter 4. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure [metron] of the gift of Christ." He summed up this thought in verse sixteen, "From whom the whole body being fitly joined together and knit together by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure [*metron*] of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16 KJ2000).

Christ who created all things, who is before all things, who holds together all things, claims preeminence over all things and that includes His Church! He is the Head of His body, the ekklesia of God. The inconsistency of it all is that the very men who preach the truth of Christ's preeminence in all things, in all practicality deny His preeminence by advancing the belief that a special few, the five fold, are needed to keep things in order. Amazing isn't it? He by whom all things were created, in who all things consist (are held together) cannot hold His church together without the help of professionals.

The true body of Christ exists by virtue of the grace given by the ascended Christ to every one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4: 7). This body cannot reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ--spiritual perfection (4:13)--apart from the measure of every part (4:16). The edification of the body is not the responsibility of a few but is utterly dependent upon the life that every joint supplies (4:16). The "increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" is undoubtedly the perfecting of the saints referred to in verse 12 that has been made the exclusive purview of a special class. The "every part makes increase" of Ephesians 4 stands in stark antithesis to the current notion that the body cannot come to maturity without the aid of educated professionals. No! The body edifies itself by the measure of every part. This is what makes a body a body. Just as the natural body edifies itself through the effectual working of every part, so does the spiritual body of Christ. This is not only the message of Ephesians 4, but most of Paul's letters.

The Gift of Christ is Christ!

When Paul wrote, "every one of us is given grace" he meant "every one of us is given grace." Every believer is given a metered out portion (*metron*) of a larger gift (singular), the gift of Christ. We realize that this could be taken as a reference to gifts that Christ gives, but the word gift is singular, referring to a single Gift. Christ is that Gift! Didn't Jesus say this when, in preparing for His departure, He told His disciples that He would send another (Greek--*allos*--of the exact same kind) Comforter? "[I will not leave you comfortless.](#)" He said, "[I will come to you](#)" (see John 14:18). He is the Gift that the Spirit brings! He comes to us! Elsewhere Paul wrote, "[And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father](#)" (Galatians 4:6 KJ2000). We find this very exciting, don't you? He has come to us!

The term *body of Christ* implies a corporate manifestation of Christ, animated by the Spirit of Christ within each believer--many members, one body ("so also is the Christ"). Christ is the heart and Spirit of that body. The body is simply a vessel through which He expresses himself. This Gift of Christ that is to take shape in a collective manifestation of Christ is the fullness of Him who fills all things. All the metrons (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher, plus the ones listed in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12) put together comprise the Gift of Christ. Unlike Jesus who was given grace without measure, and could say, "[If you've seen me you've seen the Father,](#)" every one of us has only a measure of grace. The manifestation of Christ is

dependent on the contribution of all those measures. "Till we all come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure (metron) of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13 KJ2000).

Ephesians 4:11

Having said this, let us look again at the larger context. Keep in mind that there are no disjointed thoughts anywhere in this text; one thought builds on another as Paul leads us to the sum of all God's dealings with His children to nurture a cooperate testimony of His Son. Paul tells us from the outset who the graces or gifts are given to by the ascended Christ. Let's look at it in context again.

But to each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore he says, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. . . .He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers" (Ephesians 4:7-8, 11 WEB).

Paul begins by stating that each one of us is given grace. Note that he includes himself in this, us referring to the *metron* Christ had given him. It is an interesting study to search out in Paul's epistles how many times he refers to the grace given to him as it related to what he said and did, "according to the grace given unto me" (see Romans 12:3, 12:6, 1 Corinthians 3:10, Ephesians 3:7, 4:7, etc.). However outstanding Paul's service may have been, he made no distinction between the grace given to him and the grace given to the rest of the believers. This verse alone refutes the idea that a few are exceptional. He goes on to tell how these cooperate--on what basis these graces are given and on what basis they are received. One Bible teacher used to say, "When you see the word therefore in the Bible you need to look and see what it's there for." Here the word therefore implies that the following words are an extension and development of the previous thought. In this case it attaches the statement to the explanation of how every one of us is given grace, "he ascended up on high . . . and gave gifts unto men." We see then that the gifts given by the ascended Christ are not given to a special few but are distributed among all.

What are the graces that the ascended Christ gives to each one of us? We normally read this passage this way: "He gave some to be apostles, and some, prophets, and

some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11 WEB). The misconception that these are offices rather than graces is where the interpretive problem lies. To complete this illusion these Greek words had to be changed from adjectives to nouns. Take the word *apostle* for instance.

In his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhardt Kittel says of this word, *apostolos*, "Originally it was an adjective as shown by Plat. Ep. VII, 346a . . . The most that can be said is that the word denotes the quality of being sent, unless we are to regard it as no more than a stereotyped term. . . . Thus its later Christian usage [as a title] was an innovation to Greek ears or those familiar with Greek. This is shown by the fact that the Latin did not translate it, but took it over as a lone word into ecclesiastical Latin (*apostolus*)." This is where we got the "office" of an Apostle. Here we see how ecclesiastical tampering has taken a word that describes grace at work, an adjective, and turned it into a noun--a hierarchal title.

The word translated *some* is not *some* in the Greek. It is the definite article *the* (Greek *ho*). We realize that this word is plural and attests to the fact that these graces are given to many. We have no problem with this for it is in perfect keeping with the context. What we ask is, How plural is plural? What we traditionally are led to believe as we read this verse is that the word translated *some* means a few. The implication is that only a select few with these titles can minister. Because of this false teaching, the vibrant faith that was once alive with Jesus' life flowing and manifesting through each member is now little more than a spectator sport.

Simply put, all means every one of us! The God and Father of every one of us, is above and upon every one of us, working through every one of us and in every one of us. Nothing could be clearer. Not all are apostles or sent-ones, but all are given grace. These graces or divine empowerments are distributed among all believers to accomplish specific tasks. They are not given to exalt anyone person above the rest. Jesus did not ascend on high and bestow entitlements to rule. He bestowed power to serve.

This passage of scripture is about the body, not about a few elect "offices." This word office is only found in the original New Testament writings referring to the Old Testament Levitical priesthood and is not to be found anywhere else referring to the functions of the Spirit in the body of Christ. Regardless, the word office was added by

the ecclesiastical translators in numerous places to give the appearance of a God-ordained ruling class.

We have a choice to make. Will we continue on in our comfortable padded pews Sunday after Sunday and abdicate our high callings in Christ's body to the few, or will we move on into the glory of God? We have all been given our measure of Christ that enables us all to do the work of the ministry and equip each other to do the same in the fullest way possible.

All these measures--apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, and many more--together make up the Gift of Christ. Jesus comes to each of us by virtue of these graces that He might reach out to a lost and dying world.

A Letter from a Recovering Brother

Recently we received a series of letters from a dear brother in New York who had been a part of what calls itself "The Local Church" or "The Recovery," which he is still recovering from. His comments are very insightful.

Al Haungs wrote:

"I participate in Wayne Jacobsen's Yahoo group, and Ephesians 4:11 came up in the discussion, so I did a Greek study on it. I'll spare all the details, but the most shocking thing to me was that the word some used repeatedly in this verse doesn't mean a few. In the Recovery Version, there's a footnote for this verse which says that ones mentioned in this verse have a special gift, whereas most members of the body have a general gift. The implied recovery teaching is that some means few.

"Now Nee and Lee were against the clergy-laity system, but this "special gift category" reopened the door to it. As a participant in the recovery, you eventually get drawn into being under one of these "special gifted ones" so that you can be "equipped." Interestingly, you never graduate, and always remain under an equipper.

"Personally, I believe we're all equippers and equippees, simultaneously, and may function in one or all of the functions, depending on need, as Paul clearly in one way or another was an apostle, prophet, shepherd teacher, evangelist, etc.

“When I discovered that *some* didn't mean a few, I couldn't sleep that night and got up and studied it some more until I was satisfied, and then went back to sleep.

Experientially, being in the recovery became a real super drag because meetings became essentially a platform for a few to talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and talk, and then maybe a few could testify at the end, "only three minutes, please" and usually testifying was continually corrected and balanced and trimmed by the few who were allowed to talk and talk and talk.

“I was thinking about this stuff this morning, and what occurred to me was that these gifts are commonly and liberally given to Christians, and that it is the norm, not a rarity for us to see apostling, propheting and etc, so therefore there isn't the common believer and (vs.) the special class, rather instead we all belong to the special class and it's our specialness, each individually, which blends the body together, in that each has something, beneficial to others which others don't possess.

Persons who think highly of themselves uniquely as equippers (apostles, prophets etc) and not simultaneously as equippees, typically detach themselves from the body.

Example: Almost all brothers are tempted sexually. Some of us in our hour of temptation were helped by another brother, and therefore overcame this test. In my case, all it took was me to simply see another brother on the college campus and I immediately ran to him and told him my mental torture and immediately the cloud of temptation evaporated.

“But brothers who see themselves as being in a separate and special class of gifting as equippers, and not as equippees simultaneously, when in an hour of temptation like the one I described, are detached from the body, and don't go to the first available help, but can only receive delayed help from "greater equippers" or maybe from nobody at all, and then fall into a easily overcomable sin, which sin is easy to overcome as one accesses the equipping from another accessible brother.

This matter of some not meaning few not only frees all of us to equip others, but also makes each of us on the same level of importance, and also frees us to be equipped by others.

“Al (God humiliates the proud)(the body is packed full of apostles, prophets, etc., because the Lord is super-aboundingly generous/gracious).”

Chapter 8: The Hope of Glory

Here we want to share, by God's grace, a truth that is foundational to New Covenant life and ministry. No dissertation on the New Covenant would be complete without it, for it is the divine objective behind all the graces that are given to all believers. We have touched on it previously but would like to consider it in greater depth now.

Having descended, Christ is now ascended far above the heavens and has given graces for one specific purpose and that purpose is central to everything. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10 KJ2000). This is the real message of Ephesians chapter 4. Not that a select few are called to rule over the many, but Christ desires to fill each member of His body until they collectively stand in His stature, that in the end, even the world itself will be filled with His glory.

Everything is accomplished by Christ's fullness in the believers. He is our Wisdom. He is our Sanctification. He is our Redeemer and our Redemption. We have not been called to a purely legal redemption but to a living participation with Him who is our redemption. Paul made this very clear when he wrote to Greek believers who were raised in a culture of arrogant intellectualism and humanism, "But of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, 'He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord'" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31 WEB). Such words must have sounded foreign to such a people who, all their lives had been taught the glory of human potential. God has not chosen the mighty, noble and wise. "God chose the foolish things of the world that he might put to shame those who are wise. God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and God chose the lowly things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nothing the things that are: that no flesh should boast before God" (1 Corinthians 1:26-29 WEB).

Contrary to popular opinion, we are not called to work for God or even live for God. Neither of these expressions can be found in the New Testament. We are called to be vessels through which He can live and work. God's will for all believers is that they

would be the containers of an endless source of His living water, springing up unto eternal life. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39 NASB).

We have been conditioned to think of the gospel as the story of Jesus' life and death, accompanied by a salvation message. Though this is part of the gospel, there is much more to it than this. The gospel is the story of the resurrected Christ, and the good news is that He desires to take up residence in the believer and fulfill all righteousness in the believer. This was a vital part of the gospel that Paul preached among the Gentiles.

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. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. (Colossians 1:27-29 NKJ)

What was the mystery or hope of glory that God desired to make known among the Gentiles? Was it Christ in Paul or Christ in Peter or John or Apollos or in some other holy man? No! It was, is and always will be "Christ in you!"

Webster defines *hope* as, "The highest degree of well founded expectation of good."

Everyone hopes in something or someone. What is it that we believers put our hope in? As Christians, what do we hope will bring about the fulfillment of all the promises of the Gospel? Great glory is promised to every believer. (See Romans 8:30.) What we trust in to bring us into the realization of that glory is our hope of glory. Herein is the great religious fallacy. Religion offers many hopes. God offers only one. Religion promises man that if he will just practice certain disciplines hard enough and long enough, the heavens will eventually open and God will say, "Well done." But God puts within man the incorruptible Seed, Christ himself, who transforms the believer from the inside out.

Religion promises much glory but delivers little. About the time people weary of one hope, religion offers them another. This temporarily excites and distracts the weary believer, giving him just enough hope to continue on for another year, when another

hope must be introduced or the poor worn out Christian will give up. It seems that someone always comes up with a new hope just in the nick of time. WWJD, Promise Keepers, the Third Wave, the Prophetic Movement, the prayer of Jabez, the Purpose Driven Life, G-12, the Emergent Church--who knows what will be next? With great fanfare, religious man introduces his new hope, selling his books and promising the people of God that if they will just persevere in this methodology, great glory will result. A year or two later these hardbound albatrosses appear by the hundreds in used book stores, their hope proven false and the weary fingers that turned their pages all the more weary. It makes us tired just thinking about it.

Amos prophesied of these times saying, "Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12 KJ2000). Let us assure you that Jesus satisfies the longing of our souls, but the church today has become a collection of conference junkies, always running from place to place or to the latest, greatest mega church to arise in their area. We have become addicts in search of another hit. Jesus also saw this coming when He said, "Take heed that you be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go not therefore after them" (Luke 21:8 KJ2000) Note: He did not say that they would say that they are the Christ, but that He is the Christ. This is the open door to all of Satan's most effective delusions. He uses the appearance of things being "Christian" to entice the seeker with his latest web of delusion.

Isaiah saw this same sin in Israel as she chased after her many lovers, falling victim and becoming captives to their false hopes,

The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the LORD your God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of my hand, that I may establish the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, you are my people. (Isaiah 51:14-16 KJ2000)

Like Esau, the saints of God are selling their great birthright as His people for a cup of pottage that cools faster than they can eat it. We need to heed Paul's warning, "But the righteousness which is of faith speaks thus, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Romans 10:6-8 KJ2000). This verse exposes the futility of all religious hopes. We can no more bring down the presence and power of Christ through religious discipline than we could resurrect Christ from the dead. Yet religion continues to look for that magic formula that will bring down the glory of God. If we are truly His people and do not belong to another, His word is in our mouths and in our hearts and if we to look further than that it is an affront to the Spirit of God. We quench the place of the Spirit in our inward lives.

The good news to the weary is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is not Christ in politics--getting more Christian representatives in government seats, or Christ in our schools or Christ in any facet of our daily societal living. Even Christ seated in heavenly places alone is not our hope of glory. No. It is much closer to home than that. Christ in you, inside you, emanating from you, manifesting through you, is the only hope of glory. Lasting change and work are accomplished only through the fullness of Him who fills all things. Though he might convince himself otherwise, anyone who offers any other hope, whether in men (the fivefold) or programs, is not perfecting the saints but misleading them.

Everything Paul did he did to insure that the glorious Christ found full residence and expression in everyone he met. Was Paul an equipper? Did he do the work? No. He made this very clear. "I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. Yet not I but Christ . . . Christ lives in me." Who was doing the work? Oh, we realize that this may sound a bit extreme to some but is it really? We would have to literally tear the New Testament out of our Bibles to believe otherwise, because the more we read it the more we realize that this glorious hope is found on virtually every page.

God was working in and through Paul mightily. This is not a trite figure of speech. Paul did everything according to the grace that was given to Him. Tyndale reminds us of the limitation of Paul's ministry by translating according to (kata) as "as far forth as"

implying measure and limitation. Paul had received a metron of grace and all that he did was as far forth as that grace would allow. Paul went and worked as far forth as God worked in and through him. He had no sufficiency of his own.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers (servants) of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:5-6 NKJV)

Everything is according to grace, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13 KJ2000). Everything is done by His might. This understanding was a vital part of the gospel that Paul preached. Consider the following passage.

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 NKJV)

When it came to the perfecting of the saints, Paul put no hope in human agencies. There is not one reference to human merit anywhere in the above passage. Paul prayed for something well beyond his capabilities to produce. This is why he prayed for God to act. His faith was in God, who fulfills "the work of faith with power" for the stated purpose that "Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him." Paul is not the equipper here. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

The treasure is Christ. The work of God is Christ living His life and doing the will of the Father through us--going with the aid of our feet, reaching out to others with the aid of our arms and hands. The riches of the glory of this mystery ought to be the only hope of ALL of God's Children!

Jesus spoke of this Christ in you mystery a number of times as he prepared to go away to the Father. He used the example of His relationship to His Father, who did the work through Him. He wanted His disciples to believe that the Father was in Him doing the work so that they could participate in that same mystery.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:10-14 NKJV)

We are convinced that Paul's words, "that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him" reflect a deep and abiding understanding of the mystery Jesus spoke of in John 14. In that light, let us carefully consider Jesus' definition of belief in this passage. He is not speaking of belief in creeds or a body of doctrine or even belief in the scriptures. He is calling His disciples to the highest level of belief, a participation in the riches of a glorious mystery, which begins with the well-grounded belief that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. The implications of this belief are clear. The Father who dwells in Jesus speaks and does the works.

Contrary to modern thinking, a man lives out what he truly believes, not what he just gives lip service to. What we believe determines what we can and cannot be engage in. Jesus went on to explain the outcome of ones belief and involvement in this mystery, "he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." Didn't Jesus just say that He didn't do the works but that the Father that dwells in Him did the works? Yes, the Father dwelling in Jesus spoke and acted. This is belief of the highest order; clinging to, relying upon and trusting in the Father. When Jesus said, "the works that I do he [the one who believes that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him] will also do," it was a clear reference to His previous statement "the Father who dwells in Me does the works." Though Jesus said, "greater works than these he [the believer] will do," He goes on to explain who is really doing these greater works by qualifying, "I will do it."

We see this clearly in Mark's account. "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went

forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:17-20 KJ2000)

Did the believers heal the sick? Not really. The Lord working with them healed the sick. The believer is not totally passive here, but he simply declares the good news and the Lord does the work.

Consider Jesus' words,

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for whatsoever things he does, these also does the Son likewise. (John 5:19 KJ2000)

I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me. (John 5:30 KJ2000)

Here Jesus defines what it means to be sent by the Father. Those who are sent of God can do nothing of themselves. They are not sent to act on their own good judgment or to do those things that they think the Father would do were He there. God does not send representatives who act according to some code, but vessels through whom He is present and active. True sent ones engage only in what they see the Father doing. They don't seek their own will or glory but the will and glory of the Father who sends them. Anyone who speaks of themselves, advancing their own fanciful position and power, is not true and the love of the Father is not in them. Later, Jesus qualified, "He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory: but he that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him" (John 7:18 KJ2000). What did Jesus mean by "speaks of himself"? Did He mean that anyone who talks and talks about their ministry, their place, I, I, me, me, my, is false? We feel strongly this is only symptomatic of the infidelity that Jesus was addressing here. The word translated of in this passage is the Greek preposition *apo*, which speaks of a state of separation--the separation of a part from the whole.

Thayer Definition: *apo*

1) of separation

1a) of local separation, after verbs of motion from a place, i.e. of departing, of fleeing,

...

1b) of separation of a part from the whole

- 1b1) where of a whole some part is taken
- 1c) of any kind of separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed
- 1d) of a state of separation, that is of distance
 - 1d1) physical, of distance of place
 - 1d2) temporal, of distance of time
- 2) of origin
 - 2a) of the place whence anything is, comes, befalls, is taken
 - 2b) of origin of a cause

Anyone who is sent by the Father and remains in union with Him does not speak on his own initiative but out of a living participation with the One who sent him. He abides in a union through which the Father speaks and acts. Anyone claiming to be sent, who is speaking and acting on their own, independently, has either broken fellowship with the One who sent him or has not been sent at all. He is untrue his ambition separates them. He is not passionate for the Father's glory. We see much of this unbelief today. Men are going around speaking of themselves, speaking of their ministry in grand terms, fabricating guidance and faking miracles. What passes for prophesy in their company is without doubt the fanciful fruit of their separation from the Origin. They speak of themselves and their unrighteousness has resulted in a field day for the press. Everything they do and say seems to bring further disgrace to God and His people. They continue to supply the media with all they need to vilify the saints, depicting them as mad, money-hungry megalomaniacs. There is only one thing that will silence the critics and convince the world of the legitimacy of Christ's claims.

Jesus prayed to the Father that His disciples would have the same relationship with Him that He shared with the Father. "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me . . . I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:21, 23 NKJV). Talk about the perfecting of the saints! Nothing but the collective manifestation of Christ in the believers will convince the world. Just as God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself (see 2 Corinthians 5:19 KJV), Christ is now in the believer, working to that same end.

The whole notion of "doing the Lord's work" is a fallacy. The worst thing that could possibly happen is that we spend our lives attempting to do what only God can do and in the end bring only reproach to His Name. If it is not God working, it is not God's work. God needs no one to work for Him. He is well able to work for himself! What He wants are vessels who will cooperate with Him in this great mystery, who will present their bodies as living sacrifices to prove His good, acceptable and perfect will in and through them. In the light of this great New Covenant truth, this is our reasonable worship (the only worship that makes sense).

Those who understand the implication of this great mystery, and become partakers of its riches, do not make haste or act presumptuously. Their days of religious experimentation are over. Others may but they cannot. They stand by as the many new oxcarts, promising to bring the ark of God's presence and power back to Zion, stall along the way. Their obvious lack of enthusiasm when the trumpet blasts, calling all to rally around the latest new hope, is a great source of consternation to those who act and speak on their own initiative. When they say, "yet not I but Christ," they are not repeating a mindless mantra. They are describing what has become a reality to them. They view themselves as earthen vessels, containers of the Divine. The indwelling Christ does the work. This is the key to the fruitful Christian (Christ indwelling) life. All else is so much smoke and mirrors. He who lacks this faith, this belief, is doomed to a life of religious rigor.

God wants every believer to be able to say, "I do not speak on my own authority; but Jesus who dwells in me does the works." Isn't this what Peter meant when he wrote, "[If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen](#)" (1 Peter 4:11 NKJV).

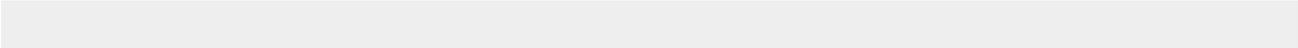
Only those who, through this belief, realize the answer to Christ's prayer, "I in them, and You in Me . . ." can have any part in those greater works that Christ spoke of, for they are not performed by or at the discretion of the believer but by God who is in Christ in them. The gift is the indwelling Christ. He who has the Son also has the Father for the Father is still in the Son and is still doing the work through Him.

We see that this Christ in you mystery is inseparably connected to the grace of Christ--the gift of Christ Himself. We are many broken pieces making up one Loaf, all with a metron of His grace. In this reality He is filling all things with Himself. One of the chief obstacles to the realization of this is our preoccupation with gifts and titles. How can we truly love one another when we want to be exalted above them by honorific titles? We don't find one example of Jesus taking titles to Himself other than the son of man, and this one He used to show His lowly place of servant among us all. In fact, He insisted that his disciples refrain from calling Him by one title that was rightfully His, Messiah. He told them to tell no one, and yet we go around spewing titles like a king's cousin twice removed. Jesus was not impressed with men because He knew what was in man. We should take His lead.

I (George) have had many opportunities to be proud of my oldest son but none can compare to this one instance he recently shared. The leader of this Christian group he met with went around the room asking each one, "What is your ministry?" Having real issues with the current concept of "ministry," he shared what he was thinking in that moment and how he prayed for an appropriate answer that would not affirm them in their error. He listened as people answered, "I am called to be an Apostle . . . I am called to be a Prophet . . . I am called to be an Evangelist . . . I am called to be a Pastor . . . I am called to be a Teacher." When the question was finally put to him, "What is your ministry?" God's answer flooded his heart. "My ministry is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and do only those things that He prompts and empowers." He went on to share with them his concerns that all these titles interfere with true service toward God and one another.

This is the point exactly. Let's stop all the fruitless talk about what our gifting is for we are in all reality none of those things. Christ in us is the Gift. He is all of those things! He does the work! Just be faithful, as He was, to do only those things that you see the Father doing. This is where the riches are found. This is where the hope of glory gives way to the realization of glory. This is where true sonship is actualized. ["And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" \(Galatians 4:6 NKJV\).](#) Acceptable obedience to the Father still springs from the Spirit of Him who cried out in the garden of Gethsemane, ["Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will" \(Mark 14:36 NKJV\).](#) All Jesus' hopes rested in the Father's will for Him regardless of the momentary cost.

Paul found this same hope in "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" and expressed his unwavering belief in the outcome of that hope, "that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (see Philippians 1:19-20). Everything is brought into conformity to the image of the Son by the Spirit of the Son within. No white-knuckle, grit your teeth Christianity here. Religious disciplines are as hopeless as they are numerous. Everything required for the magnification of Christ is found in Christ in you. He is magnificent. He is altogether lovely and as He is allowed to live out His devotion to the Father through us, our lives take on that beauty that is Him. Thus He is magnified in our bodies. The excellence belongs to Him. The beauty belongs to Him. The work is done by Him and the credit certainly goes to Him. Why all this boasting in gifts then? Why do we take the credit for what we have not done?



Chapter 9: Christ Working In Us

We must stop exalting men above measure (Romans 12:3, 2 Corinthians 12:7) and ask the Father to open our eyes to see Christ at work in us, individually and corporately. May He give us eyes to see that Jesus is the Apostle in us! He is the Prophet (Acts 3:20-22) in us. He is the Evangelist. He is the One Shepherd and Teacher in us. We must learn to view these graces not as offices but as Christ speaking and acting through each believer for the benefit of all. "Christ is you the hope of Glory."

Christ, the Apostle in Us

Jesus is the Apostle. It is He who does the work in the worker. This is what Paul was saying when he told the Corinthian church, "[Who then is Apollos, and who Paul? Ministering servants, through whom ye have believed, and as the Lord has given to each. I have planted; Apollos watered; but God has given the increase. So that neither the planter is anything, nor the waterer; but God the giver of the increase](#)" (1 Corinthians 3:5-7 Darby).

This is why signs follow those who believe. It does not say, "These who believe will follow after these signs," as is practiced so often today. The word *apostle* in the Greek means "one sent" or "envoy." An envoy is a messenger from His government. He does not speak from himself, but for the ones who sent him. Most of us have at one time or another been sent by God to bless another in the body of Christ and most of us came back marveling over the power and authority that rested upon us as we went fourth in His name.

This same word appears in one of Jesus' teaching at the last supper:

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. ([John 13:14-16 KJ2000](#))

Can you spot it? It is translated "he that is sent."

In the New Testament the twelve were called disciples until they were sent out and after that they were called apostles. The twelve who saw Christ and sat at his feet were not the only ones that are called apostles in the New Testament, either. The term apostolos is used to describe numerous other sent ones as well like Matthias, Paul, Barnabus, Andronicus and Junia and others. Look it up.

Jesus is the One sent from God, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (Hebrews 3:1), who yet comes to us by the Spirit that takes what belongs to Him and imparts it to us (see John 16:14). We may all have a part in this as the Spirit wills (see 1 Corinthians 12:11).

Some will say, "Well, how about Paul calling himself an Apostle?" Let's look at Romans 1:1:

Paul [3972], a servant [1401] of Jesus [2424] Christ [5547], called [2822] to be an apostle [652], separated [873] unto [1519] the gospel [2098] of God [2316] (Romans 1:1 KJV+)

The phrase "to be" was added by the translators. The Greek here in reality reads, "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, invited, sent out [652], limited to the good message of God." Yes, Paul was sent and that was attested to by signs following, or Christ working through him. As we said earlier, apostolo is not a title, but in this instance, describes the grace given to Paul. Paul had grace to go. He was a sent one. He was sent in the exact same way that the Father sent Jesus. Remember Jesus' words to the twelve, "Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent [apostello] me, even so send I you" (John 20:21 KJ2000). Just as Jesus proved himself to be sent by the presence of the Father working through him, these sent ones proved that they were sent by the same criterion. They were not called to fill ecclesiastical offices but to go and cooperate with Christ, Him working through them. The Father working through Jesus proved that He was sent by the Father. Jesus working through John, Peter, Paul, and others proved that they were sent by Him.

Some get into the argument that there are "Apostles" (the original twelve) and then there are "apostles" (with a small a), yet the Greek does not support this either. If you are sent, you are sent.

Many had been sent out into all the earth preaching the gospel (see Matthew 28:19-20, John 20:24, Acts 6:2 and 1 Corinthians 15:5). The Greek words translated *apostle* (*apostolos*), *evangelist* (*euaggelistes*) and *deacon* (*diakoneo*) have simple meanings pointing to the grace of God at work in the saints. Down through the years they have been, by the aid of a little ecclesiastical magic such as leaving the original Greek words untranslated and then anglicizing them into nouns, miraculously transforming them into enviable titles of distinction.

It is interesting that Saul and Barnabas were listed among certain "prophets and teachers" by the Holy Spirit while they ministered to the Lord with the church at Antioch (See Acts 13:1-3). Why doesn't Luke's record say, "There were certain apostles, prophets and teachers"? None of these had been sent out up until that time. Saul had been in preparation and on hold for about twenty-one years after Jesus had appeared to him on the Damascus road and told him about his calling, but was never *apostolos*, sent out until that day when the Holy Spirit said to them all, "[Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them](#)" (Acts 13:2 RSV). These men were not sent out by an ecclesiastical order, any more than Jesus was, but were, "sent out by the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:4).

Paul made this very clear in his introduction of his letter to the Galatian believers.

"Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" ([Galatians 1:1 NIV](#)).

Saul, who was called by Jesus on the road to Damascus twenty-one years earlier, was finally separated unto the gospel of God and sent forth by the Spirit (Romans 1:1). Saul knew the difference between being called and being sent. He might have gone out before that (as is so common today), but he would have done it without the power of God. It was after this sending that Saul's name was changed to Paul and the signs of one who is sent ("signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds," 2 Corinthians 12:12 KJV) that are proof of the presence of the living Lord working in and through him, began to accompany every venture the Holy Spirit led him into. We know few if any who call themselves apostles today who God marks with this distinction as being His sent ones. For the most part there are no signs following, no marks of Christ in their bodies, just a lot of talk and posturing. Even if God has wanted to send out these men, they have

greedily "grabbed the gold ring" and gone forth on their own without Him. They have been untrue and speak of themselves without His authority and manifest power.

Christ continued His ministry through Paul, "yet not I but Christ lives in me." No man could have walked all those miles and suffered all those hardships unless Christ was working mightily in and through him. Christ the Apostle of our faith was working through this mere lump of clay. Paul lived the very mystery that he declared to the Gentiles without posturing himself, but rather walking in the humility of the One who sent him.

Christ, the Prophet in Us

Jesus spoke and speaks forth (prophecies) as the Oracle of God, for He is the Prophet.

Then He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you." (Acts 3:20-22 KJ21)

The word translated *prophet* in Ephesians 4 is *prophetes*. It means one who speaks under inspiration, as an oracle of God. Jesus is the One who gives us that inspiration to speak by the working of His Spirit, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). As He was seen walking among the seven churches of Asia and speaking to them in Revelation, He still desires to speak to those who are His today. Yes, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Didn't Paul say that all may prophesy or speak under the direct inspiration of God? Yes, and in case we think this applies only to a few, Peter gives the general application. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God . . . that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 4:11)

Yet what do we see today? Do we see a prophetic community, or men and women running around the church claiming to possess a "prophetic office" and selling their "prophetic gift" as if they have a corner on the prophetic market? Some of these individuals have become virtual superstars, holding great conferences that we may attend for the low, low price of \$100 (often more). People who hunger for a touch from God and want to hear a comforting word from Him may, for an additional "donation,"

purchase a personal word of prophesy from these Balaams who prostitute their gifts like a cheap whore standing on a street corner. If it were not for the idolatry in the hearts of today's Christians and the lust to have kings over them, these men would never get away with this. In the mid nineteenth century, Soren Kierkegaard saw this and wrote, "Those who speak to the crowd, coveting its approval, those who deferentially bow and scrape before it must be regarded as being worse than prostitutes. They are instruments of untruth." What a contrast to the One who so often sent the crowds away and refused to be their king or take anything from them.

The spirit of prophesy has been poured out (Joel 2:27-29) on all God's people who walk in His Spirit! Peter saw this on the day of Pentecost and referred to Joel's prophesy to explain what was going on among those newly filled with the Spirit as they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Christ, the Evangelist in Us

The Greek word *euangelistes* means a preacher of good news. Jesus went into a synagogue and read these words from Isaiah that prophesied His coming ministry:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me. He has anointed me to tell the good news to poor people. He has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners. He has sent me so that the blind will see again. He wants me to free those who are beaten down. And he has sent me to announce the year when he will set his people free" [Isaiah 61:1,2]. Then Jesus rolled up the scroll. He gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were staring at him. He began by saying to them, "Today this passage of Scripture is coming true as you listen." (Luke 4:18-21 NIRV)

This is Christ's anointing and work in and through us. Each of us has had times when the Spirit has spoken through us in power to bring the unsaved the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. But we have also met some who seem to be more gifted in doing so than others. Just the same, the emphasis is not on an "office" but rather an endowment of God's grace like Philip experienced with the eunuch on the road back to Ethiopia.

As it was with the word *apostolos*, *euangelistes* has seen some tampering down through the years in an effort to make offices out of them. Kittel writes, "*euangelistes* originally denotes a function, not an office." Paul told Timothy to do the work of an

evangelist, but it should read, "labor to preach the good news." All who have Christ abiding in them have this admonition as the Spirit leads.

We see a clear demonstration of this in the design of God when Saul persecuted the church in Jerusalem and scattered them. What did this dispersed body of believers do? "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4 KJV). At last the "great commission" was about to take place.

Christ, the Shepherd both In and Over Us

[The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel - Genesis 49:24]

Everywhere in the New Testament the Greek word *poimen* is translated *shepherd* or *shepherds* except one and that is Ephesians 4:11, where it is translated *pastors*. Doesn't it strike you odd that this one poorly translated verse and word is the very foundation of almost all of the Protestant hierarchal system? A building placed on a faulty foundation cannot last. No wonder we are seeing such a great exodus from Christendom today.

Poimen literally means "a feeder." The Great Shepherd provides the feed and the feeder merely directs Christ's sheep to the Source of all Spiritual food. David knew where to go.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not lack. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalms 23:1-3 KJ2000)

Our answer to those who want to exercise reverently lordship over us is this, "The Lord is our Pastor and He does not leave us wanting." We lack for nothing. We do not lack oversight because He watches over us to nurture us. We do not lack guidance because He leads us into all truth by His Spirit. We do not lack spiritual food, because He is both our Food and our Feeder.

In the Old Testament we read of many instances where men were called "shepherds."

The Jew's religious leaders were referred to as shepherds, though they did not fare so well where this term is applied to them.

Wail, you shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, you leaders of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are come; and you shall fall like a choice vessel. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the leaders of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a wailing of the leaders of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD has plundered their pasture. (Jeremiah 25:34-36 KJ2000)

Yet, God promised to give them better shepherds.

And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. (Jeremiah 3:15 KJ2000)

And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:3-4 KJ2000)

It did not end there, because later Zechariah prophesies that God would take the flock to Himself and feed them while He cuts off the shepherds whom He abhors and under whom the flock fared so poorly. God calls them "the flock of slaughter."

And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Grace, and the other I called Unity; and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their souls also abhorred me. (Zechariah 11:7-8 KJ2000)

But God had a final plan to deal with failing human shepherds once and for all. The title of Shepherd IS given to a coming prince who would rule over the Jews, the Messianic Son of David. In Ezekiel we read,

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and you clothe yourselves with the wool, you kill them that are fed: but you feed not the flock. The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed those who were sick, neither have you bound up those who were broken, neither have you brought again those who were driven away, neither have you sought those who were lost; but with force and with cruelty have you ruled them. And they were scattered, because

there is no shepherd: and they became food to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them...

Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be food for them. For thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search for my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a rich pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek those who were lost, and bring again those who were driven away, and will bind up those who were broken, and will strengthen those who were sick. . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.

Ezekiel prophesied this long after King David died. All Israel knew that the coming Messiah, the one Shepherd, would be called the Son of David. They knew the promise that Ezekiel prophesied. God's own Son would do what the human shepherds failed to do, deposing of them once and for all, yet, Christians are still running to and fro looking for men to be their shepherds. This is no different than the people of Israel in the time of Samuel rejecting God as their King and wanting a man in His place, and it's just as sad.

Finally in Ezekiel we read, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them." How many shepherds? One! This Shepherd is different from all the other shepherds in that He has purchased His flock with His own blood. Paul says of Him, "For he that is called in the

Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. You are bought with a price; be not the servants of men" (1 Corinthians 7:22-23 KJ2000). Yes, Lord Jesus, you have freed us from human shepherds and taken us unto yourself alone. We are the sheep of your pasture! Oh what a great salvation!

Above all, Jesus is the Shepherd of our souls. He is the Overseer. We are His sheep and no other's. Peter taught this very thing.

For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25 NKJ)

Time is long overdue that we should "return to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls." A true feeder points all men to the Source of all Spiritual food, Jesus Christ. He then gets out of the way so the great Shepherd can be their Shepherd. So many today calling themselves "pastors" gather Jesus' flock under themselves and try to maintain control over them, thus reenacting Ezekiel's dire prophesy over and over again. Instead of striving to work themselves out of a job, they keep the flock weak and dependent on themselves.

Jesus told the disciples, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knows me, even so know I 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 shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:14-16 KJ2000). The end-result of Christ's sheep hearing His voice is one fold and one Shepherd. If we are to take the words of Jesus as true and then look around Christendom today with its 200,000 denominations and sects and millions of pastors and priests, we must conclude that very few "Christians" are hearing His voice today.

His sheep know His voice and another they will not follow, yet so few today even know that they are supposed to be listening for Him to speak in their lives. They run from sea to sea seeking a man to fill the place that only Jesus can. They continue to follow after men who seek to make disciples after themselves. This is so sad, yet, Paul warned that it would become the norm (see Acts 20:29-31).

Christ, the Teacher in Us

We have watched an interesting progression (or rather digression) of men taking these titles unto themselves. The same man that started out as a pastor in the sixties became a teacher in the seventies. Then it became vogue to be known as an evangelist in the eighties and get on T.V. with your own program. Then in the nineties we saw a great push to "restore the offices of apostle and prophet." So men who had these lesser titles now were calling themselves prophets. Today we are hearing many of these same men posturing themselves as today's apostles, demanding absolute authority over the flock of Christ. With this observed trend in mind, what is next, false Christs? It is obvious to us that as men have forsaken the One who has purchased them with His blood, the way as been made ready for the Great False Prophet to rise and take Christendom by storm. Who will rise to be the greatest among us and the "Pope" over all of Christendom? It only stands to reason that for false shepherds to prosper, there must also be false sheep who do not hear the Great Shepherd's voice.

You would think that Jesus' words to the disciples would be enough:

And to be greeted with honor in the marketplaces and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi (teacher), for you have one Teacher and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone [in the church] on earth father, for you have one Father, Who is in heaven. And you must not be called masters (leaders), for you have one Master (Leader), the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant." (Matthew 23:7-11 AMP)

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:25-26 KJ2000)

And how about what John told the church a few years later?

These things have I written unto you concerning them that deceive you. But the anointing which you have received of him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. (1 John 2:26-28 KJ2000)

This business of not needing a man to teach us seems like such a contradiction when we read in Hebrews that we who go on to maturity in Christ are all to become teachers:

For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk [nursing infants], and not of solid food. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. ([Hebrews 5:12-14 KJ2000](#))

Paul prophesied that in these last days, "men will heap up to themselves teachers having itching ears." Learning from men has become almost a sport in the American church. We run to this conference and that conference and we go from this web site to that web site to find "good teachers." When will we ever grow up and start to seek out the Teacher for ourselves? How long will we be mere babes, nursing at the breasts of human teachers? How long will we stay in need of milk and unskilled in the word of righteousness? When will we get some teeth and start chewing like the Buriens who searched the scriptures daily on their own and did not depend on the teaching of Paul as their only source?

A true teacher of God "salts the oats." He makes the hearers long to hear the voice of the Teacher, Jesus Christ, for themselves and teaches them that it can be done. He strives to work himself out of a job in short order. How long do you mothers let your children nurse at your breast? There is something sick about a three or four year old who is able to run and play, still nursing on his mother's breast. If you have been a Christian for more than three years and are still not teaching others (we don't mean from some study guide or work book, either, but from what you hear The Teacher saying to the churches) you are spiritually retarded! Shame on your shepherds and teachers for keeping you on their own breasts all these years!

So many Christians on the Internet seem to be incapable of listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. They don't have spiritual ears to hear. It saddens us to see these babes content with forwarding or repeating the teachings of others instead of sharing what they have been hearing from God themselves. We feel robbed that so many members of the body of Christ (where our joining together should make for the supply of the Spirit) are incapable of supplying to the rest of us from God. It is like a

body that has had a stroke and one whole side is paralyzed, limping along with sagging face, arm hanging down and dragging one foot. This is not the perfect bride of Christ that is without spot or wrinkle at His return, because His bride is a virgin that knows where to get her oil and knows it is not from other virgins!

Besides the list of graces in Ephesians 4, there is another list in the twelfth chapter of Romans:

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

(Romans 12:3-8 NASB)

Why does Paul start out this list with such a sober warning? Because there are always those who think that their portion is the only portion. When they minister it becomes "Brother Love's traveling salvation show." God has allotted to each a measure of faith! Not just one or two or some. Those who prophesy or teach do not have the "office" of prophet or teacher. They just flow in the abundant supply of the Spirit with the other members of the body of Christ. What a blessing it is when we gather together in the Spirit and have this happen! But all it takes is one person who thinks more highly of themselves than they ought and everything is quenched and our gathering becomes another fleshly dog and pony show.

Every believer who is born from above, without exception, moves in one or more of these graces. Do all have the same function? No. But all have the grace of Christ. These graces are distributed among every one of us for a single purpose--to bring us collectively into a resplendent appreciation and realization of Christ's fullness, until we attain together the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). It is so sad that those things given to us of the Spirit to cause maturity and unity in Christ

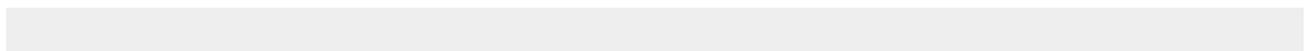
have been used, in the hands of carnal men, to keep God's people captive, settling for Christian mediocrity.

There is no place for fleshly dead traditions in Christ's revolutionary body. God not only gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins, but He continues to give us His Son, as fresh, daily Bread through the manifestation of the Spirit that is given to each one. "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3 WEB).

So where does that leave us? Right where we should be--open channels for Him to manifest Himself as He wills. Paul knew this and because of this he could say, "I can do all things through Christ (the Anointed One) who strengthens me." God gave us the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38), not the gifts of the Spirit. The Greek word *doron* or gift is not in the original Greek text in 1 Corinthians! We say again, the gift of God is Christ and His Spirit. When we believe this we will be able to say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

If Ephesians 4:11 does not mean that Christ is all in all in each of these attributes, then a great deal of the rest of the Bible contradicts itself. Jesus told us to call no man teacher. Peter told us all to speak as an oracle of God and Paul said that all may prophecy. In Christ we are all sent out (apostolos) from the throne of God with the good news. Paul served in all these ways, because He ministered Christ. He exhorted believers everywhere, "...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, for its lusts." "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7 KJ2000). We so glibly quote John 3:16, but can we hear its words? God. . . gave His only begotten Son. . ." God gave the gift of Christ! The rest of Ephesians 4 hinges on this. All the graces, spoken of after that are nothing more than Him manifesting Himself in His body as He wills.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21 RSV).



Chapter 10: Are We Engaged In Mere Church Busyness or the Kingdom of God?

Just because every one is gleefully busy does not mean that they are functioning as a body. The real question is, where do the gifts we exercise originate? Are they spiritual gifts, distributed to the body by the Head as He wills, or do they originate in our flesh? Do we worship in Spirit or do we have confidence in the flesh of men? Today's church leadership and its counterpart in the corporate world know that a busy person is less likely to become discontented. With this in mind, today's progressive churches encourage participation by every member.

It is the nature of that participation that is in question here. Each of them is asked to assume some responsibility pertaining to the function and maintenance of the church buildings, the grounds and the pastor's programs. Some are assigned to the parking lot detail. Others are more suited to ushering or greeting strangers at the door. Those that are musically proficient serve on the worship team. Those with secretarial or accounting skills may help with the church finances or serve as church secretary. Those with a grasp of scriptures may be asked to teach a Sunday school class under the careful oversight of pastors and elders. Others serve as janitors or grounds keepers. Those good with children end up in the nursery. We know of some who love the outdoors who are convinced that their "ministry" is taking other Christians hunting and fishing. There is something to accommodate the natural abilities of everyone.

This kind of endeavor must not be mistaken for body ministry. The activities we list above are not spiritual gifts but are based on natural ability, the flesh. Divine grace is not required to perform any of them. Instead of the manifestation of the Spirit, the managerial skills of men are unashamedly paraded about as though they proceeded from the very throne of God. Instead of the unity of the Spirit we see imposed uniformity or a false Babylonian unity that comes from building cities and towers. This is not what Jesus was speaking of in Matthew when He said to Peter, ["I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."](#) Peter just didn't get it. As soon as He saw the vision on the mount of Moses and Elijah ministering to Jesus, he wanted to start a building program himself. "Lord, it is good that we are here, let us make three tabernacles." God stopped him mid sentence saying, ["This is my beloved Son, hear](#)

Him!" As members of His body, we must abide in and hear Christ if His house is to be built.

When will we finally accept the fact that flesh cannot be transubstantiated into something divine? When will we learn the weight of Jesus words, "The flesh profits nothing"? Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The key word here is *born*. What is birthed by the Spirit is Spirit and is uniquely attuned to the God, who is Spirit. The natural man can be very deceptive because he is very religious and very zealous. However, the natural man has one great failing. He "does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJV). Flesh and Spirit are not compatible. "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:16-17 NKJV). Regardless of its outward beauty, what is born of flesh can be nothing less or more than flesh. Origin determines everything. Only what is born of the Spirit can take part in God's kingdom. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

Paul wrote, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36). God only approves of those things that are of, through and to Him. He accepts only those things that are fathered by Him and birthed by His Spirit. Only those things that are of Him, or originate in Him, will be sustained through His Spirit and return to Him as a sweet sacrifice. Only those things that are sustained through His Spirit will return glory to Him. All else is worthless; wood, hay and stubble, to be burned up in the Day of testing. Jesus, speaking of the Pharisees, put it in even more drastic terms. "Every plant that my Father did not plant will be rooted up." Remember, Pharisee-ism was the result of man's effort to preserve the uniqueness of a nation, Israel, in a time of captivity. What was the effect of this supreme religious experiment? They missed the day of their visitation and took part in the brutal murder of the Anointed One! Why did they kill him? They killed Christ to defend their place in a system antagonistic to Him (see John 11:47-48). Sound familiar? It should! Men are still crucifying Christ afresh for the same reason. We need to be very careful about what we are planting, for whatever does not come directly from the Father through His Spirit is a cheap knock-off and has no place in His spiritual house. "What is born of the flesh is flesh."

Chapter 11: Discerning the Lord's Body

Here is where the rubber meets the road. Things sometimes look a little different on paper than they do in real life.

The believers at Corinth were discovering that this was all too true. Paul rebuked them for practices that were inconsistent with the New Covenant. It came down to this: they were eating wrong. Their worship fell short of God's standard of worship, in Spirit and in truth. The way they ate the "love feast" or common meal among the local saints that Jesus established as a symbol of their fellowship with Him and each other was not in agreement with the truth. Paul gave them a sobering warning about sharing the bread and cup that represent our Lord's body and blood, broken and shed for us. Volumes have been written about whether the wine and bread we eat really turns into the body and blood of Christ. We will not even try to address this here, but we would like to address something that we feel is more important.

For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. (1 Corinthians 11:29 NLT)

Remember the context of this scripture. The Corinthian believers loved to feast, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats." Though they may have thought they were eating the Lord's Supper, Paul quickly pointed out that the manner that they ate was all wrong (1 Corinthians 11:20). "For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others." Nothing could be further from the truth of the New Covenant than coming together to feed our selfishness. The Corinthians did not discern the Lord's body. Each one put his own interests ahead of others. Paul continues, "one is hungry and another is drunk" (v.21). Sounds like the world, doesn't it? Something was missing, and that was body-awareness. They were egocentric rather than body-centric. They were still thinking like individuals and not like a body thinks. They were not eating a common meal that reflected the care and unity of the body as the Lord commanded, but each one ate to themselves, to the total disregard of the hungry among them.

So how do we think like a body? Paul wrote that in a spiritual body, whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the

members rejoice with it (1 Corinthians 12:26 KJ2000). If you drop a hammer on your toe, you don't merely look down and say, "Poor toe. Too bad you got in the way. I will pray for you," and then go on your merry way not giving it another thought. Yet this is how we tend to react in Christendom when we hear about the misfortune of another member in Christ's body. When someone is shown honor, do we sit in our pew and say to ourselves, "That should have been me!" Worse, these very things are perpetuated by the attitude of today's church leadership. If you are in need of a month's rent and you go to the church benevolence committee (if it even has one), they give you a twenty dollar bill and send you on your way. You get a band-aid to put on your bullet hole because most of the money in the church coffers is for the construction and furnishing of the new church building project or the pastor's trip to Hawaii. As it was with the Pharisees 2000 years ago, all church monies are corban (see Mark 7:7-13). In the church today we like to appear to be concerned for others, but in reality we are not about to lose any sleep (or money) over their misfortune. Yet, it was not this way in the infant church in the book of Acts. They were moved by the Spirit as a body and on one lacked, for no one said what they had were their own.

Corruption and stinginess seem to permeate church leadership today. It is all over the news. Jude gives us a better idea of how the Lord views such inequity. He wrote of certain men who crept in who were defiling their love feasts. He called them "defilers that turned the grace of God into lasciviousness." He likened them to "the angels that kept not their first estate" but rather rose to claim preeminence (1:6). Who were these defilers? Jude explains,

These are hidden rocky reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you, shepherds who without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. ([Jude 1: 12, WEB](#))

As we look around in Christendom today, what do we see? We see men failing to discern the Lord's body, taking their own super ahead of others. To them the whole idea of ministry is to gain prominence, not lay down their lives for others. So we hear the language of self -- my ministry, my gift, my calling, my church, I, I, me, me, my. They call themselves "shepherds" and "ministers" but they despise the ekklesia of Christ, His called out ones, and defile the love feasts by not correctly appraising (not rightly discerning) the other members of the Lord's body. Failure to discern the Lord's body is tantamount to despising them. Therefore Paul asks, "[Do you despise the](#)

church of God and shame those who have nothing?" (verse 22). The implied answer was, yes they did. But what exactly did they do?

"disperse" *kataphroneo* means literally, 'to think down upon or against anyone' (kata, 'down,' phren, 'the mind'), hence signifies 'to think slightly of, to despise, think little or nothing of'" (W.E. Vine).

Pride is a two-edged sword. It cuts two ways. An over-appraisal of yourself causes you to despise others. You cannot think too highly of yourself without thinking little or nothing of your brother and sister, defiling all that Christ hoped to accomplish by His broken body and shed blood in them.

Paul explains further, "For I received from the Lord. . ." What Paul had received from the Lord was something entirely other than what these Christians were involved in.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

This love feast is a representation of the spiritual unity and fellowship of the body of Christ as Paul had earlier explained. "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 (fellowship, sharing, participation) of the body of Christ?" Paul is not merely talking about the physical body of Christ as he went on to explain, "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (See 1 Corinthians 10:16).

As we are partakers of the Broken Bread, we collectively become bread to be broken and given to a starving world by Christ! As we discern the body of Christ, accurately appraising each member and relating to them according to the love of God, we participate in the life of Christ that flows through each member of that body. We cut ourselves off from body-life by considering only ourselves, turning the love-feast into a gluttonous party for megalomaniacs.

Paul continues, "He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Discerning the body is foremost the discerning of the place and condition of others in the body of Christ and doing something about it (verse 11:29). This has everything to do with us finding our true place in the body. The lack of body awareness is the reason for so much sickness and death among God's people. "For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (11:30). The disruption of the flow of life and health in the body is in no small part related to our failure to discern the measure of grace that each member possesses.

God has created the body to be mutually dependent. A hand is no good without an arm to get it to a place it can do something. An arm is no good without a torso to pivot from and so on. Some are given gifts of healing (1 Corinthians 12:28). If we do not discern these members we will despise them and not receive from them in a joint to joint relationship. We will not benefit from the measure of grace that God has given to them. We will live out all that is implied by the words, "I have no need of you." We are sick and dying because we have cut ourselves off from God's source of healing. This applies to all the gifts. Just as a revelation of Christ is required before we can be saved, we must likewise have a revelation of His Body before we can discern its members and enjoy the fullness of Christ. Without proper discernment of Christ's body we will assume too much, and run the risk of usurping both His headship and displacing the members of His body.

Now let's take a look at a passage of scripture that reveals how the body members should function in relationship to God and each other. The gates of hell tremble at the very thought of it!

New Covenant worship in Spirit and truth, and the hindrances to it, are well laid out in Romans 12:1-21. Please read the entire passage to follow full thought of what Paul is sharing with the Saints.

¹I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

²Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.

⁴For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;¹⁰love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

¹¹Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.

¹²Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited.

¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.

¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

²⁰No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head."

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

By the grace given to him and through the mercies of God, Paul called believers to a higher form of spiritual worship. He begins by addressing the primary obstacle to that worship. The first condition for proving God's good, acceptable and perfect will is to present our bodies to Him as living sacrifices. The second is to refuse to give in to this world's pressure to conform us to its way of thinking. It is extremely important that we understand Paul's definition of conformity to the world.

Paul is not referring to outward, fleshly sins like smoking, chewing and drinking but to the world's values and attitudes. The opposite of conformity to this world, in this

context, is the renewing of the mind. We must receive from the Lord renewed minds and this comes through His working of the cross deep into our lives. Only as our thinking is renewed can we see what is good and acceptable to God and see His perfect or full grown will come to fruition in our individual lives and together as viable members of Christ's body.

The average worldling thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think. Christians are conformed to the world by regarding themselves more highly than they should. The Greek word here is *hyperphron*, to over-think. The second requirement for spiritual worship, after we have presented our bodies to God as living sacrifices, is sober-mindedness. To think soberly is to think without exaggeration. "We will be sober if we do not take that upon us which we do not have" (Geneva Bible Notes on Romans 12:3).

When sobriety has gone by the way, exaggeration is ever present. The drunkard is the perfect example of this. He walks into the bar, inhibited and melancholy; one insignificant man on an overpopulated planet. After a few drinks he is transformed into an intellectually and physically superior giant, gloriously distinguished from all other living beings. Just ask him. He'll tell you. And if you don't, he'll tell you anyway. An exaggerated self-appraisal is a sure mark of conformity to the world and is the greatest hindrance to spiritual worship. Why? With one trifling exception the body is made up of other members. There are many members in the body and we need to apprise (discern) each of them correctly, recognizing that "God has apportioned to each a measure of trust" (Non-Ecclesiastical New Testament). We will not make place for other members of the body if we feel that what we have is all that is needed for ministry and what we want to say is more important than what any lesser member has to contribute.

In Romans 12:15, Paul describes the depth of interconnection and interdependence that should exist in the body when he writes, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." In a healthy body, what happens to one affects all the members. When Peter was arrested and imprisoned in the book of Acts, the church did not go off to their jobs and offer up a little prayer for him. No, they gathered and prayed until Peter came knocking on the house door where they were meeting after an angel had released him. "[Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him](#)" (Acts 12:5 KJ2000).

All are members of one another, passionate for one another's health and wellbeing. Hence the exhortation in Romans 12:16, "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." In Acts we see this mutual interdependence being lived out. "And with many other words he [Peter] testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:40-47 NKJV).

Paul reminded believers in Rome that their place in the body was relative to the other members. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (see Romans 12:5). To men unity is based on similarity. If we are alike then we get along. Body unity is completely different because it is based on divinely orchestrated diversity. Everyone is different and yet all are one. We are members one of another and the common bond is Christ and His all consuming love. The proverb, "Physician, heal thyself" does not apply here because the gifts that God gives to the members of the body are not for them personally but for the edification of the other members. "Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. . .Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality... Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited..." As it is with Christ so it is with His body. We are called to fill up the measure of His suffering, laying down our lives in service to others.

God is seeking worshipers who will worship Him in a manner consistent with His being! Millions today are sensing this heavenly call and, like the Christians of old, are going unto Jesus outside the orthodox religious camp, with its fixed structures and man-made traditions. Through years of struggle and suffering they are learning to discern the body of Christ and yielding to the flow of the Spirit. Some of them used to despise the body by thinking of themselves more highly than they should. They saw themselves as special, a cut above the rest. God is teaching them to be co-equal members, proving that good acceptable and perfect will of God as it was meant to be manifest in Christ's body. Their focus is no longer only on their "ministry," but they are learning to appraise themselves correctly, seeking and building up the measure of the gift of Christ in

others. This is the reform that Christ's Church desperately needs before she can ever see the perfection of Christ here on earth. Without this witness of Christ in a heavenly body working in total unity, the world will never know that He and the Father are one (See John 17). When His saints possess the life of Christ and share it, everything else will take care of itself. Satan is not all that concerned when Christians attempt to change the outer form of things, embracing new forms of external discipline. Just as long as they are not touched and changed by the life of God which manifests in a generous, selfless heart change seen by all.



Chapter 12: Don't Fear the Bulldozer

Because of that self-saving attitude that all of us contend with, most believers today have not fully made this vast New Covenant Transition. It is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of God (see Acts 14:22). It is through the crisis of stripping that God takes away the first to establish the second.

I, Michael, had a significant dream that God used to warn me of His intentions and what was about to happen in my life. About 1980 I dreamed that I was sitting on the front steps of my house on a beautiful sunny day, enjoying my beautiful well-kept yard, when a large truck pulled up across the street with a large Caterpillar tractor on the trailer. The driver got out, and started the bulldozer and was warming it up as I thought, "I wonder what the neighbors are up to with a big machine like that?" Well, I was soon to find out that it was not the neighbors that the driver was interested in. He backed the machine down off the trailer and headed it straight for my lawn! He tore up the grass, uprooted the flower beds and then next thing he hit was my house! I screamed at him to no avail. He didn't even act like he noticed me. Before he was done the whole lot was leveled and all that was left was a pile of rubble. Then he loaded up and drove off. I was left sitting there on a piece of my old steps, holding my head and asking God, "Why? Why have you taken this wonderful house away from me? Didn't you give it to me in the first place? Now I have nothing!"

We want to keep the old and add the new to it, but this is not the Lord's way. He always removes the first that has waxed old and replaces it with something new and living. He is the God of the new. He makes all things new! Don't expect the same thing that went into the ground and died to come up in a greater manifestation, either. If you plant a little seed, you do not get a big seed. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church:

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain--perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. (1 Corinthians 15:35-38 NKJV).

Through the prophet Haggai the Lord said,

According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!" "For thus says the LORD of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the LORD of hosts. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the LORD of hosts. "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts. (Haggai 2:5-9 NKJV).

After this dream and other warnings, I eventually gave God permission to do what He knew had to be done for me to continue to grow in Christ and His kingdom. All heaven broke loose in my life. It was the start of an extended wilderness period that would remove everything that I once thought was a sure sign that God loved me and of what he had done so far in my life. My family and I went through many years of hardship after that, but the hardest thing was not being able to hear His voice any longer. I can now say that what I have on the other side is not worthy to be compared to the former things. God is good and He is the one who faithfully makes all things new (see 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Revelation 21:5).

I (George) am also quite familiar with God's bulldozer. Most of His dealings in my life consist of His stripping away the many false teachings and traditions of well-intentioned religious men, who led me away captive as a new believer. Since then, my pilgrimage can best be defined as Light dispelling darkness. With each unveiling of Christ, superstitions that I once thought fundamental and indispensable were exposed as the beggarly garment they truly are. I have been freed from a vast amount of superstition and ignorance so far, and am learning who Christ really is! I am learning not to fear the bulldozer as I become more and more convinced that crisis is change. Through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. We cannot come into the full realization of this vast New Covenant before our idols are struck in their feet by the Stone cut without hands. The iron of Roman imperialism and the humble clay of the body of Christ mixed together is coming to an end. Don't fear the loss of earthly institutions and your position in them! Don't agonize over the loss of visible, carnal ceremonies and traditions. God was done with those two thousand years ago it's about time we followed His lead. Everything we have put our trust in, other than Christ, must

be crushed to powder and blown away by the Wind like the chaff at the summer threshing floor! Amen! Make it so, Lord!

God bless you as you cooperate with Him in bringing about the fullness of Christ in His body.

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