

The normal Christian life is a regular, predictable journey. A person accepts Christ, receives salvation, gets baptized, and joins a church. There the person is taught by a pastor, participates in various activities, such as helping lead worship music, teaching children, and various types of planning and perhaps co-operative governance. The church teaches the person to follow the teachings of a once earthly Jesus Christ, marries the person to another, serves the person the Lord's Supper on a regular basis, and buries the person in consecrated ground at death, offering prayers for the person's eventual resurrection. Relationships formed through Bible studies, and various church project groups and socials nourish the person's social needs through life, and the pastor counsels the person in times of crisis. A few feel called into ministry, and attend an institution of higher learning sponsored by the church, and some become pastors of other churches, thus perpetuating the system for the next generation. And it sounds so right.

Thus it has been for nearly 1800 years, with minor variations as the demands of culture changed. It's fruit is clear for all the world to see: daily wars are fought in the name of religion; disease, fear, and social problems are rampant; and Christians find more love and acceptance from pagan bosses, co-workers, and merchants than from their so-called brothers. Worse, the thousand-year period ending in 1400 AD, when Christianity controlled the rulership of the western world produced as its fruit the worst plagues, a completely illiterate multitude, and the witch trials of the inquisition. And almost no one ever got to find out what God had in mind for his or her life. And it seemed so accidental.

Surely if the power of God is half of what we believe it is, and if Jesus Christ is half of what we claim He is, the world should have kept on getting changed for the better by leaps and bounds. War should have ended centuries ago, instead of the world getting to the brink of nuclear disaster. Instead of plagues, we could have cured cancer a millennium ago. And drugs and depression should not exist in a society founded on the joy of the Lord and the bearing of each other's burdens. Certainly, the very idea that a nation needs to be formed so people can try experiments in how to worship God in new churches should not be necessary; and then,

for that nation to need to be founded on separation of church and state for the experiment to work cannot be what the God who cares about drawing all people to Himself intended. Indeed, the more knowledge that is available, the less people seem to care about being in the churches, when knowledge should cause them to seek its Author all the more. If the system so right, why isn't it working?

It doesn't work because the system is not scriptural. Not any little piece of it. There are no "churches" in scripture, only THE "church" manifesting in various places. Pastors have no position in churches. There are no "weddings" in Scripture. There is no "Lord's Supper".

We have allowed human meanings to replace the original meanings of the words of Scripture. Then, when the words came to be at variance with how the first apostles set things up, we allowed the new meanings of the words to dictate our setup. Then, we forgot the original meanings, and kept the setup, since that's all the words could let us talk about. Without the original meanings of the words, we lost the assembly, the divine feast of the victorious, the wandering apostle, the pilgrimage feasts and the very passion of God for us made fully alive. We have replaced "fill the earth and have dominion" with "earn your way into heaven", and forgotten about the thousand-year reign. We have a dozen movies about tribulation, and none about our victory (unless you count science fiction and new religion of UFO saviors). We think of trials as punishment or discipline instead of the earth crying out for the glory of God to show in us. And billions of lives are wasted.

It has taken God almost 1700 years to bring us to this point. When the early church sold its glory for a position in the Roman empire, put the disagreeing bodies of believers to the sword and destroyed the originals to rewrite the books, God started waiting, as always, for repentance. Six hundred years later, the pride of the bishops (who have no position in the church either, by the way) created the assault on the Holy Land, thinking to perform God's work with an army. Rescued copies of the destroyed books that had made it to the Arab world came back to the "Christian" empire in soldiers' saddlebags. Three hundred years later, when the banned books were read, the Inquisition murdered the first few

who dared share their new discovery that everyone has a Godly mission on earth. Eventually, a German monk had enough friends to hide from the Catholic armies, and for the first time in a thousand years, a man could claim his priesthood enough to choose his own church. The discovery of a new continent made the great experiment possible: is Christianity compatible with human freedom? For 200 years, archeological expeditions gradually started replacing erroneous teachings of tradition with scientifically provable facts. And then, a new continent was drafted to try the experiment of combining God with freedom. In 1826, the Shekinah glory appeared for the first time in over two thousand years over the little hamlet of Rome, NY – the cause – a preacher, Charles Finney (one of the new breed saved personally by God outside the church structure) dared to suggest that we all have a personal stake in the spread of the gospel. At the stroke of midnight, exactly New Years Eve 1900 AD, the power gifts were restored to a group of students in a seminary in Kansas formed to study the teachings of the preacher. A storefront ministry on Azusa Street shared the new revelation, and was promptly exorcised from the “church”. God waited, and in 1966, four Catholic college students sought a minister from the heretical denomination because God had told them to seek the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”, which, the “churches” of the time believed, only existed for “apostolic times”. The Catholic church was everywhere, and the message covered the world in less than 20 years – and again, was exorcised from the “true church”. The leaders who had been expelled started non-denominational churches, and realized that God’s anointing is more important than tradition.

In 1960, if your prayers healed someone, you were one in a million - a saint on earth. Today, healings are normal. In 1960 to write a new song was unheard of, except for professionals. Today, anyone and everyone write new worship music as a matter of course all over the world. In 1960, Baptism of the Spirit was something for the past – today, over 40% of Christians claim to have received it. It should have been a major revival. With this kind of show of power, the world should have turned to Jesus by the year 2000.

Where are the young people? Why don’t they marry anymore, but instead live together? Why do they do drugs instead of becoming all they can be? What is happening to our values? What is happening to the churches that protect them?

Have you noticed, a church is the only organization you can leave where no one will talk to you again? Have you noticed, there’s better music and better sermons on cable and the Internet? Have you noticed the lack of integrity among Christians, especially the sexual sins among the leaders? What’s God trying to tell us?

It’s time. It’s time to shut the man-made ancient system down, and get on about the business of being THE Church. The new structure has no name. But that’s good, because if it did, the name would change what we expect of the structure, and that alone would be enough to make it another idea stone-frozen in time. The structure has no name; because it is not a structure – it is a canvas, and the Painter just about has his paints lined up and ready to go. If the picture has a name, it is His – Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, alive in all of us.

This is a study in Scripture and history – the way it was, the way that worked for 1500 years in Israel and in early Christianity, and the only pattern given us by God. This is a study in human need and human purpose, and how the pattern helps humanity fulfill its potential. This is a study in where God has been going for 1700 years since that wrong turn in the Roman Empire. This is the life-plan of the society of the People in whom the Messiah lives on earth today – the un-church.

1. THE CHURCH

Of the 79 times that the word “church” occurs in the English Bible, 53 speak of THE Church, as though there is only one. 22 speak of the church at a home or at a place, and 3 other occurrences speak of a single church.

The second group, of the 22, has three Greek constructions: The Church in (en) a place, the church through (kata) a place, or the church of (genitive) a place. The Greek language has several words for the English word “in”. The word “en” refers to a static presence, actively pursuing a program in a place. Thus these phrases are not to be taken as the church in one town is separate

from the church in another, but rather as signifying members of the one church “stationed” in a certain locality. The word “kata” is usually used for the church in a home, and refers to the fact that the person seeking the church in that home is to look all through the home for its members. It, likewise, cannot be thought to mean a specific church. The genitive means as it does in English: the church of Ephesus, for example, is simply those members of the church who represent it there.

The three odd verses are: Acts 14:23 where “every church” is used: this is a mistranslation: the Greek is kata. In 1Cor. 4:17, again “every church” is a mistranslation: the Greek word “pas” has its primary meaning “entire”. And Phil. 4:15, the word “no church” uses the Greek word “oudeis” which means “no man of the church”.

The word “churches” occurs 35 times in the Greek (mostly in Acts, Revelation, Corinthians, 2 in Romans, 2 in Thessalonians). In all but one case (1 Cor 14:34), it is used of various cities within a province, or country. The meaning of “churches” is thus not as we use it (different denominations within a city), but as a collective noun to refer to the fact that THE church is in many cities within a large area. The first proof of this is that the churches of Asia Minor, in different cities, are specifically stated to be lampstands close enough to each other, that Jesus can walk among them (Rev. 1:20), and are thus ONE connected reality. The second is that Paul writes to “churches” only when he writes to the province with many churches (Galatia). In fact, to Thessalonica, he writes to THE Church, for Thessalonica is a single city in Macedonia, which he states has churchES in 2 Cor. 8:1. In fact, to Rome, which archeology shows had many Jewish assemblies, Paul does as he does to Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae: he writes to people, not to churches (proving one can be in THE church, without belonging to A church, as they obviously were in these towns). It is only to two other cities that Paul even uses the word “churches”: both Rome and Corinth were cosmopolitan crossroads of their day. Residents had all visited other “churches” in other cities. This observation explains the I Cor. 14:34 exception: the women were speaking out of order not only at their home church, but in other cities (even in some which kept the Jewish law – this is the only reason Paul

could have mentioned the law at this point: the Corinthians, as Gentiles, were not under the law). The previous verse confirms this.

There is not a single Scripture that can be used, in the original language, to support the idea of different churches within a city. When someone comes to town and opens a “new church”, he acts without Scriptural authority.

What is a church? Do you mean the Greek “Ekklesia” (Church), “Sunagoge” (Assembly), or “panegyris” (Assembly)? Take them one at a time. First, the Ekklesia means, in Greek, those “called out”. It is used to refer even to the council of a city. THE Church of God is all the people called to live in the Kingdom of God, who are following that call. These are the ones who have been called out of the world. Today, we call them the believers, but that will not work Scripturally, for even the demons believe that there is one God and tremble, and they certainly are not the church. The word ekklesia was used by the apostles, since it also carried the connotation that it was these called-out people who would one day be the salvation of the city in which they lived, and hence its counselors. The plural, as we have seen, refers to different sub-divisions in many cities of a state.

We will discuss the other two words more fully below. The sunagoge is the mandated regular meeting of believers, and the panegyris is the ultimate assembly in the final feast of tabernacles.

The most telling Scripture of all in this regard is Acts 7:38, where Moses’ encounter with the angel of God on Sinai is called church. Since there is only one God, there is only one church. In what respect can Jesus be said to found HIS church (on the Rock which is Peter)? Every tradition says that this verse (Matt. 16:18) involves a pun, between the meaning of Peter in Hebrew and Greek. But no one will state the precise nature of the pun. One major denomination goes so far as to claim that it is the TRUE Church (as distinguished from the less true churches – so states its teachings) because of its succession from Peter.

Outside of the fact that the apostolic succession was written into the books by this church when it rewrote them, and hence is plain lie, and outside the fact that apostolic succession is relevant only if God is not raising up apostles today (which we will discuss below),

there is no such thing as a TRUE church, simply because there is no such thing as a not true church. There are only those walking in the Kingdom (Church) and those not walking in the Kingdom. Besides, God is not theology, God is a relationship. So claiming to be the TRUE church proves that you consider that important, which proves you do not understand God, which suggests you are either not walking in the Kingdom, or not doing it very well.

Peter in Hebrew means, “first born son”. Jesus is saying, “you are my first born son (rock), and so on you I will build my church”. Peter receives this distinction because he was the first to realize that Jesus the carpenter from Nazareth has as his ministry that of the Christ or Messiah. Jesus is prophesying to Peter. The word “my” refers to His Father, and hence the oneness of Moses’ experience of church with ours is not violated. Read the Acts verse again, and note that Jesus was there with Moses at the time. Both Scriptures refer to each other. Jesus is the builder of His Father’s church, since only in Jesus can the Father call us out to change the world. We can all be rocks, too. In fact we are living stones, and I Cor. 3 says we can all be builders. The only price to be such a stone is to recognize who Jesus is inside each of us, and start building.

With the notion of individual church demolished, how can there be a Catholic church, a Methodist church, a Lutheran church, etc.? Could they be assemblies?

We cannot fix the misnomer that simply. The Catholic church follows Rome, the Lutheran the teachings of Luther, the Methodist the teachings of Wesley, etc. They have thus divided Christ into parts. See I Cor. 3 for the whole discussion, and Scripture’s condemnation of the situation.

This is why people have stopped going to church. And this is why churches can’t deal with people who leave. They are institutions of man in the name of God. They worked for a while, when the Body of Christ was in such a low level of maturity, since they were like schools: one educated man conducted seminars in his sermons. But the minute a follower of Jesus matures, this old temporary structure no longer works for him, and it falls away.

2. PASTORS, DEACONS, BISHOPS, ELDERS, ETC.

Who has the authority in the churches of today? Almost always, it is pastor, bishop, elder, deacon, or priest. Yet read carefully I Cor. 12:28:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

The word “set” is *tithomi*, source of the Greek word for God, *theos*, and it means, “founded for the future”. So this verse is God’s plan for who should lead in the church. Read it as many times as you like. Pastor, bishop, elder, deacon and priest are just not there. Is it any wonder our churches are floundering? The very people appointed by God to lead have been replaced by others!

The usual response to this is the “fivefold ministry Scripture”, Eph. 4, 11. Let’s examine from 10-16 by way of sorting this out:

- 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.
- 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
- 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
- 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
- 14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
- 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:
- 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

The English is extremely difficult, and does not follow the Greek in verse 11. Jesus gave some to be apostles, etc.; each ministry is in the accusative case. That means the people is what he gave as a gift. It is saying the gift is the people who do these

ministries. Word by word, we read: those surely apostles, those also prophets, those also evangelists, those also pastors and teachers. With no numerical order, except for the first, just like the gifts listed in the I Cor. Passage, since once things are in order, they all work at once, without formal authority.

The next few verses tell us that their ministry is temporary, until we become mature, and until we all speak the truth in love. That is why they are not established in the church.

But three of them are. The apostles, prophets and teachers are in the Corinthians verse. What is going on here?

We have 10 ministries to account for. We begin with the established offices:

The apostle is the founder of a work. It is ludicrous to suppose that only the Twelve and Paul are apostles, and God has no more. It violates common sense. How could II Cor. 11:13 and Rev. 2:2 witness to false apostles if the list had only 13 names on it? Surely, no one would have been confused as to who was who. And how could Jesus be an apostle (Heb. 3:1) if apostles need to be “sent by Christ” as some denominations claim? Early Christian literature outside the Bible speaks of a group called the “wandering apostles”. This group often comes from those who have had a disagreement with their church. They are told to leave and go to the world, who will receive them, for “the earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof” (the reference, for those who care, is I Clement to the Corinthians, ch. 54), and makes specific rules for them to minister to groups of the church and even to accept paying positions in due course (the Didache). While we do not rely on such non-Scripture to prove a point, these sources explain nicely the hitherto had to understand I Cor. 9:5, where many other apostles have wives (and surprisingly, Cephas or Peter is not among the apostles in this list), Rom. 16:7 which makes it puzzling why the Twelve in Jerusalem had time to take such a detailed interest in a few people so far away, and of course the situation of Barnabas sent out by the method similar to what I Clement described (in Acts 13:1) and later called an apostle in Acts 14:14, though he had previously been a teacher, and later separated from Paul by the exact method described by Clement (in Acts 15:38). Leaving a group in which one has ministered is NORMAL, and

part of the process. As founders, these people are first in the church, since nothing happens until God has someone found a work.

The prophet’s ministry is well known. The same Didache witnesses to wandering prophets who also can be established in paid positions. It calls the apostles and prophets the high priests of the community. After the apostle founds the work, the prophet articulates God’s vision for it.

The teacher is also well known for his ministry. Taking his cue from the prophet, he articulates and develops the connections between the new vision and the old order. It is this step that makes it possible for a group of church people to act together. The usual result after a few years in most “churches” is that 10 or so people run everything. The reason this happens is because of why churches are formed. A new person opens a church and claims to be a pastor. As long as he has a new vision or new work in mind, he is a prophet or apostle, and the church grows, since he is following God’s plan, even though he is using the wrong words. After that he teaches, and again, God gives the growth for a while. But because he is told to be a “pastor” he eventually starts “pastoring” and the church stops growing, since he is now out of God’s order. His most enthusiastic people enter the next phase, that of “miracles” (the word is wrong. The Greek is “works of power”.) Without an articulated purpose and plan, the only works they can do is those they can communicate to each other. Social psychology tells us that an intimate group cannot exceed 17 people or so, and without the plan, only intimacy can provide for enough communication to accomplish anything. That’s why a group of that size ends up running everything. Having now left God’s purpose, the church slowly starts to die, and all that’s left of what God intended in the original vision for the committed group is to do the works that keep “pastoring”, and this is what they help with. The rest of the attenders come to a museum of what God once intended to happen, but these 10 or so stay in the next level.

The numbering stops with these three. First founders, then visionaries, then teachers. We now move on, without numberings to:

Miracles, which is actually the Greek word “dunamis”, or actions that accomplish something because they have the power of God behind them.

The next four are not ministries but gifts, and are what the church does for each other as the work grows. By allowing our bodies to act as vessels of God’s power to do the work, we get healed. In doing the work we help each other, and establish whatever scheme we need so it continues (governments), and finally find ourselves in the diversities of our God-given inner languages expressing the glory of God.

This is the plan of the first four ministries. Note the church is project oriented, not commissioned to get new members, and not commissioned to teach everyone. Those are ministries within the church. The project oriented nature follows from the nature of the operation of grace on earth: When God created light, evening came and morning followed. The earth’s response to the revelation of light was to get dark! The earth cannot stand the full glory of God, which is why there must be a “new heavens and a new earth” before Satan can be defeated and why it “groans in agony” (Rom. 8:22ff) awaiting the manifestation of the glory of God in us, so we can do our ministry of fixing it. We are on earth not to earn heaven but to do job. Heaven is the natural reward, simply because God could not let his beloved people go any place else.

The first three of these four ministries are temporary, since when they are done, and the works begin, either the apostle, prophet and teacher may move on (which is why they are “wandering”) or else, God may use them in the same group to start a new work.

Ministry 5 is the evangelist. Read the Scripture again. This ministry is to the people of God, NOT to the unsaved. We are using the word wrong. When Paul preaches to the unsaved, he is a “preacher”. Note that we normally call pastors “preachers”, and that, too is wrong. No wonder our people feel so unsaved – we treat them like they are. An evangelist’s job is to build enthusiasm for the works of God. He does not have an office in the church, because if the prophet and teacher have done their work well, the very desire of God is its own builder of enthusiasm. The evangelist

picks up the slack and communicates the enthusiasm to new arrivals.

Note, the pastor is linked with the teacher. He works at the same time. He does not run the church, and his ministry is temporary. In English (and in Latin), when the word “pastor” is equated with “shepherd”, it means “sheep – herder”, and therefore it means “sheep leader”, and that’s why we let pastors lead. This is why we also find mostly sheepish people following them, and why Christians have such low integrity – they are too immature to stand up for what they know to be right in business and daily life. In Greek and in Hebrew, the word means “to feed”. In fact, it is translated “feed” far more than translated “pastor”. Derived from “feed”, instead of “lead”, the pastor’s job becomes that of taking the teachings derived by the teacher and repackaging them for people one – on – one. Since my job is teaching college, I understand this very well. He is the tutor in the system of renewing the world in Christ. Which is why the shepherd each claims his own sheep in John 10, just like my students have tutors they prefer. It’s also why the sheep scatter – they want food. Without a community of believers with a project, they will study with whomever they like – whether God called them there or not. It is also why shepherds can be struck – apostles have a God given purpose, the shepherd has only a purpose derived from the plan he is a part of. Pastoring is as temporary as food, but as necessary as food, and as varied as food. But it is not a cause to start a new church.

The remaining four ministries are those not set in church governance by God, but often by man. Let us search out the true purpose of elders, bishops, deacons, and priests.

Deacons are the simplest to account for. The word in Greek means “runners of errands”. The entire teaching may be found in I Tim. 3. The translation “office of deacons” does not occur in Greek, but rather is a derived word, like the English “diaconate”, meaning the “experience of being a deacon”. Note also, that the table waiters of Acts 6 are NOT called deacons. Note also, that the same word is routinely translated servants throughout the New Testament, though the English “servants” is also used for the

Greek word for slaves. They are what the church has always held them to be – the ones who do the necessary busy – work.

Elders are the next easiest, since the Greek word is identical with the English, and their presence may be traced back to the Jews by many passages in the gospels and Acts. Titus 1:5 is translated in a way that suggest that they were ordained, as are pastors, but the Greek reads “find elders and establish their rights to be recognized”, not the conferring of a special privilege. The reader must remember that until fairly recently, and then only in the western culture, society never does anything without first consulting the elders. A council of elders is a routine fixture in any organization back to Sumeria, and they are listened to. The qualifications of elders are well discussed in I Tim. 5, but to put the matter in perspective, it would be well to recall that in the early church at Rome (about 200 AD), there were two types of members, for which we have no English equivalent words. Once baptized, a new Christian was a type 1, a learner, and not expected to show much fruit, yet. The type 2 Christian was mature, had been a Christian many years, had exercised, or was now exercising, a successful ministry, and showed the fruit of following Jesus faithfully, such as having his household, marriage, business, and finances in order, and was not sick too much. It is simple experience that both types are found in any group of Christians, and our lack of words to distinguish them is a good part of the cause of the world’s perception that Christians lack integrity – they are confusing the newly saved with the experienced and mature vessels.

There should be no talk of a priesthood of specially selected or empowered believers. The Scripture is clear: Christ is the high-priest (Hebrews), and anyone who follows Him is one member of a Kingdom of priests to serve our God (I Peter and Revelation). The priesthood is the priesthood of making Christ present on the earth, and the earth and its inhabitants are what and who is being ministered to.

Timothy and Titus cover the teachings as to how to choose a bishop, and note the word “ordained” in Greek here means “elected”, and implies a democratic vote, but note that in Acts 20:28, where the word is translated “overseer”, the election is

assumed to have been guided by the Holy Spirit. To understand the work of a bishop, note 1 Pe 20:25 makes Jesus the feeder and overseer of our souls, and Acts 1:20 implies that Judas was a bishop. We are surely not talking about an office, or even a ministry, but rather an oversight, a business (as I Tim. 3:1 uses the word, there translated “work”) of inspection. But of what, and why? What would make it so necessary for the bishop to be so qualified as I Tim. 3 mandates?

3. THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Scripture gives us a view of the normal Christian day – to – day life which is incompatible with that of the modern church members. First, basic Christian teaching was always based on the two kingdoms. This doctrine is believed by Christians today, but is almost never preached as such. Back then, preaching to non-Christians began with the statement that there are two, and only two kingdoms in which one may live while on earth: the kingdom the world and the kingdom of God. Originally, we were all placed into the garden of an imperfect world by a God who wished to use us as His emissaries to perfect the work He had created on earth. (In the ancient mind, the earth was the farthest point of existence from God, hence the most imperfect.) Mankind was unable to function in this job because of the confusion brought about by the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and so all our good intentions to bring about the best we could see inside ourselves were frustrated. God’s eventual response was to place His own Spirit into our hearts, so we had a voice inside and an empowerment to get us back on track. However, since sin was a free choice, God couldn’t force us to accept this empowerment. This is the source of the two kingdoms. A person living in the kingdom of the world was forever frustrated, and dealt with the frustration by spending his time and efforts in pastimes of the world – sin. A person in the kingdom of God spent his time in communion with the Spirit of God inside him, and thus was delivered from his bondage, and could now perform the work assigned him in the beginning, and, upon bodily death, he would enter heaven and be with God. The entrance to the kingdom could not be earned – it had been earned by the Messiah (Hebrew) –

Christ (Greek) – anointed (English) of God, and needed only to be accepted, upon which acceptance the anointing dwelt in the person and could be carried through him to the world and to others.

As stated, the world is so structured that the power and knowledge necessary to live in the kingdom of God can be infused by God upon acceptance (I John 2:27). Metaphysically, the reality is that the presence of Christ Himself lives inside the individual, joining His Spirit to the individual's, thus giving this power. The only difficulty is that the mind is still, in the early stages of acquiring this power, informed with the rules and procedures of the kingdom of earth, and hence must go through a period of change, which, with proper guidance, can take several years to get most of the way (although no one ever gets to the very end on earth), but frequently is not even halfway completed in the course of the person's remaining lifetime, if the guidance is lacking. The guidance comes from Scripture, other more mature people who have come farther in this journey, and experience working in the kingdom during the living of the Christian life. Further, as the progress in the mind (soul) occurs, even the physical body responds by becoming more immune to disease and trials of life, gaining more energy, etc. The reason for so few people getting farther in this journey of change is that the Scriptures are difficult to understand without help, and the nature of how Christianity is lived under the current system offers little in mature assistance and chances for experience. The current system of Christianity is based on the needs of an unlettered middle age, and tacitly assumes that no one ever gets past the stage of basic learning; personal salvation is thus the best that can be hoped for, and world – change is neglected.

It is not the topic of this writing to prove the statements in this discussion, and only a summary is presented here. It is assumed that this study is written for relatively mature Christians seeking the scriptural system of church life, and these matters are familiar in the reader's experience.

The purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection is and always has been to restore us to the glory we had before the fall and thus to have us complete the mission of perfecting the earth. (Consider Rom 5 and the entire notion of the thousand-year reign). All

power and knowledge to do that job is restored to us in Christ. However, the earth cannot accept the glory of God at one time. And "earth" here includes our bodies, and even our minds, until they are set free of earthly bondage. This is why the earth got dark after the creation of the light (Gen 1:5) and groans in agony waiting for us to get our act together enough to fix it. (Rom 8:21-22). The cycles of earthly time are simply earth's way of resting between its successive encounters with the glory of God. The purpose of our time on earth is not to "earn" heaven, but to take part in the cycles so we can fix ourselves and fix our part of the earth; heaven will come as the natural result of our no longer being able to interact with earth when our body fails, since the God who loves us enough to have gotten us this far could do nothing other than to draw us to His presence. And we fix ourselves not by our efforts, but by accepting what Jesus earned for us, and then by allowing our study, mutual association, and work experience to fix our minds.

The goal of the meetings of the Church on earth is thus to aid ourselves in study, promote our mutual association, and get us on track with our ministries.

The current structure fails to aid us in study, since, as any college teacher knows, lectures (the sermon) especially without later tests are the least effective method of teaching. This is why almost all Christians "church – hop" and why they all listen to Creflo and Joyce and whoever else on cable – if lecture is the only method available, at least let there be variety, and at least let it be something they agree with. Yet, pastors, who themselves have no standing in the church, often condemn the procedure of this random listening.

The current system fails to promote our mutual association, since Sunday church meetings are mass affairs, too big for the intimacy necessary. Some churches create artificial more intimate "home groups" of various types, but these cannot be effective unless they are assigned based on what the person needs to learn next in his walk, and they never are, because again, it is a pastor, not God or even an apostle or prophet, who sets up the membership in the meetings. Even the informal gatherings after services around the coffee pot are pretty valueless, unless a more

mature person has the authority to direct the conversation on godly topics, which almost never happens.

The current system not only fails to promote the individual ministries, it normally fails to acknowledge them. True, a few people are encouraged to go to Bible school, or become missionaries, but far more likely these people are being sent where the church board wants them, then where God would have them go. Also, most spontaneous ministries, such as Christian writers, bands, outreaches to children, etc., are condemned by church leadership on the grounds that they are “new, untested ideas” or that the person wishing to do them is not “mature enough”, or, worse yet, not under their “headship”. God’s will is that maturity is gained through experience, not the other way around.

The best method of teaching, according to all the research done by colleges, would be to allow people to try things and reflect together in a group led by a more mature person, why certain things succeeded or failed. And this, if implemented, would meet the other two needs as well, since it would promote mutual association, and encourage individual ministries. Yet, pastors who have been trained to teach from a pulpit as tradition dictates, persist in what any college teacher knows is the least effective method of teaching. “Churches” have lost most of two consecutive generations, but no will do more with the system than try a patch here and there. We have got to get back to the basic “club” of Christians organized around mutual association to encourage one another in ministry of perfecting the world, while still maintaining the ties of worldwide oneness. Would it surprise anyone that this is the system sanctioned by Scripture?

Luke 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. It goes on that Jesus reads, then preaches, in fact he prophesies, and they don’t like the message. But the question is, what kind of church allows people to stand up to volunteer to preach?

If you think it’s just because it was His home church, and they knew Him, look at Luke 4:33, Luke 13:10ff. and especially Luke 6:6. Jesus is allowed to preach and minister anywhere there is a synagogue with no questions asked. The others judge the ministry

and react as they see fit. Notice, it is not a church, it is a synagogue (the English adaptation of sunagoge. We have not forgotten the promise to get to that term).

The Jewish synagogue of today is nothing like what we are reading here. Lacking a temple, the Jewish religion is quite confused, and things have changed a lot. Jewish history tells us that since the time of the occupation of Israel, the synagogue had not changed much into Jesus’ time and even into the second century AD. They were just what we read about here – places where followers of Torah (the Law before Jesus came) ministered to each other on the sabbath, by sharing Scripture, and sharing their lives. In fact, Jewish writings say that whenever the synagogues stopped, it was because the nation of Israel wanted to get into sin, and thus was on its way to being judged. The synagogue was everyman’s appointment with the People of God – and they worked in Israel for over a thousand years.

Nowhere in Scripture are Christians ever told to go to church. But Heb. 10:25 tells us to sunagoge ourselves (the word is translated “assemble”) and what to do when we get there. James 2:2, using the translation “assembly”, assumes that is where the Body of Christ will be meeting. Paul gives explicit instructions what do when we get there: I Cor. 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

No rules on who or what. The only rule is that it be done to build up the others.

The word sunagoge is used a tremendous number of times. It means to “assemble”, and is, as such, an extremely general word. But that’s the point. As our general week – to –week meetings, we are not to go to church; we are not to attend services; we are not to participate in liturgies, we are just supposed to get together to build each other up. No big deal; no ordination; no special training; just Jesus being himself in each one of us. That’s where He is; that’s where we should be, and that is where the power is. The famous Mat. 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say unto you, That if

two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. “Gathered together” is the sunagoge word.

By doing, we learn. Working together to build each other up is our mutual association. And our ministries grow as we help each other. And, by seeing God move dynamically in each other’s lives, we gain respect for each other, and experience of the full range of what His power can produce in our lives and in the world. The exact system we need according to the best educational research, is the exact system contained in Scripture.

4. CONCERNS

Immediately, thousands of questions leap to the forefront of the mind formally trained in divinity.

How does a system of such small, free groups maintain the wider view of a worldwide body? The wandering apostles for one. Elected overseers for another. The three pilgrimage feasts for another (on which I have written two other books with the details).

What about doctrinal authenticity? Come on now! There are almost 24,000 denominations (one a month since Jesus rose), and they all disagree with each other on some point that they each consider important. How could any other system be any worse? Actually, Scripture teaches that (I Cor. 11:19, Matt. 18:7) disagreements and even scandals are normal, though regrettable, but the only test of a true spirit is that which proclaims that Christ is present among us in our flesh. (Against this interpretation of 2John 1:7, most denominations are guilty, for their teaching is that Jesus comes in their DOCTRINE.) Actually, without disagreements, we would all be in the same place. How could we “fill the earth” if our perceptions were all in the same place? More to the point, there is basic doctrine and advanced doctrine, and most of the Christian life is about the advanced. (Heb. 5-6). That 2John 2:7 offer such a simple test, essentially doctrine free, is proof of how unimportant doctrine beyond the fundamentals of Jesus is to Scripture. As stated above, God is relationship, not reason. Most doctrine and theology is just how we report, in our

limited human language, (which is why we disagree in the first place) the unlimited experience of God. Besides, Scripture speaks of the first three offices in the church (apostle, prophet, teacher) as having false counterparts (false apostles, false prophets, and false teachers); yet there is no word for false workers. The obvious reason is that by their fruits you will know them. False workers have false works, which would be instantly recognized and not followed. Any teacher knows mistakes are a normal part of learning. Churches are only afraid of disagreements because they have no fruit to prove themselves by.

Who gets the money? Find the word “tithe” in the New Testament. If you can, it refers to the Old. That was the tax system then. We are above the Law, and live by the commands of the Spirit written in our hearts. The Kingdom of God gets the money, wherever we find it: our ministry, each other’s ministry, wherever. There’s an old joke about the Jewish rabbi deciding how much to tithe from his collection: He throws the money up in the air towards heaven, and assumes that whatever comes back down, God does not want, so that is what the rabbi keeps. The reason the money comes back down, is all the money is God’s; He gives it to us to spend in His name, on His business – including keeping ourselves alive and at peace, so we can pray and minister.

With no pastors, who baptizes? Anybody. Whenever it is wanted. A case can be made that the service of water baptism is unnecessary, so long as the individual converting get “clean” from his old life. This is not the place to summarize the entire teaching. But I Cor. 1:17 is clear that baptizing has nothing to do with station or anointing.

Who marries people? They marry each other. Not anywhere in Scripture is a wedding ever performed or prescribed to be performed by any authority. No prophet, judge, king, priest, apostle, bishop, elder, or anyone else. The current system is a means of control exercised by the Catholic church as the legal heirs of the Roman Empire (for such is their claim). The Bible is compatible with many views of marriage, and many processes of weddings. The only rule is that the two people must agree to live together for life, and the decision should be based on the

reciprocating fulfillment experienced by Adam when he first met Eve. Again, this is not the place for all the details.

The issue of women in the church can be treated here as well. Most Church members are confused by the fact that while in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28) and thus it was from the beginning (Matt. 19:4, Gen. 1:27), yet women are not permitted to speak in the church (I Cor. 14 and other places). The solution is simple. The Hebrew and English words for “woman” both derive from the word for “man”. In these languages, a woman is the complement of the man (and he of her). But in Greek, the words are very different. The standard Greek word for woman is used both in the Bible and in the classical Greek literature to indicate a woman acting as a sexual companion to a man. For example, three “women” get up early; three “women” go to the tomb, three “women” see the stone, but as soon as they believe Jesus is risen, the word “women” never occurs again. “They” run and “they” tell the disciples, etc. Likewise, a “woman” in a ministry is never called a “woman”. She is called a prophetess, deaconess, apostleless, etc., indicating that she is the complement to a man of the same anointing. When Paul defends his right to a wife (I Cor. 9:5), he is forced to call her a “sister as a wife”, since the Greek word “wife” used alone is the same as “woman”, and hence would deny her ability to do anything except to distract the apostle sexually. What the Scripture condemns is that a “woman who is acting as a sexual companion to her husband” have any speaking rights in the church. And that is consistent with the nature of church as “people who have been called out”. There is a classic Greek philosophical text about two philosophers coming out of their meeting place, and the wife of one has just had a make-over. She accosts her husband and tries to persuade him to discuss her physical beauty. He responds very much like Paul in I Tim. 2:9. One can only wonder about the amount of money that pastor’s wives traditionally spend on such treatments, and then stand up to lead praise and worship.

What about the other sacraments (as they are called in some churches)? One at a time:

Confirmation is praying over kids as they grow up. Baptism in the Spirit is far more important, because it really works, in a

provable fashion. But no one ever questions that we can claim that for ourselves, without outside help.

Penance (confession) is just James 5:16 with an authority complex. We all bind and loose every day by how we use our faith for what we choose to affirm in our brothers.

Ordination is nothing, since it gives no standing in the church. Ordination comes from the anointing inside, and needs no service to bless it, and give it a name and a reason to be puffed up.

Praying over the sick is a command to the elders. (James 5:14) But anyone who feels like he wants to try should respond. After all, today’s elders were all young once, too.

Praying over the dying is only necessary if a person has not been built up in life. (Rev. 14:13 and Ps. 115:16).

That leaves the Eucharist, which is mandated for the assembly, and so needs some study here. The clearest understanding seems to follow from I Cor. 11: 23-29 as enlarged on by the Didache. The word “remembrance” is not the Greek word that means “so you will remember”. It means “because you remember”. The Eucharist is not an earthly meal (verse 20-21) but a foretaste and shadow of the eternal final now – and – forever heavenly celebration (the panegyra. That word was not forgotten either.), which is why it is a yardstick against which one may measure his unworthiness (verse 29), and note, that the penalty occurs whether we know about it or not.

To understand the meaning, note that it is completion of passover. Each common heavenly meal is part of a new passover – a new cycle that sets us a little freer from earthly bondage, puts us into a new desert, with a new promised land waiting, and only God to guide us. The cycle is the same as the cycle that gives us the pilgrimage feasts and lets us understand the earth’s groaning in agony. Thus the meal is the consuming of heavenly food, symbolized by earthly, which prepares us for our journey of the next cycle of sharing the glory of God with a waiting world.

The bread is the symbol of the grains scattered all over the earth. Passover is the first grain harvest. God made the seed. Humans planted it. God made it grow. Humans harvested it, gathering it from the hillsides. God inspired bread. Humans kneaded it. God made it rise, though the Israelites had to leave

Egypt before it had risen. Heat baked it. And it is served to His children. God made the seed of His glory. We consented to being the ground in which it was planted. God made it grow. We harvest it in each other, gathering from the entire world, which we have been told to fill. God inspires us to join ourselves together, being ground, polished, and mixed as we go, kneading ourselves into a meal for a starving world. The Spirit blows the wind that raises the dough, although we leave for our journey before it is risen. The purifying fire bakes it. And it is served to a starving world.

Wine is the “Vine of David” in the Didache. For Noah, wine was the blood of the Nephalim. He planted the vine to collect their wisdom and power, and his drunkenness followed. (This is the Greek legend.) The “Blood of the Lamb” is, as it was for Abel, the first fruit, found acceptable to God. It was the acknowledgement of God’s dream for His people (“Abel” means “dream”). Because they trusted Him, the wine of joy became the Blood of a Covenant, a legal written document (the Torah) of trust. But the Vine of David is so much better. Hebrew has two words that mean “beloved”. One is derived from “love”, as in English. The other is derived from “passion”; the word “beloved” in the Song of all Songs, is “be-passioned”. The word for passion in Hebrew is “David”. The “Vine of David” is the joy he felt dancing before the Lord. It is the overflow that commissioned the most successful songwriter of all time. It is the symbol of a new covenant written in hearts and sealed with the very presence of the passionate love of God as first fruit.

Verse by verse: In 23, the word “delivered” used by Paul of his teaching on the Eucharist, matches the word “betrayed”. This is not about remembering the death of Jesus, but remembering His gift to us. It happens at night, to announce that a new day is coming, once the darkness has passed. (It could be at eve, evening, or eventide, or even omitted.)

In verse 24, the word “break”, is used only of bread, except here. Greek has several other words that mean “break”. In fact, common sense says that wine cannot be “broken” “in the same manner”. This word means to “separate to share”, and using it of Jesus’ body tells us that the new day will be when He is shared with all of us, which is why the church exists, and the fact that

defines its mission. That’s also why He first “gives thanks”, as He did when He made the few loaves feed all who were hungry. The sheer size of the task can only be done by God, if a world of participants have already thankfully acknowledged it done.

Verse 25, we are not ready to journey together until we have the food for the journey – Jesus in each other, so He waits until after He has supped.

Verse 26, you “show the Lord’s death” – and thus His partitioning, to the world. That is the purpose of the presence of Christ, the Church, the gatherings, and the Eucharist. The word Eucharist, in fact, means to give thanks for what Christ is doing in us. His death is His breaking – His partitioning into each of us, as the bread for the thousands was partitioned.

5. THE OPERATION OF THE CHURCH

The situation described in the Scriptures can operate under almost any circumstances. Loose, informal gatherings, only with lists of overseers and elders for security, have operated for centuries under repressive governments and persecutions. In fact, the Church has been operating for sometime now. Most young people have been royally turned off by the churches, and with good reason. A few have begun working together in neighborhoods, or as the result of meeting at jobs or school, or Internet chat rooms. A handful of people, who accept the challenge of following an apostolic call or prophetic revelation need no allegiance to a recognized name, denomination or 503c corporation. God can raise up pastors, teachers, apostles and prophets from the stones. Christian marriages can take place without official sanction of a pastor. And anyone can celebrate the Eucharist and baptize. Charles Finney defined religion as whatever men do to respond to God. But the Church is what God is doing to set men free, and thus is the direct opposite of religion, and its systems. As literate, educated people begin to search the Scriptures with the speed of computer Bibles, now available for free on the Internet, the difficulties of the original languages can be overcome while God’s people are still young enough to do something with the understanding. The now worldwide recognition of the reality of the Baptism in the Spirit has made the acceptability of miracles

and hearing the voice of God much greater than even a generation ago. The more small handfuls of believers work together, the more they will be opened to the grace of God, and the more they will grow, and the greater will be their accomplishments. With or without the acceptance of parents, pastors, or traditional churches, THE Church can only get better and stronger. Meeting in homes, hotel rooms, or backrooms of restaurants, the edifying, the mutual bearing of burdens, and the eventual rebuilding of the earth will continue. The spots and wrinkles in the Bride will be worked out, and the physical return of Jesus in glory will be hastened. The small beginnings of a few books in soldiers' saddlebags have become a mighty torrent of revelation and miracles virtually in plain sight, and yet invisible to all but those who will see.

The only requirement is that those wishing to participate must renew their terminology, for the corruptions of language that make the system of churches operate have blocked the development of the Church for centuries. If this happens, the door will be open to as many as wish to be part of the Kingdom of God instead of the kingdom of religion constructed in God's name. The Church will be seen as the un-Church, but the fruit will be in its midst.

And the ones who don't wish to participate will never even know it's happening. At least until Jesus meets them and tells them.