



The Church as presented in Scripture

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1. The Church

The large number of divisions in Christendom today is nearly uncountable. With all these divisions, the honest seeker of the truth of Christ, is bounced around like a rubber ball as he listens to all the various doctrines. This booklet will bring to light what God has created and is still building upon, concerning the Church.

Some of the things written in the first chapter may seem silly or even untrue. However, the things written are believed and followed by many in today's churches. The churches, through these various teachings, have become humanist organizations without the understanding of God's purposes, all the while claiming a high spiritual position for themselves.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: — For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 3:1; 4:3-4).

God's answer to this deterioration is His Word, which gives us truth, wisdom, and understanding. A believer is

able (if he will), to receive these characteristics from the Spirit of God into his inner man (Ephesians 3:16). They will redirect any believer to the Jesus presented in Scripture, not the Jesus many have made for themselves to follow (2 Corinthians 11:4).

“Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7).

“Behold You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom” (Psalms 51:6).

Truth heard, seen, and not followed, is truth not known and of little or no value to the hearer. Faith in Christ Jesus is truth seen and followed, which leads to the knowledge of God in the inward man (2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:11-16). Intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus is the end result of this narrow path (1 Corinthians 1:9).

In today's churches, there are many diverse views, teachings and practices. Some of these doctrines have come from centuries past, others are relatively new. Many of these views are not from the Spirit of God. Some come from a time when Christians were persecuted

by the Roman Catholic Church. They embraced teaching from the reformers, during the reformation period, that freed them from the darkness and bondage of Catholicism. Some of the Scriptural truths taught by the apostles, were not recovered by the reformers during, the Reformation. The errors found in the Reformation churches are still being taught today.

Many new man made sects have been started since that time, some with much zeal, while others are built on their spiritual experiences. Some church people are following leaders who have made a great impact on them resulting in a spiritual awakening, and yet are incomplete as far as what God has established as His Church. The Church which God has founded, will be discussed in later chapters. First we will look at some principals and doctrines commonly used by man as a foundation upon which to build a church.

Our church is more right than other churches

The saying used in this persuasion is, “We only speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent.” The supposed superiority of this doctrine over

the doctrines of other churches, creates a veiled self righteousness that undermines the grace of God. This doctrine is espoused to other churches as a place of superiority with God.

A local public newspaper reserved a religious page, for local churches to utilize. A church of this persuasion (“we speak only where the Bible speaks”) advertized “the truth of their denomination” on this page. Meanwhile, a large Pentecostal church of a different persuasion took out advertising on the same page and began arguing with the first church in the newspaper. This went on every week for some time. The thought of these two denominations was that their church was more right than the other church. This public disgrace answers to the word of the Lord, “*For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise*” (2 Corinthians 10:12). And again, “*But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*” (Galatians 5:15).

The doctrines in our church come from a place of higher knowledge

We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. We have a higher understanding than most, because we have extraordinary revelation that Scripture is also inspired culture. We believe that water baptism, communion, the priesthood of all believers, and headship of men over their family, was part of the culture in the day it was written. We believe the prohibitions written in Scripture against homosexuality, women teaching men from an authoritative position, women ordained to the clergy, homosexual clergy, sectarianism and other such prohibitions, were for the culture in the day in which they were written. The hierarchy in our denomination has put out booklets to show this is true. Our doctrine sets us free from past cultural prohibitions recorded in inspired Scripture, we are no longer under these God given prohibitions.

Our denomination was started by a highly spiritual person

Our church has a heritage that goes back many centuries. We have an honorable name among all the

churches. The rightness of our doctrine and practice are seen in the antiquity of our denomination. Our traditions are ingrained in our church. Therefore we are not open to any other teaching or spiritual truth. We are unchangeable in following our church.

The televangelists on television are my church

My friends and I hear teachings on TV that you do not hear in the local church. Those teachers are so sincere, and so charismatic. They teach new revelation and teachings that have never been taught before. Knowing and following these new revelations, has put me into a higher spiritual place.

For example, my favorite clergywoman says Jesus went to hell after He died, and that He had to be born again to get out of hell. I feel so good to know that Jesus is no different than us. She has insight into spiritual revelation that you almost never hear anyplace else.

These televangelists are so bold, they say that I am a god, and as a god, I can speak anything into existence. This is amazing; I have been raised up to great heights by their teaching. I am no longer just a person, I am a god. I can speak money or whatever I want into my life.

I have also learned that there are generational spirits. That is, any sin or tendency to sin is not my fault or responsibility. It is the fault of my parents, my grandparents, and my great grandparents. This has taken all the burdens of my actions with all their bad results, and put them where they belong, on the generations before me.

I send the televangelists my money, because if I get sick they promise to send me a handkerchief that will heal me.

These prophets are so wonderful. I am just ecstatic over what they have taught and done for me.

Our church has a clergyman who is so amazing that he is mesmerizing

The talks our clergyman gives on Sunday mornings makes me feel so good. This oneness I have with him has brought me to the point that I feel I would believe whatever he says. He never talks about those things that are so offensive like, crucifixion sacrificing a person, blood needing to be spilled for sin, or death, and taking up a cross and living a life after those things. After all, I am

part of the laity and I don't need to know about those things.

Our clergyman is careful not to say anything that does not make me feel good; those kinds of things have nothing to do with our church life. Our clergyman relates how Jesus always did everything to make people feel good, and I completely trust him and his ministry. He is a wonderful person and a true shepherd of our denomination.

We have the most wonderful programs in our church

Our church is on the move and is on the cutting edge of everything God is doing today. We have an activity group, class, or program to fit everyone. If you are a negative person, we will fit you into one of our programs to fulfill **our needs**.

We also follow the Bible as long as it does not make anyone uncomfortable, we know about people who do make church people uncomfortable; we call them "unkind heresy hunters." We do not believe in any kind of separate roles for men and women, we are an equal opportunity employer. God could not have meant some

of the things written in the New Testament, because if He did, that would undermine the whole foundation of our church and our religion. Our church fully embraces the doctrine of diversity, you cannot get anymore into God's will than that. We are all nice people doing God's will.

If you want to do God's will, come and join us and we will teach you all about religion.

In our church, we have all been specially baptized by the Holy Spirit

In our church we speak in tongues, and do other things that show we are in the supernatural. If anyone else comes into our church who does not speak in tongues, we know they do not have the Holy Spirit. Our spiritual experiences prove that we are the apple of God's eye. After all, look at the day of Pentecost, all spoke in tongues to become Christians.

When someone shows us something different from the Bible than what we are familiar with, we know they are wrong because our church goes back over 100 years with these experiences. Our personal experiences are true and when other people insist the Bible is where truth alone is

found we just smile, because our experiences are real. Besides, nobody can be sure their understanding of the Bible is right.

When people tell us that men have done mighty works of God by faith alone, without our spiritual experiences, in these days and in ages past, we just smile. We know by our experiences that these people don't understand and they are attacking our religion. Our experiences tell us that some of the Bible is cultural, so to use the Bible to undermine our church and our religion is something we will never accept.

We are above what they are saying, and some of the New Testament does not apply to us. Anything else that does not support our experiences and our religion, we reject. We use the Bible and the woman who started our denomination, to back up our experiences.

We do not allow anyone in our church who has been involved in a divorce and remarriage

In our church we believe in holiness because the Bible says, "...without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). We also know that we are to "...be

perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). We believe that any kind of divorce is always wrong, and remarriage is always sin. If anyone remarries after a divorce, that person is living in adultery for the rest of his or her life. We do not take communion with these kind of people. If you are one of these, you are not welcome in OUR CHURCH.

Recently, a woman who said she has been an L.D.S. member (Mormon) for 18 years was asked a question. She was asked if she knew that Mormonism practiced polygamy from it’s beginning. She was horrified at the question. She said she did not believe this because it was untrue and was false information about her church. (Her church had never told her the truth about Mormon history).

Today, many church people are like this woman. They trust their church leaders, their hierarchy, or their clergy.

The churches and the people who attend them are very serious about their individual doctrines and their religious pursuits. These are real people, and in high numbers, who assume they are following truth by following their church and their spiritual experiences.

Most have been numbed to the fact that they are called to follow only Jesus Christ and His word - without their church. These are **not** one and the same as many people think.

A few errors in the religion of man have been pointed out. The question a person who seeks only the Spirit of Christ and truth should ask is this: **What is the mind of the Lord for His people?** We will attempt to answer this question in the following chapters.

Here are some questions for the reader to ponder.

1. Which church would the Apostle Paul meet with if he were here today?
2. What denomination, sect, or independent group would the Apostle Paul, or any of the apostles, join as the church of their choice, if they were among us today?
3. Which church would they be baptized in?
4. Which church would ordain them into their clergy or hierarchy?
5. Would the apostles ask for a guaranteed salary?

6. In which church would they speak in tongues to show their support?
7. Would they support all of the churches or none of them?
8. Would they rebuke the churches with the Scriptures the Holy Spirit directed them to write, concerning the errors in the early Church that are still being practiced today?
9. Are you predestined to follow your church or the denomination of your choice?
10. Or are you predestined to be “in Christ” to follow Christ as revealed in Scripture?

2. Who is a Christian?

Before the subject of the church is presented, the question of what or who a Christian is must be addressed. God has designed the Church only for those who are born of the Spirit of God (John 1:12-13). Those not born of God may be numerous in today's churches, but have no part in the kingdom of Christ, "*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him*" (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Scripture is exact in showing us the line between a Christian and one who is not a Christian. This is shown in the book of Romans, "*But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you, now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His*" (Romans 8:9). These Scriptures also tell us the same truth, 1 Corinthians 6:19; Colossians 1:27, and 1 John 4:13. As seen here, Scripture teaches us that every Christian is born of the Spirit of God (John 1:12-13), and the Holy Spirit dwells in him.

A person may have had spiritual experiences, been ordained in their church, or may even be in a church leadership position, but if he is not indwelt of the Spirit of God, he is not a Christian.

How can we know if a person is indwelt by God's Spirit? Scripture gives us the answer. Jesus told the Jews that, "*He who is of God hears God's words; Therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God*" (John 8:47).

In contrast to those who do not have an ear to hear, are those who do hear and are born of God's Spirit. Jesus tells us who they are, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*" (John 10:27). Two different directions are seen regarding hearing. There are those who do not hear and fail to respond to Scripture. They have no desire to follow the Chief Shepherd. Then there are those who do hear, and they respond and follow the Chief Shepherd's voice, the Word of God (John 1:1, 14).

The Apostle John tells us the same truth. Everyone who knows God, hears the apostles of Christ. "*We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error*" (1 John 4:6). The love of God is a test; those born of God respond to His love, and will love the brethren (1 John 4:7). We are also instructed

that His commandments (words) are not grievous to those who follow Him (1 John 5:2-3); like the disciples, they keep the word of God (John 17:6). We are further told that the one born of God overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). The issue before the reader is, do I follow the teachings of a church or do I follow the Chief Shepherd's words as taught by the apostles, in the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Many in the churches would say they believe all of these Scriptures. However, when church people are shown that the world has taken over the professing church, resistance to the Spirit of God arises among those not following God's Spirit. Some of the results of Christ not being the churches foundation are: believer and unbeliever alike are church leaders and are full participants in the professing church; unbelievers break bread as if they were believers; women are ordained to the clergy; homosexuals are appointed to the clergy; rock music is part of worship; and the word of God is taught as culture. Additionally, the Law of Moses is used as church structure, and many other such attacks from the humanistic philosophy of men and the enemy, control the professing church.

We will go on to see what God has established for His Church.

3. God has made only one body of believers

“So we, being many are one body in Christ, and individual members of one another” (Romans 12:5).

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4-5).

Jesus prayed that all who belong to Him would live in the same oneness that Jesus had with His Father (John 17:11). When the Spirit was given at Pentecost, this oneness became a reality for all who are indwelt of the Holy Spirit. The admonishment to believers of ages past and present is to keep this oneness, the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3).

This oneness is not accomplished by attending a church, or by the efforts of an individual. It is by faith in Christ alone that the unity of the Spirit is entered into and kept. Any add-ons of man (sectarianism, denominationalism, or independency), brought into the body of Christ, grieve the Spirit, and lay the foundation for

divisions in the body. Scripture has shown us there is only one foundation for oneness, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Most church people would say, we believe Jesus Christ is the foundation. However, any church person who may desire to learn of Christ will usually enter into their sectarian church to do so. If that person is converted, already being a part of that sect, he is already programmed to accept practices contrary to Scripture, sectarianism.

In contrast to Satan's and man's ways is God's truth and purposes in Christ Jesus. Jesus prayed to His Father for those that belong to Him, "*that they may be one as We are*" (John 17:11).

How can this be done today in view of the fact that almost every church is a part of the division of the body of Christ? The Apostle John gives the word of God concerning Jesus Christ, "*Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning*" (1 John 2:24).

Jesus Christ and His body are one, Jesus Christ and the divisions of Christendom are not one. This is seen with the carnal and defiling divisions that started in the

Corinthian Assembly (1 Corinthians 1:10-15; 3:1-4). This defiling of the temple of God, the Church of God (Ephesians 2:19-22), has consequences. *“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are”* (1 Corinthians 3:17).

God has sent His Son into the world, so that all of His own may live in His love, grace, truth, righteousness, peace and joy (Romans 14:17). For a believer to walk in these spiritual attributes, faith in the whole counsel of God is necessary (Acts 20:27). A question most people would have is, how can I do this today, since I am just a church member, not a leader?

First John 2:24 has given us the answer to this dilemma. *“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. — These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you”* (1 John 2:24, 26). We must gather to and abide in, the Jesus which we heard from the beginning. In other words go back to the beginning and gather unto the Lord Jesus as

His body, and abide in the unity that the Spirit has created in the Son. Every believer has been called into this fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Seek the Lord and those saints who gather and meet unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

4. Priests unto God

*“And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us *kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”*
(Revelation 1:5-6). (*NU and M text read kingdom, or kingdom priests). (*NU-Text is Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies text of the Greek New Testament, M-Text is the majority Text of the Greek New Testament).

As can be seen in these verses, everyone who is **in Christ** has been made a priest of God, unto God. This God given priesthood is not a position or a service unto a denomination, the clergy, a church or its church by-laws. God has designated it only for His kingdom, the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13).

A person who functions as a priest unto God, looks to serve only the interests of Christ. Those interests are found in the Doctrine of Christ. God makes clear through the following Scripture that all who outwardly profess to be of Christ but do not believe or follow the foundation of Christ are not his own. *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son (2 John 9).* The New Testament epistles give us the Doctrine of Christ, as directed by revelation of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 1:12) through the apostles, *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)*

. To reject the apostles’ teaching is to reject Jesus Christ (Luke 10:16). The Doctrine of Christ reveals the deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures. It does not include setting aside the apostles’ teaching at the will of man, or a church doctrine that resists the apostles’ teachings.

The Apostle Peter instructs believers that they are a Holy Priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). The word ‘holy’ means sanctified, or set apart. The position of a believer being set apart is found in the completed work of Christ as seen in this Scripture, *“For we are His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10 JND). The believer is told to live and walk in this separation. This separation unto God cannot be practiced without the believer walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16). It must be emphasized that this priesthood is not unto a person’s church. It is for “spiritual sacrifices” (the work of Christ) that are acceptable unto God.

Peter also shows us that those in Christ are a chosen generation, a Royal Priesthood, a holy nation and a special people (1 Peter 2:9). A “chosen generation” means, a race of people unlimited as to time. The meaning of a “Royal Priesthood” is given to us in the revelation that the Apostle John received; they are “Kingdom Priests” who reign with Christ in His kingdom. In the Church Age, it is a spiritual kingdom, and in the

Millennium, a physical kingdom. A “special people” depicts His people; they are saints of God who live and walk in the light of Christ.

Saints of God belong only to Christ for His service, not to the religious organizations that men have built.

Christians are eternally His and are only for the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. What is the Church

“... I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Church was in the mind of God from ages past. *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son...”* (Galatians 4:4). Christ, coming into this world, became the fulfillment of this mystery, the Church. This mystery was unknown in ages past (Ephesians 3:5). Christ Jesus is the wisdom of God from eternity past, revealed in and to the Church (Ephesians 3:9-11).

The Church consists of all persons who have been baptized by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ

(1 Corinthians 12:13). Those persons who make up the Church are His body, bones, and flesh (Ephesians 5:30). Individually, they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Corporately, they are the temple of God, the Church and the dwelling place of His Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19-22).

The Church which the Spirit of God is building is built on the unity of His Spirit (Ephesians 4:3-6). The Spirit has revealed it is not sectarianism (denominational or independent) (1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-4; 12:25). It is not built on divisiveness (Titus 3:10), nor on hierarchy or clergy (Matthew 23:8; 3 John 9-10).

The Church which God is building is built by His Spirit through the gifts he has given to the Church. These gifts are found in Ephesians 4:11, and are given to men in whom God has gifted in order to: perfect the saints; equip the saints for the work of the ministry, and edify the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

The Church is God's revelation to the world, manifesting Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 4:9; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 John 4:9-10, 14). The Church, which the Holy Spirit is building, is the wisdom of

God (1 Corinthians 1:30) and reveals divine truth, God's redemption to all men (John 3:16).

6. The path of irrefutable truth, the Scriptures

“Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth” (John 17:17). (Sanctify, means to set apart).

When Jesus stood in the judgment hall before Pilate, He told him He came into the world to bear witness to the truth. *“Pilate said to Him, what is truth...?”* (John 18:38). Pilate's question is asked today and has been asked in all ages. Needless to say, men look for truth in carnal and material form. Jesus, who stood before Pilate, was the Truth incarnate, (truth in human form). Jesus was pure truth and light, He represented His father perfectly (John 14:9). However, every heart that does not seek or receive truth or light, will not receive Him because they cannot comprehend it (John 1:4).

For those who do receive truth, God has sent His Son into the world; He is the very Word of God (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13). Jesus told the Jews, *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me”* (John 5:39).

Again He said to them, “*For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me*” (John 5:46). The Scriptures are God’s revelation of truth; Jesus Christ was the embodiment of them (John 1:14). When Jesus walked on the earth, He was God’s Word (in human form) for all men to see (John 1:1; 14:9). The Scriptures are God’s word in physical form (Deuteronomy 4:2; 8:3; 12:32; Matthew 4:4; Galatians 1:6-9, 12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). Only in the Scriptures, is the mind of God shown to man (Romans 9:4; 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Scriptures are the instrument the Holy Spirit is using to build the Church of God (Acts 2:22-41; 1 Timothy 3:15). The gospel, written in Scripture, is the revelation of God’s salvation to all who will receive it (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The gospel by which all men will be judged is recorded in Scripture (Romans 2:16).

Scripture is God’s divine method of giving the world truth and the revelation of Himself. For the Christian, the Scriptures are life and hope. The riches of the Kingdom of God are found only in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-48).

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”
(Romans 15:4).

Is all Scripture for today?

“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

“Now these things, brethren, I have transferred, in their application, to myself and Apollos, for your sakes, that ye may learn in us the [lesson of] not [letting your thoughts go] above what is written, that ye may not be puffed up one for [such a] one against another” (1 Corinthians 4:6 JND).

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The spiritual condition of the Church is deteriorating in these last days (our day) to which the Holy Spirit

prophesied (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The attack upon the Holy Scriptures is evident in just about all the divisions of Christendom. Corruption in the Church has always existed, right from the beginning. However, today it is being attacked through the rejection of the Scripture in the professing church. This is done in many ways, some quite subtle and others in blatant and open rejection.

For example today, in what is called the Emerging Church Movement, with multitudes following it, the statements of some of its leaders proclaim outright rejection of the divine inspiration of Scripture. One of the most well known leaders has stated his position as a leader of this movement.

“I let go the notion that the Bible is a divine product. I learned that it is a human cultural product of two ancient communities, biblical Israel and early Christianity... I realize that whatever ‘divine revelation and inspiration’ of the Bible meant (if they meant anything), they did not mean that the Bible was a divine product with divine authority” Marcus Borg (quoted from the Berean Call, September 2007).

The Traditional Church is unmoved by the many truths shown to Christians in Scripture; desiring instead to hang on to partial truths and the works of man's philosophy. The Evangelical movement, with much influence coming from Pentecostalism, has rejected much in the Scripture by calling it culture, then substituting a works doctrine in its place. This rejection of truth, revealed in Scripture, has brought church people to follow and believe Charismatic leaders instead of Scripture, no matter what kind of heresy they teach and preach.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:2, the Holy Spirit has taught believers that the truths given to the church at Corinth are for all Christians everywhere in every place. In this epistle, the Holy Spirit gives instructions on many subjects. These truths which are revealed by the Spirit, tell us that they, in their entirety, are the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). Many of these commandments are rejected by the present day professing church. Second Peter 2 and 3, prophesy of the professing church falling away in the last days, because of the rejection of Scripture as God's ground of truth for His Church. The Laodicean Church and its prophesied

position of the last days is being brought to light where all can see its fulfillment (Revelation 3:14-22).

7. God has set the foundation and purpose for the Church to come together

“For where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them”
(Matthew 18:20 JND).

The foundation

Jesus made it clear to His disciples and to all who would follow Him, through words He would give them (John 17:20), that He would be in the midst of those who honor His word (John 14:21). Scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit has given believers one ground of meeting, and only one, **unto the Lord Jesus alone** *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

In contrast to gathering unto Jesus alone, divisions were developing in Corinth. The Holy Spirit gave instructions, through the Apostle Paul, to correct and put away the divisions (sects, denominationalism, independence) that were developing in Corinth

(1 Corinthians 1:10-15). Believers are instructed in the first 4 chapters of 1 Corinthians to put away all grounds of gathering together except unto Jesus Christ. These instructions teach us that adding anything to the name of Jesus Christ is not from the Spirit of God.

These carnal add-ons that church people have built their church upon, have no part or lot in the kingdom of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Romans 8:6). It is also evident that these divisions are offensive to the work of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:2), and grieve the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30).

We are further told these divisions defile an assembly of God's people, the Church, which is the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:17). Those who are involved in building carnal organizations will have their works burnt up on the day of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The Assembly of God, the Church, is the dwelling place of God, and is not to be changed or trifled with by man (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Holy Spirit cannot build the Church of God, or reveal Christ (John 16:12-15), in fullness or in freedom, where carnality is being introduced and followed.

In Galatians 5:20, the Greek word *eris*, in John Nelson Darby's "New Translation" is translated "schools of opinion." The word is translated "variances" in the KJV. We are instructed that those who practice "variances" or "schools of opinion" will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21).

The purpose of gathering

We learn God's purpose for believers, when they come together, in Acts 2:42. We are shown that the Church is built on 4 foundations. "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42).

Apostles' Doctrine: The divine teachings given to the apostles, now preserved in the New Testament.

Fellowship: Those with new life in Christ, meet and fellowship with one another in the Lord Jesus. It is a place of separation from the world and gathering unto God in spiritual communion.

Breaking of Bread: This is a time for an assembly of Christians to gather around the Lord Jesus, to remember Him in His death; through the breaking of the bread and

the partaking of the cup. It is the worship Jesus directed those who belong to Him to practice (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The Church, in the beginning, practiced this every Lord's Day, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Prayers: The Church prayed in dependence upon God. It is the place of submission to and reliance upon, the Holy Spirit, to lead and direct an assembly. We ask the Father that the purposes of His kingdom be fulfilled, in leading the work of the ministry, fulfilling the needs of the saints, and answering other prayers submitted to Him.

Every one of these 4 foundations is vital to give place for the Holy Spirit to bring life into an assembly. Unless the Holy Spirit gives life to an assembly, the world, the flesh, and the devil will surely rule.

The purposes of God for His Church have not changed (Romans 8:6, 14; 11:29; Hebrews 13:7-8). The truths that brought spiritual life to the Church in the first century, still bring life to any assembly that will, in faith, follow Christ.

Christ, having full fellowship with His people, is the heart of God for the churches. **Not one person has**

ever been called by God to join a church and become a member, but every Christian has been called into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). This fellowship leads to full and complete liberty to follow every word of God (Matthew 4:4). On a corporate level, it is the same. Fellowship with the Lord Jesus brings a person and an assembly into righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

Joy is the fruit of faith, individually or corporately, in an assembly (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 John 1:4; 2 John 12; 3 John 4). An assembly following Christ in truth, will have liberty in the Spirit with joy, and in joy, much fruit will be produced. The Father is glorified in the fruit produced whether in a believer walking in faith or an assembly abiding in His word (John 15:7-8; Revelation 3:8-10).

8. The liberty of the Spirit

“But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And don’t be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ”
(Matthew 23:8).

Who is in charge?

Scripture teaches that true liberty can only be entered into by faith in what God has told us. This liberty that the Holy Spirit brings into an assembly is not according to the world's culture (feminism, or fairness in diversity), philosophy, man's religious ideas, clergy/laity system, traditions, or other religious spirits. Liberty of the Spirit is the grace of God which is manifested and built upon, the truth in Christ. "...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). This liberty gives each believer freedom to exercise faith in the assembly as the Spirit leads (1 Corinthians 12:11; 14:26). This liberty is practiced in the assembly within God's governmental order as taught to us in the epistles.

Liberty in the assembly

All believers have been given a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). The faith that a believer has, when exercised, will bring forth his gift. For some believers it will be seen by all in a short time, for others it will be a longer period of time (Romans 12:4-8). However, we can safely say that no one has been given the gift of pew setting.

When Christ is leading His assembly, the priesthood of every believer finds freedom to exercise faith without the permission of men. In worship, the Father is seeking spirit and truth worshippers (John 4:23). Those who walk in faith to the truth in Christ, will have great desire to worship the Father and the Son. Jesus gave His Church only one form of corporate worship, spirit and truth worship. It is practiced in the **Breaking of the Bread** and drinking of **the Cup** as Jesus gave to His apostles (Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). In the breaking of the bread, the believer/priest is free to lead the assembly in praise. It may be through a Scripture, a hymn, a prophesy, or an exhorting of the Saviour's love; as the Lord Jesus is remembered in His death (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 14:26). The new nature in the believer/priest finds fulfillment and joy in worshipping according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In the study of the **Apostles Doctrine**, he is free to give understanding; or to expound upon the simplicity of the Saviour's life and its practical application for each believer in the assembly.

In **Prayers** of the assembly, every brother is free to speak for the assembly in addressing and supplicating God for its needs. **Fellowship** in the assembly is based on the sufferings of Jesus (Philippians 3:10), and on the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). He died for us (me) (1 Corinthians 15:1-3), and He rose again from among the dead by the glory of the Father (Romans 6:4). In all of His completed work, we are partakers, being members of His body (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Our fellowship is in His completed divine work; having loved the Church, He gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). The Spirit of God has regenerated us into being, “...members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:30). He has brought us, “...to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:22-23). Our fellowship is centered on Jesus who is our life and sits at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1).

9. The Church, the dwelling place of God

“Now therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God — in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19, 22).

It has always been the purpose of God to dwell among His people. This is seen with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt, where they were slaves. He dwelt with them and led them with a cloud by day and a fire by night (Numbers 9:15-23). He continued to dwell among them with His presence in the tabernacle. When Solomon built the temple, the Spirit of God filled it with His Glory (1 Kings 8:10-11), His presence was there continually (Numbers 35:34).

God has done the same with the Church. On the day of Pentecost, He sent His Spirit to indwell all who in faith, believe on the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:4). By God’s promise, He dwells among those of His people, who meet only unto the name of His Son (Matthew 18:20). God, dwelling in the midst of His assembly, is His purpose for

every assembling of Christian believers who will receive Him through believing His word (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The Church of the living God is the building that God is constructing. It is His dwelling place, in this day, upon the earth (1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16). The Church that God is building is built upon truth, and that truth is the Lord Jesus, who is revealed to us in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:15). God's building materials are found in all of Scripture (1 Timothy 3:16-17). However, the "apostles' doctrine," is God's truth to build the Church upon.

"Now therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in who you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

The truths that God revealed to the apostles are eternal, they are not cultural (as taught by some sects), and they do not change with time. Upon these truths His

church is built to His specifications. When men change God's design for His Church, it is no longer the building that God is constructing. It is wood, hay, and stubble and will be burned up in the Day of Judgment (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). This day, is not the great White Throne Judgment as revealed in Revelation 20:11:15.

That Day is at the judgment seat of Christ, where every believer will appear before Him, to test and judge their works (2 Corinthians 2:5-10). Men, building a church or a sectarian movement in their own image, are inviting God's judgment. *"If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are"* (1 Corinthians 3:17). God's purpose is to bless His people; His blessing comes to those with whom He abides.

The continued presence of God, with an individual (John 14:23) or an assembly, is assured by believing and following every word of God (Matthew 4:4). God's blessing for His people has always been His purpose, first for Israel (Numbers 35:34; Jeremiah 29:11), and later the Church (Ephesians 1:3-6). Israel received earthly blessings (Deuteronomy 28:1-14), the Church has

received the fullness of God's eternal spiritual blessings (Romans 15:29; Ephesians 1:3).

These are the foundational purposes and promises of God. They are entered into by faith in what God has told us in Scripture. All spiritual blessings are for the Christian and an assembly (a gathering together of Christians who desire to worship God) who will receive them by believing what God has told us.

D. Neely

1-07-10