

61 THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

DEFINITIONS

Christian: A follower of Jesus and citizen of The kingdom of God

The Body of Christ: The citizens of the Kingdom of God on earth and in heaven. Denominational members are not automatically members of The Kingdom of God but may be.

Assembly: Christians gathered together for worship or other purposes of The Kingdom. It is also called a fellowship. Otherwise, it is just socialising.

Congregation: A group of people that meet in a church or similar building that may include non-Christian or lukewarm Christians.

Denomination: a collection of congregations which segregate their congregations from congregations of other denominations and by this divide The Body of Christ. Each denomination finds a fault with the doctrine or practice of other denominations and so considers they are the only one with correct doctrine and practice. There is only one denomination and that is The Body of Christ. All others are man-made for the purposes of man as a result of the reasonings of man. Jesus does not recognise denominations. He only recognises The Body (of His followers).

However, a denomination can be used to contain an assembly and provide legal protection for it and be used as a way of assemblies to form a united front and to contact each other more easily so that it is like an association where it does not control each individual member but works for the common purpose and benefit of all the members.

Unfortunately, denominations think they are the Kingdom and so replace it with their rules and guidelines.

Independent Church: A church that does not belong to a denomination or similar. These form associations of independent churches and negate their name and purpose for being independent from a denomination through doing this.

Social Gathering: A group of Christians who are gathered together for purposes other than those of The Kingdom of God.

PREAMBLE

There is only one set of laws in the universe. The Laws of The Kingdom of God. All others laws are in part or whole a reflection of or rejection in part or whole of these. The Mosaic Law was a reflection of the law of The Kingdom of God and it still applies, although some parts are now redundant because the death of Christ no longer made them necessary or through having been repealed by Christ.

The Law of The Kingdom applied from before eternity and creation and will apply after these manmade non-Kingdom laws are gone. The Kingdom is the Primary Law we are under and all else is a reflection or rejection of its laws.

The Mosaic Law applies. It was obeyed by Jesus and was not revoked by Him. Some parts of it were made redundant because He fulfilled forever their requirements (Sacrificial and Ceremonial Law) or made a greater freedom in following them (removing The Temple and making us His Temple so we can worship Him wherever we are). The laws to do with food were revoked by Jesus (Acts 10:12 ff)

The Body of Christ reflects the fellowship we will have in heaven. The denomination is not The Body of Christ but is a meeting of people who profess to be Christian and at times may approximate the love and fellowship we will have in heaven. Those belonging to The Body will be doing The Work of The Kingdom

rather than the work of a denomination and by their fruits you will know who they really belong too: The Kingdom and The Body or a denomination.

The denomination does do what they consider the work of God but modify it according to their structure and beliefs so it falls short of what they should be doing at times.

When Jesus died, He established a New Covenant (Testament) based on The Kingdom of God and summarised by the following verse:

Heb 10:16–17 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

This was to signify the presence of the Holy Spirit given to us after Jesus ascended to heaven. There was no longer a need for a temple or a high priest which is why The Temple was removed in 70 AD.

God's presence is in us so now we are The Temple of God in which the Holy Spirit's presence is in and who marks us as belonging to The Kingdom of God. Jesus also removed the blockages between God and man so we can go directly to God through Jesus (Jn. 14:6) and do not need any other intermediary. He alone is sufficient and our High Priest. We can worship where we are, when we want too and need no one else to be there to do this. All you need is a desire to worship and to have intimacy with The Father, Jesus, and The Holy Spirit.

As the sacrificial law was fulfilled at Calvary, we no longer need to sacrifice any animal for any Kingdom purpose. As there is no more Temple the Ceremonial Law cannot be fulfilled and in fact is no longer necessary.

THE NEW COVENANT (ROM 8)

The New Covenant was mediated by Jesus and witnessed too by Calvary and is based on God's Love and Grace. A new commandment was given that would express this new covenant (and which really was the basis for the Mosaic Law). This is called the Law of Love and is as follows:

Jn 13: 34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

This is the basis of all the other New Testament commands as well as of the Ten Commandments and should be the basic attitude of all interactions between Christians and any person not a Christian. Note that there is no way out of doing this. There is no escape clause.

Salvation is a relationship (Jn 17:3) and this new commandment shows the type of relationship it is, a relationship based on Love and not legalistic obedience to a set of laws. Any legalism of any type should no longer be in a church. The moment there is legalism of any type, the church is no longer under grace. If it is no longer under Grace, it is no longer under the new covenant of Grace and Love as there is no grace or love in legalism.

This commandment has no loophole. It is all or nothing. You cannot half-love in the way Jesus Loves a person.

There is a difference between obeying laws for administrative purpose in which a form of legalism is required and legalism in enforcing the Law of Love which defeats the actual expression of love.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE 'CHURCH'?

What is the purpose of the 'church'?

The Body of Christ is God's representative on earth and is used by God to further His Kingdom and also to worship Him showing God's love and grace in all they do as well as its manifestation on earth and by this bring Him glory and honour. Everything a church does should be directed at furthering The Kingdom of God (either property or persons) or it will result in glory and honour to man and be a form of idolatry. Churches do not do God's Will if they do not demonstrate, preach, or teach the Kingdom of God, of which the church is supposed to be an example of in this world. A church not doing this is not part of The Body. Individuals in it may be but not the congregation as a whole and in serious cases may have its candle (light in the world) removed by Jesus so it no longer is His as it no longer represents Him and His Kingdom.

It is sad that Jesus said 90% of people who call themselves Christians are not real Christians but people who say they are and who do not live as they should.

When you become a Christian and follower of Jesus the minister invites you to join the church or denomination. You already are a citizen of The Kingdom of God so why do you have to join a church or denomination as you are the church. He should be asking you to join their fellowship of Kingdom orientated believers. Anything else is not Biblical.

A church Christian lives in and for the denomination of church. A follower of Jesus lives in and for The Kingdom of God and may attend a church but the denomination or church is not their purpose for living.

EVANGELISM

This is a work of the church and is a major focus of Jesus who wants all saved and for them to be with Him in heaven. So, if you do not declare Jesus and His salvation when you have the opportunity to you are not doing the work of The Kingdom and in a sense are denying Him and risk Him denying you at the day of Judgment.

THE INVISIBLE CHURCH

To many people in the western world most churches are a moral place which they have little or no interaction with and have no idea what happens there. In a sense, to many, it may as well be a secret society as they have no idea what it is or does.

They are attracted by New Age, Masonic lodges, Satanists, or religions that advertise what they do as they appear to have spiritual power and authority and in which people can get involved on a personal basis and which do not rely 'qualified people' to run the show or have to be approved by the church to do any important ministry of any type in that organisation.

However, once a church walks in love and demonstrates the authority and power of Jesus through (signs and wonders and deliverance etc.) and not just use the world's methods to sustain their budgets and grow in numbers, people will see The Kingdom of God and that it is different to religions and as they see it overcome demons and the illness that the demons cause then they will see Jesus as being greater than the New Age or Satan.

The church must show this or die spiritually.

Where The Kingdom is demonstrated, the church is growing. In the west where it is not demonstrated by most churches it is dying.

A church must demonstrate the Love of God and the Authority of Jesus over Satan or it has no real purpose and becomes just another social club or charitable organisation having the appearance of Godliness but not of its demonstration.

Until a church can show these things it is not going to do the work of Jesus, hinder Satan's Kingdom, rescue people from its influences or destroy his works. It may as well be a social club of high moral standards or a secret society for a few who know the ritual and language of the church.

Paul stated this principle clearly as being an important part of his evangelistic ministry:

1Co 2:4-5 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

KINGDOM LIVING

The principles of The Kingdom express themselves in creation and they are written on the hearts of men by The Holy Spirit so they can be seen by man in God's creation. So, Citizens of The Kingdom of God will demonstrate it in their character and demonstrate it fully by their lifestyle and God-given (not church-given) ministry although if the church is fortunate they will coincide.

As you express the relationship you have with The King you either follow these principles (being guided by The Holy Spirit) or follow man's principles as expressed by a church or denomination in their rules and requirements that are additional to or replace what The Bible teaches.

If the guidance and empowerment of The Holy Spirit are no longer sought and deliverance from the ravages of Satan on the people no longer is done then the church activities are little different to what the world does and there is little to differentiate the methods of the church from that of the world. If it does not preach the Kingdom, it does not preach a purpose greater than that which the world offers and has little to offer of the world.

This is especially so when the church adopts man's ways of doing things because spiritually it appears not to be able to do them.

People other than Christians have moral principles and if the church does not demonstrate Jesus and His authority these people have every right to ask why they should change their morality for one the church offers.

Without the guidance of The Holy Spirit, deliverance, or other manifestations of the Kingdom of God the church becomes nothing more than a social worker using reason and man's methods, giving lip service to The Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God. The tools of organisation and/or methods of working that Satan promotes in the world are used as they 'work' but are Christianised to be acceptable to the denomination.

Most denominations promote a social gospel having not the power and authority of God so must use man's (Satan's world) methods and devices. There is also the opposite end of this situation where The Spirit is followed and deliverance is carried out but excesses occur as Christianity becomes emotion driven and not Biblically driven and the guidance of the Holy Spirit becomes hidden or obscured as it all becomes an emotional experience and not a spiritual one.

Satan has trained the church well so that deliverance is made to appear difficult even dangerous and something to be feared or done after long study and striving for holiness. Demons are allowed to manifest to further make people hesitant to work in deliverance. He has also trained those who do not listen to The Spirit what teach so that He, hell, and other subjects offensive to him are no longer taught in churches and the Gospel is now more centred on humanistic things rather than Christ.

Satan cripples the church through their ignoring the things of God and everyone continues as if nothing is wrong having been duped by Satan into believing what they do in church is normal to the Christian life and the expression of The Kingdom!

There is also the witchcraft spirit in a church that controls the people for the purposes of the people in charge. People do what the leaders say or are considered to be troublemakers or spiritually immature and to be ignored spiritually and may even be driven out of a church. Often the leaders guide the church for their own self-esteem purposes/needs or out of pride or denominational purposes and not as the Holy

Spirit wants it led. This is a major problem in denominations where minister put the denomination, promotion in the denomination and/or church growth ahead of what Jesus really wants them to do.

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Eph 4:5 Endeavouring to keep the unity of The Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

It is only as you walk in unity with God, being unified through the common Holy Spirit in all Christians will you walk in unity with God and other Christians. The Holy Spirit gives us the instructions of God so we know what God desires us to do and it is only as we listen to Him will we walk in harmony with God and The Body of Christ fulfilling what God wants us to do and represent The Kingdom as we should.

This is how The Body is supposed to function. All should be guided by The Holy Spirit and all work in unity of purpose in accordance with the Will of Jesus and any: body, committee or governance that sets itself up to make laws for the interaction of The Body (unless required by the laws of the land or administrative purposes) is usually interfering with God's guidance through the Holy Spirit and limiting God's guidance in people by making The Holy Spirit's leading subordinate to man's judgment. This is why a spirit led person cannot worship or survive well in a church that is not spirit led.

Only as each person is guided by the Holy Spirit will they perform the role God requires them to perform in the body so that it will function as it should.

Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Satan knows this which is why people who are led by The Spirit are forced out of churches or have The Spirit's leading quenched in them through control spirits working through the leadership in a church.

Note that the basis for the unity is Peace with God, with all the members is being in a proper relationship with God then they will be all guided by The Holy Spirit and act as one, unified body. The fact that there are denominations and factions within churches shows that this unity of The Holy Spirit is not there which means those that promote their denomination or church and not the Kingdom are not in a correct relationship with God or they would be listening to The Holy Spirit and promoting The Kingdom of God and expressing it to those who are not Citizens of this Kingdom!

The reason for not promoting The Kingdom could be because of one or more of the following reasons:

The minister is not teaching The Kingdom but is promoting the denomination or church either knowingly or out of ignorance

Only qualified people are allowed to do things so the congregation just sits there and does little for the Kingdom. A two class Nicolaitan type structure results

The person is not in a salvation relationship with God

The person is hurt and needs deliverance and healing to be able to enter fully into the correct relationship with God

The person knows about it but is not interested in promoting The Kingdom of God.

The person is learning incorrectly how to promote The Kingdom of God

Remember, you will be judged for what you did with what you knew about Jesus and His Kingdom and if you did not knowingly promote The Kingdom and the unity of The Spirit that is integral to the Body of

Christ then you could be in a precarious position in regard to salvation when you face Jesus and give an account to Him of your life.

People are without excuse for not promoting The kingdom of God or learning how to as Jesus taught and spoke only of The Kingdom and His example was to preach, teach and demonstrate The Kingdom of God (Matt 4:23)!

So why is the church not doing this? Satan has gotten into its teachings and corrupted them so that they teach what he desires and not what God wants otherwise there would be no disunity amongst Christians and the Authority of The Kingdom over Satan and his works would be demonstrated by them.

THE BODY BELONGS TO JESUS.

He places people where He needs them for His Will to be done and The Holy Spirit trains people for their role in The Body.

As people walk in the principles of Matt 6:33 (seeking the Will of God and furthering His Kingdom) each day they are being trained and placed where Jesus needs them to be at that moment of time and they will be doing what He needs them to be doing at that point of time. You will be in the place you need to be to serve Him and do His Will and you will do your part in the body so that it will function as it should as well as grow in preparedness to go to heaven.

HOLY UNITY

Holy Unity is defined as the union we have with Jesus as we identify completely with Him and His teachings so all is put aside to pursue His Will. This unity is the highest form of worship and is paralleled to the relationship in marriage between a husband and wife and is the desirable state to be in if a marriage is to succeed and serve God.

THE CHURCH AND MATT 6:33

In Matt 6:33 there is the promise that anyone who seeks The Kingdom of God and of being in a correct relationship with Jesus will always have provided what they need to live and serve Jesus. This also applies to The Body and its subgroups.

A Church is not a building but a fellowship of people who follow Jesus as their Lord. If they are seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness, they will never lack for anything they need to do the work of God. God promises to provide all they need so why then do they need to ask for donations or take up offerings? If they are doing what God wants them to do these should not be necessary.

God is in the business of building people not buildings so church expansion not ordered by God will always cause budgetary problems and take up, money that should be used for the purposes of The Kingdom.

If people are listening to the Holy Spirit, they will give what God says so to give so that the church does not need to ask for what it needs. By demanding people tithe or give it makes giving a legalistic exercise by implying that what God said in Matthew 6:33 is not true.

The only conclusion is that they are not doing what God wants then to do so need to find money for these 'unauthorised activities,' or, they do not trust God sufficiently to supply their needs. Satan will suggest many good things to tie up a church's money which have the appearance of what God wants done but are actually not what He desires done. By this Satan has a church tie up its money and sidetracks what it does so it does not do what God wants it to do.

If a fellowship is guided by The Holy Spirit Satan cannot sidetrack it this way as The Spirit will tell them it is a plan of Satan.

WHY DO CHURCH GROUPS HAVE TO ASK FOR MONEY?

If God asks you to step out in faith, He will always provide what you need. As it is a test of faith, He will make you wait for His provision to strengthen your faith in Him. You will not need to ask for donations or gifts or to take up offerings. It is only as we do not trust God that we turn to man for help.

God will prompt those He wants to give to do so and will tell them how much to give and to whom to give it too. This assumes these people are listening to God and can hear God's instructions in regard to this.

This also assumes the church has taught them how to hear God so when He prompts them to give, they will give. If the church has not taught them how to hear God, then they will not hear to give.

It also assumes, the church is doing what God wants it to do and is not doing things it is not suppose too which God cannot bless or supply provision for but which Satan will gladly try and supply them so that the church or denomination becomes committed to the new expense. When the church has all these ungodly commitments (not being from God) then Satan will stop helping the church leaving the church wondering where God is and in a financial mess.

While Satan is limited with what He can do to you there is nothing to stop him leaving things around for our lusts to accept and use and by this gain a foothold in you. This is how he uses the media that he controls.

Whatever the case it begs the question. With God's promise of provision in Matt 6:33 why does a church have to ask for money to keep itself going?

As the church building is only a place the people use and it is not something that is able to determine its usage (as it is not alive) it then becomes the attitude of the church people towards God that determines whether God provides for its upkeep or not.

If the people use the church fellowship for the purposes of The Kingdom and pursuing righteousness with God, then He will provide for its upkeep (Matt 6:33). The moment they go outside this usage there will not be enough money to meet its upkeep and people will be asked for donations and offerings (often special church fund type offerings) .

This also applies to parochial organizations, Para church organisations or associations attached to a church. If these bodies are used in accordance with God's purposes their needs will be met otherwise, they will be continually asking for Money.

Should a Christian give to organisations not seeking God's kingdom (Purposes) or God's righteousness? No! Why give to the devil God's money. This is how Satan ties up the money of Christians so it is not given to God's work or purposes. Often people give out of habit or guilt. Since when does God make you feel guilty so you will give? Since when does God also ask you to give out of habit instead of asking Him first what to do with His property (Is 66:1,2)?

We are only stewards of what we have as God owns everything so we need to ask Him what to do with what we have.

Through this incorrect giving Satan ties up the money God should be using elsewhere and by this removes blessing from the congregation. Give only as guided by The Holy Spirit. Then you will know it will be used as God desires it to be used.

We are to tithe, but it is God who tells us where to send the money and not the minister or denomination. They can only suggest where it should go.

VARIOUS MATTERS

OPPOSING GOD'S WORK

I write this section with a heaviness as I see many opposing the work of The kingdom of God and do not realise it as they are led by pastors who oppose the work of God (without realising it).

When God has a work for a person to do you oppose it at the risk of death, illness, or other punishments such as heath and finances. God will tolerate deliberate rebellion and resistance to His Work for only a certain period then He acts. It is more important one person dies for the sake of The Kingdom than many go to hell or be hindered in doing His Will. Often the death will save the person's salvation which could lose if they kept going on with their opposition to His Work. I know examples of these so am speaking from my experience and the experience of others.

In revival, people opposing revivalist preachers have suddenly dropped dead. In marriages a spouse opposing the work of God has died suddenly, divorced, or been incapacitated so they could no longer resist the spouse and their work for God. God will free the bound spouse to do His work in His time and not the spouse's timing. So be careful opposing a spouse or someone whom has the anointing of God on them for a work of The Kingdom you are resisting. Sometimes the opposing person has illness that gets progressively worse as a warning before they are removed.

When God calls a person to ministry their spouse will have complimentary gifts to aid them in that ministry. This is why God calls couples to minister where possible and not just one. So, when you ignore your spouse when you minister is to ignore someone God has put beside you to minister with you and use their gifts to help your God-given ministry.

A person guided by The Spirit of God will never oppose the work of God because they have a conscience desiring to do God's Will and desiring to hear The Spirit so that they know what God's Will is and will fit in with whatever God desires them to do for the ministry they have been given.

God is Love and all He does is in Perfect Love and that includes removing the opposition to His Will and Work.

EXCESSES IN THE CHURCH

SHOULD WE SPEAK OUT ABOUT EXCESSES AND ERRORS IN THE CHURCH?

Jesus said it is His church so we should leave it to Him to fix it His way. However, we should obey what He tells us to do and He may use us in some way to help, heal or deal with church problems.

We should know what their errors are so we can avoid them as well as meekly explain to people what they are doing wrong (backed up by Biblical scripture).

We can discuss them, for purposes of learning and not condemnation

We are to go whom He wants us to warn and in humility warning them, telling them only what Jesus wants us to say to them.

We should examine ourselves daily to ensure we do not fall into these errors ourselves.

Any other way of doing discussing these things is pride, judgemental criticism, gossip, or lovelessness, any of which is sin.

WHAT ABOUT REVIVALS?

After the usual heated debates in an internet chat room about the Lakeland revival (which debate I observed in a concerned manner and tried to defuse) I was shown the following by The Holy Spirit.

Where an event occurs like a revival or church split that causes you grief then:

If there is obvious error then correct in meekness lest you become proud and sin. All you can do is show where The Bible says they are wrong in what they are doing. Then it is up to God what happens to them as it is His church.

Where there is no obvious error then you watch the fruit of The Revival.

Remember people have gone there to draw closer to Jesus and the ministers there are seeking to preach the Truths of God so as long as they sincerely doing these things you cannot condemn or criticise them. So do not attack the people but attack the demons causing any problems (Ep 2:10):

In Jesus' Name bind any demons causing problems

In Jesus' Name command any deception to be revealed to the people involved

Ask The Holy Spirit to teach the people in charge what they need to know to draw closer to Jesus

Ask God to bless their faithfulness in desiring to know more of Jesus.

Give your attitude about it to Jesus to be Lord of.

If the revival is of Him, you will not be able to stop it. If it is not of Him, He will take care of it His way. So, sit back, command what He tells you too against the demons trying to use it and do what He says to do in respect of it but do not criticise it as it may be a move of God then you would be criticising God's work. Remember to always be humble when speaking about the revival because you are not their judge and have only been sent by Him.

WHERE TO WORSHIP GOD

Acts 17:24-25 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

God does not need a special place to worship as He is everywhere. He does not need us to offer things from creation as He owns them already. To say you need to worship God in a special place is to limit God's presence and imply He is only able to be worshiped in places like churches and not able to be worshiped everywhere.

So, what does God want from us then?

WHY WERE WE CREATED?

He desires:

Our Love

An intimate, relationship with us

Our voluntary service

For us to relate to Him as our Father (by adoption by Him) , close friend, King, and advisor.

He does not need us to do these as He is complete in everything but desires these for our sake so He can give us the pleasure of our relationship with Him and all that results from it.

In other words, He wants an intimate relationship with you where you appreciate His love for you and are thankful for all He does with you and express this thankfulness in loving service of Him.

IN SUMMARY

It can be said that the modern view of the Christian life as being church or denominationally centred is completely inadequate to give the complete picture of what it means to be a follower of Jesus and a citizen of The Kingdom of God.

There is only one Kingdom of God and as each church or denomination follows their own agenda they will be out of unity with the others, not being unified in purpose and direction by The Holy Spirit and showing they are possibly not part of the activities of God's Kingdom. In Mark 3:25 Jesus said:

...a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

This means that as churches and denominations squabble and divide the Kingdom of God they may keep their physical presence but spiritually will fall and may eventually no longer represent God or His Kingdom as they should. As this happens in churches they no longer work in the Power or guidance of The Holy Spirit and man's attempt for unity of the churches has led to denominations trying to find common ground but because each has a statement of faith that is slightly different this finding of a common ground will be difficult.

ON ASPECTS OF MINISTRY

WHO THEN IS TO LEAD THE CHURCH?

The Holy Spirit is to guide the church and those in Authority in it are to do what He tells them to do which is very hard if they do not believe in the personal Holy Spirit who was promised by Jesus.

Its Bishop (ruler) is Jesus (1 Pet 2:25) and its Guide is the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:13). This is the situation in The Kingdom of God whose citizens we are. In the Kingdom Jesus rules and appoints people to do His Will and His Will involves serving others and not usurping the Role of Jesus as King and controlling them. Any church, denomination or similar that appoints leaders without consulting The Holy Spirit is setting up its own system independent of The Kingdom of God. This thing set up will not do the work of The Kingdom as it has not been sanctioned by its King. It may satisfy the needs of the congregation but it will not satisfy the needs of The Kingdom.

It will probably hinder the work of The Kingdom as it will be man guided reasoning and orientation and not spiritually led (except possibly by Satan). If they were led by The Holy Spirit they would not normally be in that position of ministry.

In the early church, spiritual guidance was given by people who waited on God, while the physical (administrative) side was, carried out by people (deacons) The Holy Spirit appointed to do this (acts 6:3-4).

They were leaders appointed by God who did not rule or control as such but passed on what The Holy Spirit advised them to do or tell others for the purposes of the Kingdom of God.

Churches, Bible colleges, seminaries, denominations did not exist. God did not ask for these and fact is they are really for man's benefit of controlling what is taught and not necessary for the worship of Him!

Is 66:1-2 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

He is more interested in the heart of people than in what they build for Him or do for Him than in any man-given qualifications.

Most of what the church considers necessary to worship and serve God was not actually present in the early church and in fact may even detract from or hide The Kingdom of God because it portrays it incorrectly to people so that they do not see The Kingdom of God but a man-made organisation.

The Father is your provider. Jesus is your King who protects The Kingdom . The Holy Spirit is your Guide. He will teach you or send people to help you and advise you in regard to spiritual things and they will mentor you and not rule you.

THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY

Jesus did not give leadership roles to the church but people to help it grow. The fivefold ministry are gifts to serve His church not rulers to govern them. This is in line with Matt 20:26-27 where those in charge are servants not rulers.

The moment they use these gifts to control they are no longer using their service for God but for personal gain.

MINISTRY AND THE CHURCH

How does the current church system fit in with the Kingdom of Heaven?

All are given gifts and are expected to use them to minister to each other. This is what happens in heaven according to those that have been there. Everyone willingly and gladly serves others, putting serving them before their own needs. This is easy in heaven as no one has a lack of anything they need to live and survive and the tyranny of time is not a problem. On earth, this placing of others before yourselves is sacrificial at times because of your own personal survival needs that are not dealt with to help another who is worse off than you. In heaven personal pleasure is forgone to help others but people do not count this a loss as heaven is such a joyful place.

God promises to provide for us on earth (Matt 6:33) if we do His work, all we need to serve Him and live as He desires us to live, which includes all we need to give to others as well as the cost of serving others so that we should not need to do any sacrificial giving. If we give out of what we need to sustain our family then we are worse than an unbeliever according to The Bible.

So, people in heaven all serve while on earth they must be qualified by the pastor or the denomination to have any roles of importance or serve the denomination in a recognised area. Instead of helping people to find their gifts and training them they are sent to a bible college or similar or told you need church approval to use them. So, most people are not prepared for the Kingdom and are not utilised as God wants them to be and are kept in a sort of servitude, always being ministered to and never given a chance to minister.

This should not be so and goes against what God desires for all of us which is for us to learn how to serve and minister and spiritually grow as well as being used to expand His Kingdom through the example of loving service to those inside and outside the Kingdom of God that will make people look seriously at what Christians believe.

Love was a characteristic of the early church and until it seen as the mark of the modern church Jesus and His Kingdom will not be seen in its fullness, if at all.

Evangelism is for reaching people which is why signs and wonders are necessary for that. For a close friend, your lifestyle and your Love of The Kingdom expressed towards them will reach them and it is important to show this love to them in all you do with them. For others they will need to see The Kingdom expressed through its authority over Satan and his works.

Hypocrisy is the one thing that will turn people off The Kingdom of God quicker than anything else except lovelessness or indifference.

Your life is a training ground for your life in The Kingdom in heaven and we need to be taught and guided now how to live as a citizen of The Kingdom through learning how to love and to serve others so that we know how to use our gifts properly. We also need to hear The Holy Spirit so we can serve God as He desires us too here and in eternity.

If you are not serving God and are in a position of authority in The Body then what are you doing? Earth is God's training ground for The Kingdom of God in eternity and how you use this life to prepare people now to live in eternity will have a big effect on your rewards and possibly your even getting to heaven.

CONTROL BY MINISTERS

There is no written delegation given by Jesus in The Bible that authorises anyone to have spiritual authority or control over another and man does not have the authority to assume that from any scripture as this authority has to be given by Jesus and He has not done that.

To be an 'adopted son of God' you need to be guided by The Holy Spirit and not man (Rom 8:14). This means Jesus is your head/authority and not man,

The moment you place yourself under a man's spiritual authority and follow him, you are no longer a son of God but a son of that person by adopting them as your leader. This is spiritual idolatry replacing God with another (unless that man has been appointed to be a mentor to you or to encourage you in your Christian life and then he is only a guide for a season and not your controller)

In the physical realm things are different as people are given stewardship over things by delegation to them by Jesus and will be held accountable by Jesus for how they dealt with those things.

In the early church there were no denominational or church guidelines to limit The Holy Spirit. These became necessary as people, not led by The Spirit, came to control the church and rules were needed to support their usurped authority.

God will send people to guide you and tell you what The Holy Spirit said but they will point you to Jesus not to their will or the guidelines of a denomination or church. The moment someone points you to these guidelines instead of Jesus and you accept them you are possibly in idolatry unless The Holy Spirit has told you to obey them or they are necessary for the laws of the land to be satisfied.

You do not need to be pointed to guidelines that are already in The Bible except for correction or guidance so any other guidelines are additional ones made up by Man.

Jesus is King, and anyone who says they are your leader and controls you and/or others, is usurping Him and may cause you to sin as they take the place of God and become to you an idol if you obey them and not God.

The danger of denominations is that they set themselves up as the authority over its members and by this stop the individual leading of The Holy Spirit that is necessary for Jesus to guide each member of His Body in what He wants them to do. By this His work is hindered, not promoted.

Because The Holy Spirit no longer leads people, the denomination turns to man's methods and reason and starts to decline and move away from The Bible. The moment you place man's rules before God's or use them to constrain what God teaches you have a church or denomination that is starting to die and possibly a cult. It no longer is led by God's Spirit and so must use its own reason which Satan gladly helps them with.

The denomination will deny this but ask them how often they stop to hear The Spirit in the things they do each day and not do what their reasoning tells them to do.

This is why denominations do not teach the guidance of The Holy Spirit but teach obedience to the denomination. It is not obedience to Christ they practice, even though they may preach it, but obedience to what man has said is best for their church or denomination.

How often are the needs of the denomination preached but not the needs of The Kingdom of God!

Unless each member of The Body is guided by The Holy Spirit, or taught how to be led by Him, then The Body will not function as it should and denominations will take over The Body and splinter it. In the revivals to come in these last days, each person will be guided by The Spirit and any minister stopping this will be removed or lose their salvation if they are not careful.

HEALING IN CHURCHES

One of the problems in a church is that people will condemn someone as having a wrong spirit (Jezebel, gossip, lying etc) but do nothing to heal the person of the hurts that allowed the demon to enter.

Love, deliverance, and healing is what is needed and not more guilt, hurt, rejection condemnation heaped on that person.

The Kingdom of God promises deliverance from demonic oppression and the ability to defeat Satan, but most Christians have no idea how to achieve these and the churches do not teach this usually. So, they do not show the authority of The Kingdom over Satan and by this hide the reality of the devil to its members and those outside the church.

A MODERN-DAY PARABLE

People were entering the church. As each entered, they looked at the grand building and all the ornamentation and pondered how wonderful a church they had and thanked God they had a building worthy of Him. Few had thanked Him that the day for their breakfast but most thanked Him for the wonderful church building they had.

They were thinking various things:

“What does God want me to do here today?” Thought one.

Another was wondering if there were any good-looking girls there that day

Another wondered if they would finish counting all the bricks behind the altar before the sermon finished (true story)

Another wondered what they could do today in the church to serve the minister or his church

Another was looking forward to the emotional high they got when worship was on and they could ‘feel’ The Spirit’

Another was wondering how long the sermon would take

Another was glad the wife was not nagging them to come to church as she had stopped nagging when they said they would go

Another entered and wondered what church was all about

None wondered how they could serve The Kingdom there but some thought about how to serve the minister and thus the denomination.

everyone walking in greeting people they knew, ignoring strangers or others not of their social standing or clique except possibly for a polite ‘hello.’

The Lord asks you:

Who was fellowshiping?

Who was doing His work of The Kingdom?

Where was The Holy Spirit in this who is supposed to lead church worship?

Sadly, this is typical of churches and you wonder why The Kingdom of God is not found in them and fellowship is missing as God desires it to be.

Who is at fault for these attitudes?

The minister, for not teaching what The Kingdom is and emphasising its role in their life?

The people for being lukewarm as they have not responded to the minister stirring them up to holiness and zeal for The Kingdom? (assuming he even does that).

The modern bibles they read because they do not challenge their faith?

Wrong! Satan has suggested things and people listen to him. He is behind all this and the church ignores him and does nothing to fight him.

Until the church fights Satan and demonstrates The Kingdom of God it will be a social club achieve little for The Kingdom and be in danger of being spewed out of the mouth of Jesus because it ignores what He told them to do (Rev 3:5).

THE BATTLE NOT FOUGHT BY THE CHURCH

We are told we fight the demons who plan the attacks and not just the people that carry them out or the demons guiding the people to do the action, that we are to attack these demonic leaders and not just the people or demons they use. Demons can be replaced but if you remove their leaders then there is no one to there to organise demons to attack you and their attack stops dead in its tracks.

Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

We are told the Kingdom of God is being attacked and we are to attack back

Mt 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

We are told to do it and not just watch!

Mar 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; ...

So the church ignores all this and asks Jesus to do it for them when Jesus has distinctly said we are too. Any wonder the church is in decline in many places.

STEWARDSHIP ASPECTS

STEWARDSHIP AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Satan is out to kill, steal and destroy and his time is short. As he is still ruler of this world these trademarks of his are all over it. Everywhere is death, destruction as well as people who have been robbed of their quality of life. As his time is short, he has stepped up his activities in these areas so that these activities of his will become increasingly worse and, in the tribulation, become almost unbearable. But God is a God of Love and has promised never to test us above what we can handle so there will still be a way of escape for these people in the tribulation and the great tribulation. Jesus will still accept them if they repent.

The earth belongs to Jesus as it is part of the spoils of war from His victory over Satan (apart from being His creation). It is an unclaimed part of His Kingdom and so we have a responsibility because we are its citizens of The Kingdom of God, and thus stewards of the things of The Kingdom, to look after the things of The Kingdom of God on the earth we are given to care for. Usually this is the family and family property although in government and public departments it could be a greater area or activity.

This is one responsibility the members of The Body usually do not do in the way Jesus desires it done which is why governments have so much legislation to inhibit Christian activity these days.

As stewards of the things of God we need to care for them. Satan knows this and all ecological problems are a result of Satan trying to destroy God's spoils of war as he uses them to trap as many people as he can to take them to hell with him.

The things Satan tries to destroy most are our mind and body so we cannot do the work of God, attack Satan and his kingdom and bring Jesus' dishonour by abusing what He has given us. So, we need to learn how to be a good steward of all God has given us.

We need to examine what we do carefully and see whether we are destructive (Satan guided) or constructive (God guided).

As stewards we must be faithful to reap the rewards promised of which one is Salvation.

STEWARDSHIP AND THE CHURCH

Another masterstroke of Satan was to convince the church they were owners and not stewards of the things they had and as such could do what they wanted with them without the need to consult God. Thus, God was deprived of the use of these things and Satan got the benefit of them because people did not ask God what to do with them. This meant Satan could suggest what to do with them and use these things for his own purposes. They would not be used to cause people openly to sin but to sidetrack them and gradually lead them into sin. Usually, it was a sin of pride in what they 'owned' or covetousness to make their building or ministry greater than other buildings or ministries.

Satan taught people to mark their spirituality by what they did and not what they thought. God is not interested in your successes but in the attitudes, you achieved them in.

Because possessions were thought by people to be their own to do with what they wanted, Satan brought in the concept of profit on interest and saving (hoarding possessions and not sharing excess possessions with those who needed them). Wealth creation and profit became more important than hearing God as people did not believe they needed to ask God what to do with things. Because of this we have the resulting financial structure today with the emphasis on wealth creation. This emphasis on wealth creation and preservation hides the promises and requirements of Matt 6:33 as well as the attitude to money a citizen of the Kingdom of God should have.

(In The Kingdom of God and when it is here on earth in The Millennium, when Jesus rules, money is not used as it is used today which shows how destructive it must be for Jesus to reject its modern usage in His Kingdom.)

By this attitude Satan ties up the money of God even further having Christians seek for treasure on earth, ignoring obtaining treasure in heaven as well as blinding them to their stewardship responsibility of things, and that they really need to ask The Holy Spirit what to do with God's possessions that have been trusted to them.

Until this situation is remedied the church will always be poor spiritually and financially as it follows projects and spending in areas Jesus does not want it to pursue which Satan has suggested and so it has problems obtaining the finances it needs as Jesus does not give it to them as it is not His Will for them.

The Body has many interactions with the world one of which is stewardship and unless it is guided by The Holy Spirit it will not serve God as it should, be good steward of what it has been trusted with let alone be able to demonstrate The Kingdom of God as it should.

THE CHURCH IN ACTS

The book of Acts is a history of the of the Kingdom of God on earth after the commencement of the New Covenant (Testament) between God and man that resulted from The death of Jesus at Calvary.

It is an example of how a church should function and people should behave as Christians which is ignored by most of Christianity today which has replaced The Kingdom of God with denominations (the kingdom of men).

With the death of Jesus, the Old Covenant (Testament) was completed, the sacrificial system was made redundant so that there were new ways to worship and minister to Jesus and others on His behalf and relate to Him.

A covenant was evidenced by blood and with the death of Christ the sacrifice of animals was no longer necessary so the Old Testament was no longer evidence and a new one was witnessed to as a result of the blood (sacrifice of Christ).

The Kingdom of God on earth was now in the citizens of God's Kingdom and you no longer needed a select group of people to help you approach God or a special place to worship. These were made redundant after Calvary and so now you could worship God without the need of sacrifice or of a special place to worship God in. There was no need for ritual of any kind or for someone to sacrifice an animal for you. Worship was possible at any time, anywhere and fellowship could occur anywhere now, and not just in the Temple synagogue or special places.

Churches are special places which so that worship is centred on a building and not the home where it originally was.

The Kingdom of God was now mobile and was sent to everyone in the world as it was no longer tied to the Temple because it was in people now. The people of The Kingdom could go everywhere to preach Jesus and were able to worship Him wherever they were. The shackles of Old Testament worship and evangelism had been broken and a new regime for evangelism and worship (as recorded in Acts) was now to occur!

The book of Acts opens with Jesus telling His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until The Holy Spirit was sent to authorise (empower) them to serve Him (Acts 1:4-5). The disciples were not to be concerned when this would happen, or when Jesus would return but to wait for the Holy Spirit to anoint them to minister and then all the resources of The Kingdom would be behind them as they did the work of the Kingdom (Acts 1:7-8, Matt 6:33).

With the arriving of The Spirit's presence in them The Kingdom of God had come to earth in the true followers of Christ.

This principle of waiting for God to anoint you to minister is so important that it is the first command given in Acts. The command given in the Gospels, the Great Commission, could not be fulfilled until The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost to appoint and anoint (empower) them to this ministry. To serve Jesus, you must wait for His timing to anoint you, authorise, and empower you to minister.

Service is not at the command of the denomination or minister which authorises people for the purpose of the denomination or man usually. Often this service is not what God desires and so counters or hinders the work of The Kingdom.

In the Gospels Jesus told us what was on His heart for us to do and in Acts He tells us we need His Commissioning (anointing of His Spirit as happened in Acts 2) as well as the guidance of The Holy Spirit to perform it. Note how many times the baptism (anointing) and the Will of The Spirit is mentioned in Acts.

This cannot be given by man at their command but only by The Holy Spirit who may work through people to show it has occurred.

The disciples had been given the Holy Spirit previously to mark them as belonging to Jesus (Jn 20:22) and would soon be given The Baptism (anointing) of the Holy Spirit to authorise them for service so that The Holy Spirit could work through them to demonstrate the Kingdom of God like Jesus did.

This shows you can be a member of The Kingdom of God but not have spiritual authority to express The Kingdom of God to the world because you do not believe in The Baptism of The Holy Spirit.

When Jesus left, He was not there to authorise or guide them so sent The Holy Spirit to do this.

The apostles were still a man short and had not yet received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to be guided by Him so resorted to reason to replace Judas. They used a method of the Old Testament, the casting of lots (Acts 1:26, Prov 16:33).

Here is the first example of what happens when you do not consult with God or wait for His timing:

The person they chose, Matthias, is hardly mentioned in Acts as he was not God's choice

They did not pick someone who was to minister as God desired.

Their choice did not have the qualifications God needed to use him as He wanted too so could not authorise Matthias for ministry as an apostle.

They assumed they had a right to pick the replacement even though Jesus had picked the original twelve.

God's choice was far superior:

God chose, Paul who had the knowledge required for God to use to write what He needed to tell people

God anointed him apostle to the Gentiles

God anointed him to write and explain things and interpret God's Will/solution for problems in the early church

He willingly went to Rome to die because he knew the Gospel would spread throughout the Roman Empire if it was preached in the capitol, Rome.

God's solution is far superior to that of man which is why we need to be led by the Holy Spirit to hear God's answers and desires for us! It is as we implement our own solutions separate from God that we fail, achieve second best, or get in the road of God's plan for us and will have expenses God will not meet because He has not authorised them, which is why churches always seem to need money and have to ask for special offerings.

This is why a church will not usually function as God desires it when the people are chosen by denominational or church guidelines or affiliations or who they know in the church, unless the person chosen is also God's choice and they minister as a citizen of The Kingdom and not a member of a denomination.

God is a God of wonders! Not only did He stop the persecution that was happening but used one of its leaders to replace the position left vacant by Judas (Acts 9:31)!

The Holy spirit was given to them (acts 2) and the gifts they needed would also have been provided. As the primary focus was to preach and teach the Kingdom, the first gift given was the gift of tongues, the ability to speak in your own language but be understood by the hearer in their own language. This was so they could minister to and preach to those who did not understand their language, which was important in Jerusalem as so many people had come from other countries to worship at the temple at Pentecost and the only way to reach them was through the gift of tongues.

When they had been sent out previously to the Jewish Nation the gift of tongues had not been needed but now, they were to be sent into the world to preach amongst people of a strange tongue they would not be able to talk to them without the gift of tongues and the corresponding gift of interpretation of tongues.

The apostles and disciples were now authorised to do the work of Jesus and had a boldness they did not have before. They came out of hiding and the first act Peter did was to take up his God-given ministry of evangelism and preach Jesus. The Holy spirit does not just anoint you to minister He also gives you the boldness to minister!

Another result of The Holy Spirit's anointing was unity. They continued in worship and praise of God, learning more of God and having fellowship and communion (in 4:23-24) in unity of The Spirit (Acts 2:42-43), they also were willing to share what they had spare with those who needed support of any kind, but they did not steal from the needs of their family to give to others (Acts 2:44-45.)

The Kingdom was also demonstrated in miracles so that many were confronted with the authority of the Kingdom of God over that of Satan's kingdom and so followed Jesus.

They were not afraid to suffer and fearlessly preached Jesus, valuing His message more important than their own life (Stephen, Acts 7) or the threats of imprisonment or beatings (acts 4:17).

The Holy Spirit will always give you the strength and faith you need in these circumstances (Acts 4:8,5:17-18)

They were doing the work of God (Acts 8:12-16) so God protected them (Acts 5:17-20). They went fearlessly back into the Temple they had been thrown out of and were not afraid of being arrested or beaten.

The Kingdom was being proclaimed and it was being added to daily with new citizens.

As in revivals, God quickly dealt with those that opposed the move of the Spirit.

Ananias and Saphiras believed they could hide what they did from the Apostles and God. They did not really appreciate God and His all knowingness, so they did not wholeheartedly follow Jesus, not being willing to pay the cost of following Jesus. God did not tolerate this lying and lukewarmness and removed them before they could pollute the Kingdom and bring it into disrepute (Acts 5:1-11)! Similar happens in revivals where people stand up against the anointed evangelist resisting the revival preacher and the revival and drop dead. The Holiness of God will not stand being polluted by unbelief.

Another problem that arose was the time the spiritual leaders spent doing the mundane activities required to meet the needs of the disciples. So, God brought this to a crisis and gave instruction in regard to who was to do what in the assembly. God divided them up into two categories: those involved in spiritual ministries and those involved in physical ministries. Later on, in the Bible God gives us a list of the five spiritual ministries given to minister too (and not control) the citizens of The Kingdom of God.

Those who were the spiritual leaders were not to get involved in the daily duties necessary to run the local assembly but were to spend their time with The Holy Spirit to hear His advice and instructions so they could give the spiritual guidance people needed. God's fast is to separate yourself from the world and what it offers so ministers are to separate themselves from worldly pursuits and concentrate on the spiritual side of Christianity as their ministry is to The Body.

Godly people were appointed to run the gathering of disciples and families and meet their daily needs. This would also be a training ground for them to learn to serve properly in preparation for when they would be spiritual leaders and spend their life in service to others (see Acts 6).

An example of the quality of Godliness these people had is shown when Stephen is Martyred for testifying to the religious leaders of his faith in Jesus (Acts 7) rather than denying Jesus and being freed. The early Christians were not afraid to die for their testimony.

The early church trusted completely in God and obeyed Him regardless of the possible consequences to their selves. However, they did not go into all the world as Jesus had told them too.

As usual Satan puts fear into people so the Christians in Jerusalem were scattered because of the persecution of them by the leaders of the Jews. This God allowed scattering the knowledge of Jesus throughout Israel or wherever other places the disciples were scattered too. They did not go to all nations as Jesus said to do so he used Satan to scatter them to other nations.

The quality of Character of another of these men is shown. Phillip was an evangelist as well as one who demonstrated the miracles of the Kingdom of God. He was the disciple who took the Gospel to Samaria leaving his home and security behind. The Samaritans believed but had not been authorised (anointed/empowered) to minister. Two apostles were sent to them, whom when they realised this, laid hands on them and prayed for them to receive The Holy Spirit's Baptism (authorisation to minister). With authorisation by The Holy Spirit comes His empowerment. The laying on of hands was symbolic, as the anointing comes from the Holy Spirit and not from man.

The things of the Kingdom cannot be bought, They are gifts from God (Acts 8:18-20). Anyone selling them or implying they can impart them at will does not belong to the Kingdom of God or is very deceived and needs deliverance. Only as God authorises can the gifts be imparted and stewardship of property and possession be transferred.

The church also baptised by immersion (Acts 8.38). It is hard to be buried and rise again if you are only sprinkled but it is easy if fully immersed in water. In fact, in the early church documents there are guidelines what to do if there is a scarcity of water and sprinkling was not mentioned as a valid way to baptise.

God makes everything beautiful in His time and now it was time to replace Judas. God is a God of Miracles, and now the person who was to replace Judas was the chief one stirring up opposition to Jesus. The Apostle Paul!

Note the obedience of Ananias (Acts 9:17) even though there was the possibility of dying He trusted Jesus, and went to Paul. The early church was willing to do the work of the Kingdom no matter what the cost was to them.

Paul's life was now in danger as He preached Jesus because He was sufficiently skilled to show the teachings of Jesus as superior to The Law (Acts 8:23) but his time to die had not yet come and God delivered him to safety.

We are given specific examples of the kinds of miracles the early church did. Healing People, raising people from the dead (Acts 9) and casting out demons (Acts 16:16) are all examples of the authority of The Kingdom over that of Satan's kingdom. These are the signs Jesus said would follow those that believe (Mark 16:9-19) and their occurrence in the book of Acts verifies that this passage of Mark is scripture.

This was never negated by Jesus at any time so still apply today even though modern Bibles write them out as being part of scripture and imply man put them in the Bible.

We are also shown that the Gospel is for all (Acts 10) so that if you withhold the Gospel from any one because of their lifestyle or race then you are not doing what Jesus asked you to do. In heaven there is no such thing as race or creed (Gal 3:28). There are only true believers who are citizens of the Kingdom of

God. Any church promoting their denomination over that of another one (except for their being heresy in the other denomination) is dividing the Kingdom of God and does not belong to it, promoting its own agenda over that of God's! Any church ignoring a race or group of people and not taking Jesus to them does not belong to Him or it would be impartially doing His work!

A final comment is on Paul surviving snakebite (Acts 28). Jesus said we would take up serpents and they would not harm us. Here God also shows His word in Mark 16:9-19 is true.

It is to be noted that nowhere in The Bible are these gifts and working of miracles said to no longer apply. So, man has no excuse for not at least trying to do them. God looks at our heart and its purposes and not our success. So, we may not be used to do miracles but if our heart has a correct attitude to their being done that is all God requires of you.

THE APOSTLE

When we look at the book of Acts, we see that so much of it is about the apostle Paul and is in a sense a mini panorama of his life. Why, in a part history of the Kingdom of God on earth, is there so much about the Life of one man.

I believe there are five reasons for this:

To show his qualifications so that it is obvious Paul knew what he was writing about

To Show the attitude of a citizen of the Kingdom of God to the Gospel

To show what an apostle does

To show God was correct in choosing Paul as an apostle and ignoring the choice of the eleven apostles who chose by lot the replacement for Judas.

To show no one is beyond hope of responding to the Gospel even though it may take a personal visit by Jesus to encourage them to respond.

Acts 13: 2-4, The Holy Ghost appoints him to ministry and guides him in it. He is sent by the Holy Ghost to evangelise the Gentiles and to teach them, through his letters, how to live for The Kingdom of God (2 Tim 2:2).

An apostle goes where no Christian evangelist or pastor has been already. An apostle is to proclaim the Gospel and teach Jesus where no one has gone Before, He may find believers who have declared Jesus To be their Lord in another place in which case the apostle strengthens their faith and teaches them how to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. This is how Paul operated in ministry, reaching those who had never heard and encouraging and building up those who had. He rarely stayed in a place for too long (unless there was a need to) and moved around teaching and preaching The Kingdom God (Acts 28:31). He preached boldly and unashamedly and fearlessly trusting God for whatever happened to him.

Paul gave up all to follow Jesus and was not afraid to die for his faith in Jesus. He willingly went to Rome knowing he was going to die there. He willingly went there as it would give him a chance to tell the Gospel to the empire as well as preach to people who would go to all the empire because Rome was the centre of the empire and people went from Rome to every part of the empire.

Paul said "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Anyone who calls themselves an apostle but stays in a church is really a glorified pastor. Unless you are appointed an apostle by God and sent to do the work of an apostle you are not one.

In Acts we have before us a panorama of the Christian life as it should be lived by a citizen of the Kingdom of God (Paul being a chief example which is why his life is mentioned so much in the book of Acts).

It is not just the Apostles (leaders who lived it) but the disciples (ordinary people) also lived it. All who say they belong to the Kingdom of God, are expected to live this lifestyle or at least trying to live it. If this lifestyle is the requirement to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God what then of Churches and its members that do not do these things? Are they part of the Kingdom of God? After all Jesus said that by your spiritual fruits you would be known.

You are either in The kingdom of God, doing His work (showing His fruit), trying to do His work, teaching The Kingdom, resting from serving it or learning how to do His work. If you are not doing any of these you may not be in The Kingdom and not have salvation.

The work of the kingdom is:

Preaching The Kingdom and The King

Teaching The Kingdom and how to relate to The King

Demonstrating The Kingdom

Casting out demons

Healing the sick

Destroying the works of Satan (note: destroying not hindering)

Encouraging others to do the work of The Kingdom

Whatever the King tells you to do

This is all plainly seen in the Bible so you do not have any excuse for not knowing that you have to do these things.

Jesus also said that the miracles done by the early church were a sign that they were His followers (Mark 16:17-18). Any one not doing any of these signs needs a good reason not to be doing them, especially if they call themselves and apostle unless they are resting from service, teaching others to do them, learning how to work in them or waiting for anointing to go out and minister in an area.

What of the Shepherds of the sheep that do not teach the sheep to do these things. He gave no way out from doing these things or an option of something else to do. The shepherds are supposed to be mature Christians and if they do not do these things or teach them then they do not believe what Jesus said and may be false shepherds honouring Jesus in name only and not doing the works He said to do.

Jesus said we would do these things if were His follower. If you are not doing them then you had better have a good reason to give Him for not doing these things when you face Him at the Judgment seat.

You are a citizen of the Kingdom of God and are expected to live like one and to undertake the necessary training or learning to be able to serve Jesus in these things.

You will have no one else to blame but yourself as Jesus said (John 7:17) that anyone who wanted to know what He taught (including what He says you are to do) would be shown this by The Holy Spirit.

What happens next is up to you and you will have no one to blame but yourself for what happens to you after you die if you are supposed to do these things and you do not do them.

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Why does Jesus address the church as a whole and not individuals in the churches when writing to them in the book of revelation?

He is looking at the impact of the church on the society around them because of what it preaches and how it demonstrates Jesus. The church and their representation of The Kingdom reflects the leadership and in a way these letters are comments on the leadership in these churches.

If a church is not doing the work of Jesus, it may not be part of the Body. It could be in the category of one of those churches that God says will be removed and people in it may lose their salvation. They lose being a member of the Body of Christ and its members may be in danger of going to hell.

So, there is a double warning here:

Are you as a church part of the body doing the work of Jesus or

Are you not demonstrating The Kingdom to society as Jesus desires you to by life and mouth and are in danger of hell fire.

The church is the sum of its members so the local church that Jesus condemns is because of what most of its members do. The condemnation is also of the church's leadership that guide the members so that they do what they are taught by the leadership.

WHAT WERE AND STILL ARE NICOLAITANS

The root of the word Nicolaitans comes from Greek nikao, to conquer or overcome, and laos, which means people and which the word laity comes from. The two words together especially means the destruction of the people and refers to the earliest form of what we call a priestly order or clergy which later on in church history divided people and allowed for leadership other than those led by the Holy Spirit. A good translation of Nicolaitan would be "those who prevail over the people"

These destroyed the flat structure of the Body of Christ where each person is directly answerable to Jesus and not to another. Spiritual authority over another in the Body of Christ is only for the purposes of helping them in their spiritual life and then it is not controlling type authority but a servant type serving the spiritual needs of the person. This true authority last only as long as Jesus wants you to minister to that person to guide them, help them mature, to meet any needs you need to or to teach them what Jesus wants them to be taught.

Ministry is the expression of God's love in you to another and to express it any other way than helping them because Jesus has asked you to is to take over the role of Jesus and declare you know what is best for a person.

To take authority over the physical side of a person is wrong unless Jesus appoints you as steward over them.

BACKGROUND

Chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation deals with letters to seven churches in Asia Minor. Why were they all in Asia Minor?

We are told in the Letter to Pergamos that Satan had his throne (seat) there so he ruled from there.

The chief spirit over Asia Minor was not a lower territorial spirit but Satan himself? So, the churches were prime targets for his attacks. So, these Letters are to seven churches to illustrate the effects Satan attacks on churches.

It is interesting that after these letters to the seven churches the focus changes from these churches in the area Satan controls to God's throne in heaven as if to remind us that Satan is controlled by God so that these churches are only in danger if they do not follow Jesus as Lord!

EPHESUS 2: I-7

This was the seat of the worship of the Goddess Artemis who was worshipped throughout the then known world. The demon behind Artemis would probably be working directly To Satan.

The Ephesians were doing all the correct things as Christians, but from wrong motives. They had left their first Love, Jesus (v4) so love for Him was no longer their motivation. The legalism that was involved in the cult of the goddess Artemis had somehow crept into the Christians so love was no longer a motivation for service.

They Tested the spirit behind things v2

They could not stand evil people v2

Laboured to serve Jesus and endured in this labour v3

But their motive for service was wrong so Jesus could not have them as His representatives and would close the church down rather than have it minister a corrupt way. Even though they were preaching the correct gospel of salvation (as they follow the Bible v2) legalism and ritual had crept in and replaced love and grace. They were not serving Jesus out of love for Him but for the sake of service.

They were commended because they hated the priestly structure associated with the Nicolaitans

The Ephesian church had the truth but did the right things but for the wrong reasons. They had lost their love for Jesus so it was just ritual and legalism, the same as it was at the Temple of Artemis to which it was little different once it lost its love of Jesus.

SMYRNA 2:8-11

The church at Smyrna is commended for its endurance against Satan attacks on it. They are encouraged to continue in their endurance until the trial is over and they will be rewarded with eternal life.

They are told not to be afraid as Jesus is greater than Satan and they can never lose the gift of eternal life He promises them if they endure to the end of the trial.

This is the type of Church that resists the evil around it and is not compromised by this evil in any way. Its members would rather be imprisoned than give in to the forces of evil around them.

PERGAMOS 2:12-17

In this city Satan had his seat (throne) and from this earthly throne he could monitor Rome, Jerusalem, Ephesus, and other important spiritual areas in the countries around him.

The church in Pergamos was once godly and they had people who had died fighting for the faith in that city. But they had become compromised in two ways:

They had allowed a priestly structure in the church (with all the results that followed) They had abused the freedom; the Grace of Jesus allows a Christian by compromising their faith through allowing things of Satan's world system to be an acceptable in the belief they could repent afterwards because of Calvary and the forgiveness that was there. (Heb 6:6-8 had been written then and they also had the warning in Rev 3:5)

After a while this worldliness became a natural part of their lifestyle and they no longer repented.

The Nicolaitans were there because the church had accepted things of Satan's world, but lost the ability to Hear the Holy spirit so adopted man's system of doing things

This is the church did not fight evil but compromised with it and lost its love for the truths of God and its ability to hear the Holy Spirit and adopted man's methods of doing things.

THYATIRA

This is the longest letter to any of the seven churches. Jezebel was the problem. Jezebel is part of the unholy trinity: Jezebel, Death and Hades and Anti-Christ so a victory over her is important.

This church showed Gods' love in its ministry but had Jezebel in its midst using Christians for her purposes. (Those that did not have Jesus truly as Lord).

Each person in the Thyatira church would be judged according to their service of Jesus. Those who allowed Jezebel to use them would be destroyed. Those that resisted her would be given a relationship with Jesus (salvation) and would rule the nations with Him.

Jesus placed no other trial on them than to resist Jezebel and obey His revealed Will (truths). This is the church that seeks to do God's Will and resist the things of Satan.

SARDIS 3:1-6

Sardis was a Church that had forgotten its beginnings so the foundational teachings it had received were badly compromised or forgotten. Things were so bad that many would lose their salvation. They were told to restore (strengthen) that of the Truth that they still had left (and Jesus would build on this and their desire to hold to these truths).

As always, there was a faithful remnant who had held to this what they were originally taught.

This is a church that compromised its truths and salvation because they allowed into their belief system things that were ungodly and embraced them. They had salvation (were in the Lamb's book of life but if they did not repent their name would be blotted out of and these would lose their salvation (v5).

Can you lose your salvation? Yes, according to this letter.

PHILADELPHIA.

Jesus had been watching them as they had been faithful to the point of exhaustion (had little strength) and had obeyed Jesus completely (there was no condemnation to them).

Jesus set before them an open door (of service and ministry) as they had proved their worth to Him through their faithfulness to Him. Their enemies would bow before them and admit their error of faith to the Philadelphians.

They are encouraged to endure to receive their rewards. it is only as you finish the race do you receive the prize.

LAODICEA 3:14-22

The lukewarm, worldly, wealthy, comfortable church, a comfortable social club with all the trappings of Christianity but none of the fruit of it. Of no spiritual relevance to the world around it as it makes none or little spiritual impact on it.

Jesus hates comfortable, lukewarm people or churches so much He spews (violently vomits) them out of His Body into Satan's world as He will not use or tolerate hypocrisy. This is the hypocritical church that say they are Christ's. but pay only lip-service to Him.

If any obey Jesus and repent (v20) their Salvation relationship with Jesus will be restored (Jn 17:2) and they will be as restored to fellowship with Him.

Some of the lessons from these letters:

You can lose your salvation (Rev 3:5)

Only in obedience to Jesus and His truths is their salvation

There are rewards for overcoming the attacks of Satan.

Only if you endure to the end will you receive a reward

Lukewarmness (comfortable Christianity) is hated by Jesus.

You must reject the world and all it offers not to be compromised by it.

God is Love and readily accepts the repentant person back into fellowship (Salvation.). It is obvious these people had not blasphemed The Holy spirit or they would not have been able to repent.

Each of these churches would have shown the Kingdom in a different way but only those that obeyed would be showing it correctly. Those that showed a church structure or lifestyle little different to the religions around them would have little impact on the society they lived in but those that had people willing to stand up for Jesus and die for Him would have changed the society they lived in.

Only as you show your life is different to those around you in the world and that you are willing to die for Jesus as well as demonstrate the authority of The kingdom of God will you impact society in a way that will change it.

Remember, that these churches reflected the attitudes of the minister(s) and/or denomination over them and Jesus will hold ministers accountable for the way they led the people they had control of.

CLOSING COMMENTS ON THE LETTERS

As I was discussing the purposes of these letters with a prophetess, I was given the following by Jesus:

They were written to the people in those areas professing to be of Christ yet not willing to open their blind eyes or their ears. Had they been willing to listen to the Holy Spirit, certain letters would not have been necessary. They are also an example for churches employing those same practices today.

These were written for Christians to examine their heart and see which one of these churches they are attending. Yes, they were written for leaders of churches as well as all the people in them

CONCLUSION

A citizen of The Kingdom of God will be Kingdom focused and not church or denominationally focused. Examine your focus. It will be found in how you represent The Kingdom or your lack of representing it.

Only citizens of The Kingdom go to heaven so you better be sure you are living as one, demonstrating and living The Kingdom as Jesus desires you to live it.