

Church History and the King James Translation

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: DISTORTED AND DEFORMED

DISTORTED: ..dis•tort•ed; [dih-stawr-tid]; -*adjective*

1) Not truly or completely representing the facts; 2) twisted, as with an aberration or bias; 3) to cause to work in a twisted or blurred manner; 4) to turn away from the expected or proper direction; 5) a deformation of an image; 6) to give a false, perverted, or disproportionate meaning to.

DEFORMED: ..de•formed; [dih-fawrmd]; -*adjective*

1) To mar the natural form or shape of; 2) put out of shape; 3) to change the form of; 4) transform; 5) to change the original state; 6) to disfigure as if by twisting.

Preface

The foregoing definitions clearly depict the sad state of the organizational/institutionalized Christian Church today; distorted and deformed.

How, when, and why did it arrive in this abhorrent and abominable condition?

This is what we will explore in this article, and for some, it will not be pretty.

Like a dead corpse rotting away, today's "*organized/institutionalized local church system*" bares virtually no likeness or semblance to what was once a living and vibrant community of believers who knew what is was to be set free from the entanglements and the yokes of bondage.

But right off the bat, someone might be saying, "*...What in the world are you talking about? My church isn't distorted or deformed. In fact, our pastors are humble men, filled with the Spirit and many saints have benefited much from their ministry. Our church is Christ-centered and God-glorifying, vibrant and growing...*" etc., etc.

You might be surprised, or shall I even say, shocked.

I'm reminded many times of the Scriptures in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15

"Now the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually examined. But he that is spiritual examines all things, and he himself is examined of no man."

The importance of this verse in arriving at truth and understanding God's Word cannot be overestimated.

As you scour through this article, hopefully there will be some of you who will gain a little knowledge and understanding, not only as to:

1) how "church leaders" have distorted and deformed the church; turning it into an enslaving institutional system, which was not founded by Jesus Christ, but by men who love to feed upon and control other human beings;

but also,

2) gain a little knowledge and understanding of what the church really is; a purchased possession bought and paid for with the sinless blood of Christ; who alone has the authority of ownership and declares that no man can lay any other foundation than the one He has already established.

Remember though, as you read and study, pray for the ability to see and hear the deep truths presented throughout. Without God's Spirit, without the One of whom it is written, "He shall guide you into Truth," all the time in the world will not bring one to the knowledge of the Truth. The Spirit of God is not something that I, or any man, can give to you.

May you find the faith and courage to do what God would have you to do, because doing it will bring you the peace, joy, and freedom that Jesus died to provide.

INTRODUCTION

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: DISTORTED AND DEFORMED

"But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Spirit teaches; combining spiritual things with spiritual words." 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

What would you say is the number one responsibility of Bible translators, or any translator for that matter? Would you agree in saying that the main function of translators is to convert written material from one language into another language, making certain that the translated version projects the meaning of the original text as precisely as possible?

When God told Adam and Eve, *"Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it..."* (Gen. 1:28), you can be certain that He chose His words carefully to keep from being misunderstood. When He commanded them not to eat of *"the tree of knowledge of good and evil,"* the record indicates that they fully understood the order and its dire consequences (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-3).

All throughout time, God spoke His will to the people, sometimes directly and sometimes in a dream or vision. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2).

As our opening verse demonstrates, the Apostle Paul would say that it is impossible to know the mind of God without the help and aid of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has always been present to help the inspired man of God select the right words that are relative to revealing the word of God. God did not leave anything to chance. We must stay with words "*which the Spirit teaches*" (1 Cor. 2:13) and be careful, when we attempt to explain an idea expressed by these Spirit-given words, not to stray from their original meaning.

That is why translators are given a great responsibility in making sure they get it right, especially key words. The changing of one word can literally change the world. Do they get it right, or do they have something to protect?

The word "*c-h-u-r-c-h*" is one of those words that has impacted the world and has subverted the purpose for which it was intended. Because the translators substituted the word "church," meaning a building, instead of the Holy Spirit's word, ecclesia, a word reflecting a functioning body or a community, it has affected our whole approach to the meaning of the body of Christ. We have been given a word from the translators that has nothing to do with the original Greek word ecclesia.

This may come as a surprise to some people but there is no such thing as a *CHURCH* (institution) in all of Scripture! Oh yes indeed, the word *CHURCH* is found therein about 100 times; but the English word *CHURCH* should NOT be there at all. That word is not a TRANSLATION of the Greek word ecclesia; but it is substituted for a translation of the Greek word ecclesia in every place it appears in the NT Scriptures with the exception of three instances; all three found in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41 (more about this later).

When Jesus said, "*Upon this rock I will build my ecclesia*," (Mat 16:18) the translators purposely used a word identifying a building rather than the people. What He said was that upon the great truth confessed by Peter, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus would build His assembly, His gathering, or His community of redeemed people. Jesus did NOT say that He would build a *church* and He did not do such a thing! The ecclesia of Christ is NOT a church! All churches are the works and creations of men. Jesus did not set up a religious institution of any kind. The ecclesia (*ek*, "out of or from," and *kaleo*, "a calling or to call") is His called out, obedient people, wherever they are! The ecclesia (or e-k-k-l-e-s-i-a) is NOT an organization or institution.

Now dear reader, at this point, you have a choice: either believe what the translators had to say or go to the original language and read what Jesus and the apostles had to say. You will surely find no word coming from Jesus that He called the translators to represent His authority.

Doesn't it stir your mind and heart enough to move you to really examine why this is true and consider all the error it has brought upon the world? Most people *in the church* are not aware

that some Scriptures have been mistranslated, and then misapplied by human leaders. Everybody can check these things out for themselves. Today, we have bible programs that show every Greek word, its meaning, and what part of speech it is. We have bible dictionaries, lexicons, the internet and resources without end. And of course, we have the ever-present help and aid of the Spirit Himself who will "*guide us into all Truth.*" We are indeed, "without excuse!"

CHAPTER 1

THE "C-H-U-R-C-H" TAKES SHAPE

How did the Greek word Ecclesia, meaning a called out assembly, congregation or community, come to be translated "*church*", a word that is neither Greek nor English but is of doubtful Latin origin and implies a building and temple worship? What is a word that is neither Greek NOR English doing in a Greek to English translation?

In order to answer these questions, we must look at some historical documents and references. When we study the history of Bible translations, it is easy to see why those in authority, along with the translators, have sought more to *hide* the meaning of some verses than they have done to *reveal* their real meaning to the common people's understanding.

There is absolutely no doubt that this word (among others) remained intact in order for the clergy to redefine it, interpreting it with the strongest institutional and hierarchical connotations. Was this mere ignorance, or a means of creating a ruling class of "*church overseers*?"

In 1604 for example, King James I, who was not only the King of England, but head of the Church of England, commissioned fifty-four Hebrew and Greek scholars to give English-speaking people the official version of the Bible. The king had always been interested in the Scriptures and was somewhat of a scholar in his own right. He appointed Richard Bancroft, soon to be made the Archbishop of Canterbury, as chairman and "chief overseer" of this committee.

The "*King James pattern of church*" was already well established in the ecclesiastical orders and offices of the Church of England, so it was relatively easy to follow the instructions of the noble King James who held many titles, one being "Defender of the Faith".

So, the stage was set to give the world a true English translation of the Bible. But the world never had a chance to receive a pure translation because everything was stacked in favor of one that would place the emphasis on the institutional Church and its ruling officers. Bancroft, as well as Erasmus, were the architects of the King James Version translation and they were far from being saints. The translators were obligated to fit the translation with the Anglican agenda and beliefs without any conflict between church and state. King James knew "*no bishop, no king*" and he ordered a translation which would make his control over the church and the people less difficult.

When the King James Version of the Bible was created, James actually gave instructions not to change the word *church* in order to reflect its actual meaning. This is not a conspiracy theory.

This is documented history! Bancroft subsequently, with the King's approval, devised 15 rules which the translators were ordered to abide by in their development of what became known as "*the Authorized Version*;" a cunning ploy that would eventually make all other versions "*unauthorized*." Notice rule number three: "The old Ecclesiastical Words are to be kept; i.e., the word *Church* not to be translated congregation or community, etc." It was clear to the translators what "*ecclesiastical words must be kept*" and you can be sure that they would have no qualms for choosing "*ecclesiastical words*" that would fit the best interest of the powerful Clergy/Church, one of which was this rule not to tamper with these terms (i.e. church). Again, this is an historical fact. Many other words were translated differently as well so as to agree with the Anglican Church.

So again, the King James translators retained, under orders from the King and the Archbishop certain "*ecclesiastical words*," including "*church*." Such words do not give the true meaning of the Greek. "*Church*" does not translate ecclesia. English words such as "congregation" and "assembly" and "community" do. Again we ask, why were these words not translated? Why were the people deprived of the true sense of these words? What would the Church of England, and subsequent "churchmen," have to gain by keeping the people ignorant of the true meanings of these words? We have given you a hint to the answers to these questions already in this article. It is so obvious.

Bibles are not translated by atheists. If they were, maybe they would be more accurate. But Bibles are mostly translated by Christians who profess to adhere to the tenets of Christianity and who ALREADY KNOW WHAT THEY BELIEVE. And as they translate, THEY WILL PUT THEIR BELIEFS INTO THEIR TRANSLATION.

In regards to "c-h-u-r-c-h," here we have an example of translators modifying the text to make it seem to align better with tradition and practice that is already set in place, rather than trying to convey the literal intended meaning.

The word "church" naturally draws the reader's thoughts to a religious structure and a religious form rather than organic spiritual life.

But this is no justification of the use of "church" for ecclesia. Unless of course one has a built-in bias in shifting the meaning of the word from "the people" to "a building". A building would more serve the purpose of a religious group with a built in hierarchy.

"Church" was employed by the King James translators to protect their own interests and to keep its readers from a proper understanding of the will of God. They were happy to let the people live in ignorance and superstition, so long as the church was able to keep its position of privilege. This word has created many false ideas, causing much confusion and division among religious people, even among those who are striving conscientiously to serve the great God of Heaven.

The word "*church*" is not of God. It is the product of man's own theological imagination and abject bias. It is in a class with "Purgatory," "Easter," "Christmas," "Transubstantiation," "Eucharist," etc. For that matter, the same can be said of "Bishop" and "Deacon."

Remember that the "Church" at that time, and indeed, right down to today, had been fashioned into a powerful force that dictated "truth" to the people, and wielded the ecclesiastical sword as a political weapon for its own advantage. In addition, the "Church" imposed itself as the *"mediator between God and man,"* making obedience to IT an absolute necessity, without which there could be no salvation. The "Church" claimed to have given the Bible to the people, and that it was the rightful guardian of it. When I speak of the *"Church"* I am referring not only to the Roman Catholic Church, but also the Greek Orthodox Church, all the Protestant Churches, and especially the Church of England.

As a result we have many Bible translations today that truly are tainted by men using covert schemes to gain their own ends; where men who supposed themselves to be authorities over the Lord's Assembly tried to destroy the revelation that all God's children are priests unto God through one High Priest, Jesus Christ. The scheme sought to place self-appointed leaders in mediation between men and God, usurping the authority of Christ. These men sought to alter the Bible text just enough to make it appear supporting of their hierarchical rule and false authority.

These facts are recorded in history and anyone can do the research themselves and find it to be true.

Enter Constantine

From its earliest usage, the word "church" has been understood in pagan traditions. It was the pagans who had constructed their obelisks; their buildings; their shrines and their pagan mosques in which they met to offer their sacrifices unto their idols. There were pagans using the word "church" long before Christians ever began using it. Church is a pagan concept and not a Christian one.

In fact, Justin Martyr, writing in the 2nd century, makes it plain that the concept of *"church"* and *"church buildings"* were nonexistent in his day and that the saints were not accustomed to meeting at any particular time or in any place!

When he was asked where he assembled, Justin Martyr answered:

"Where each one chooses and can; do you suppose that we all are accustomed to meet together in one place? Quite otherwise, for the God of the Christians is not confined by place, but being invisible, He fills the heaven and the earth, and the faithful everywhere adore Him and sing His praise."

Not only that, most of the pomp of religious ceremony that so many believe to be essential in *church services* is derived entirely from pagan concepts that influenced and corrupted the early Church. This again is an undisputable historical fact! It is clearly evidenced in early Christian writings. Here is just another example of the many early writings:

"The pagans had been accustomed to numerous and splendid ceremonies from their infancy, and they saw the new religion (i.e. Christianity) destitute of temples, altars, victims, priests, and all

the pomp which the pagans supposed was the essence of religion; for the unenlightened persons are prone to estimate religion by what meets the eyes. To silence this accusation, the Christian leaders thought they must introduce some of the rites and ceremonies which would strike the senses of the people;

"Before the second century was half gone, before the last of the apostles had been dead forty years, this apostate, this working of the 'Mystery of Iniquity,' had so largely spread over the East and the West, that it is literally true that a large part of the Christian observances and institutions, even in this century, had the aspect of the pagan mysteries" (Mosheim in Ecclesiastical History).

Even Constantine (280-337), the Roman Emperor and his mother, Empress Helena, built many pagan temples but after his conversion in 313, he continued his custom of building, but this time it was "Christian" temples. Many pagan buildings were later converted to so-called churches. This was really the official beginning of recognizing buildings as churches but it was not until after the reign of Constantine that Christianity was publicly recognized and sanctioned by the state.

By this time however, a clear class of "*church officials*" had evolved and it was Constantine that gave legacies (money) to church leaders and began to erect cathedral type buildings. He built 7 in Rome (at least), and others in Italian cities, in Africa, Syria, and Asia. Also at this time, the church leaders thought that it was a good idea to herd the laity under one roof. This was desirable so that they could be guarded against "heretical" teachings of those that weren't approved by the clergy.

Since there was now a well defined distinction made between the clergy and laity, special clothing, special titles, and official duties evolved that could only be performed by these elitists. This group now decided who could speak, who could teach, and be added to their special group. These "*church leaders*" now gathered together to decide issues and plans. They regularly discussed personal matters of the laity that in other contexts would be considered gossip. And all this was accomplished for the good of the laity. These were the "self-appointed watchers" that insisted on submission. These leaders thought that they had the power to act in authority above the Word of God. They sought to, and did impose their self-righteous, man-made doctrines on the people and called all failures to obey these man-made rules sin.

Can the reader describe one aspect mentioned above that is NOT present within denominations existing today?

Organized Christianity was now on the move and made equal before the law with the few remaining pagan religions still recognized by the Roman government. Some church historians accord these events as one of the most decisive in world history. Whether Constantine was himself "converted" in the sense of New Testament usage of the word matters little. What does matter, and very much, is that the "*c-h-u-r-c-h*"; the institution of the church, was legalized for the first time; all of this done with no Biblical justification whatsoever! The full majesty and power of the stately Roman government conferred its recognition and blessing upon this new formed institutional church.

In 325, Catholicism became the exclusive and domineering religion of the realm and in rapid succession, urged on by the clergy, Constantine issued decrees conferring unprecedented advantages upon the church. Tax exemption was granted; members of the clergy were excused from military service; the estates of those dying without direct heirs was given to the church, and the church was empowered to receive gifts and legacies of any kind.

Every pagan cult and communion of any kind, except Catholic, was outlawed and their assets confiscated and given to the Catholic Church. And the measures taken against dissident Christians were even worse. Christians who opposed what was happening were forbidden to assemble on pain of death or exile, and all their assets were confiscated and given to the Church. Of course, the clergy said that these measures were necessary for the defense of the gospel and silencing heresy.

THIS was the beginning of institutional Christianity and the downfall of what "*church*" and "*worship*" truly means.

As the centuries went by, this idea of not only the word (church), but also the concept of an institutional church kept growing more and more by the Catholic church and was retained by the Church of England and both used it as a device to hold people in subjection to the whims of a few powerful men who controlled the institutional church at that time.

Enter Tyndale and others

The keeping of the word "*church*" in the vocabulary of the religious leaders is important to the institutional church concept even today, and is defended by the modern day clergy for the same reasons that it has been for centuries but never has the word "church" been demonstrated or justified from a biblical stand point to represent the Greek word ecclesia.

But even at that time, though the Bible was still a closed book for the English, God was in the process of preparing a man to change this.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, some Godly men knew of the evil that had been already perpetuated. In the 16th century, men of God like **William Tyndale**, Greek scholar and translator of the first printed English Bible, knew that the word "ecclesia" did NOT translate as "church." In his translation of the Scriptures, instead of using the word "church," Tyndale used the word "*congregation*" to place emphasis upon the congregation of God or the community of God's people who assemble ONLY under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He wanted to rid the Bible of the ecclesiastical words set in by a powerful clergy system and move the unscriptural focus from a building to the people.

He knew that the word "church" was totally misleading and that inherent in that word resided all the apparent justification for an institutional Church with all its trappings. Although he was at one time brought before the local bishop on charges of heresy, but released with a warning, William Tyndale would not be silent about the Word of God.

Tyndale's emphasis was deliberate and true. It is obvious to see how this offended the religious leaders of his day, just as it does the religious leaders of our day; because Tyndale's emphasis on people being the Ecclesia of God distracted readers from seeing organized religion, hierarchical leadership and the buildings dedicated for religious service as pertaining to and even defining the Church.

These men were fighting for the right of the people to have a translation that would give them clear meanings to all the words; that they be expressed in simple English words that would make the meanings clear to the people. Tyndale, and other men like him, were fighting against that which they saw as a perversion of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They contended that each individual had the right to assemble where they wish and a responsibility to search the Scriptures on their own, and not to rely upon the Clergy. The "Church" objected, and therein lay the conflict.

Those who held political sway over the masses through the "church" insisted that these men be silenced, and that their works be burned. An all-out attack was launched to discredit those "*heretics*" and to intensify the message of so-called "*orthodoxy*." The "Church" determined what the truth was for everyone, and the clergy set out to defend it with all vengeance. Religious leaders who did not pledge allegiance to the State religion, The Church of England, were more than looked upon with a great deal of suspicion. They were deprived of certain rights. If he was a clergyman, he was often relegated to an obscure outpost where his work could not influence many people.

William Tyndale became famous for his translation of the Bible from Greek to English. Throughout his translation, Tyndale gave "congregation" as the meaning of ecclesia, and the word "church" **never appears in his translation**. One church leader named John Bell told Tyndale that it would be better for the people to be without God's truth, as long as they had the church's law. This was Tyndale's famous response:

"If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough should know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

In the England of Henry VIII, it was illegal to translate the Bible into English. The church authorities believed that it would be dangerous for people to read the Bible themselves. How would they know how to interpret it without the "Church" to tell them what it meant? (Sound familiar?) One English bishop complained that placing the Bible in the hands of the people would cause "*the pearl of the gospel to be scattered on the ground and trodden in the mud by swine.*" But the real problem was that the "Church" was not teaching the Truth of the Scriptures to their people. They were happy to let the people live in ignorance and tradition, so long as the church was able to keep its position of privilege.

There is no doubt that Tyndale's assessment of the problem was undeniably factual in that the Scriptures were being hidden from the eyes of the people. Many of the people could not find the answer or explanation, or even understand the "churches" subtle rules, policies and teachings. Those in "*leadership positions*" in the church covered up their abominations and sham by hiding the Scriptures from the people's eyes and darkening the right sense of the Scriptures by their

confusing and deceptive arguments. This went well beyond mere verbal deceit to tampering with the actual Scripture texts themselves, as we have seen.

The average person had no way of proving or disproving their suspicions. If they did speak up their lives would be endangered by the very institution that claimed to speak for the God of love. The terror that plagued the hearts and minds at the very mention of the word "*heretic*" kept them silent, for the end of everyone who was given the title was the same - burning at the stake.

One English couple were actually arrested for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer and the 10 commandments in English. They were found guilty and burned to death. These things infuriated Tyndale, causing him to press on in earnest. Tyndale realized what he needed to do.

After his translations started showing up in England, the King, (Henry VIII) along with *the church*, declared Tyndale a heretic and a criminal and orders were issued for his arrest. The King sent many spies throughout Europe searching for Tyndale. They were ordered to arrest him and take him to England. Tyndale lived a life of constant difficulty and danger.

It is believed also at this time that Tyndale probably hid for several years in Hamburg, Germany. Even his friends did not know where he was. During his time of hiding, he also wrote other books, one of which was "The Practice of the Prelates," a book dealing with the corruption and abuses of the Church. This, along with other books, were secretly printed and smuggled to England where they were a great help to Christians there.

Even while he was engaged in this great work, Tyndale was never safe. He knew he was a wanted man and he constantly moved from place to place. Because he was so secretive, we don't know much about his life at this particular time. He was probably living in a very poor run down area of whatever city he was living in at the time; or in barns out in the country. Of course, he couldn't afford to attract attention. Tyndale lived on very little food and had almost no possessions, except for the books and papers he needed for his translations.

Although Tyndale was very careful about who he trusted, he was finally "tricked" by a man whom he thought was his friend, but turned out to be one of the King's (Henry VIII) spies. One day, Tyndale accepted an invitation to this "*friends*" home for dinner. When he arrived, there were other men waiting who grabbed Tyndale and tied him with ropes.

He was taken to a huge medieval fortress in Antwerp, and cast into a filthy and rat infested dungeon. He was beaten and mistreated and was held there for a year and a half.

The crimes he was charged with, among other things, was for teaching that people should be able to read the Truth of the Scriptures and to read it in their own language.

His pursuit of a fair and honest translation not only put him at odds with the Clergy, but his translation brought down the wrath of the Clergy and it cost him his life and for that they labeled him a "heretic" and finally succeeded in having him burned at the stake. All this, because he dared to challenge the meanings of certain ecclesiastical words; all because he translated the

Scriptures from Greek and Hebrew into terms that more closely identified with their original meanings!

Tyndale refused to say that he was wrong. He defended his answers by quoting from the Bible, which he had given his life to study and translate. In October 1536, he was declared guilty and was sentenced to death.

On the day of his death, he was taken to the place of execution. First he was chained to a wooden stake. Then he was surrounded up to his waist with straw and wood sprinkled with gunpowder. Church officials were sitting in their seats of honor to watch. Many hundreds of townspeople had also come.

The order was given and the hangman first strangled Tyndale, and when he was dead started the fire that burned his body.

But Tyndale was not silent in his death. Just before his death he prayed in a loud voice, "*Lord, open the King of England's eyes!*" Just as our Savior Jesus did, Tyndale prayed for his enemies at the moment of his death. The Lord answered the prayer of William Tyndale, raising up other men, who took up the task where Tyndale had left off.

After the martyrdom of Tyndale, the work of giving the English speaking people a Bible in their own language fell upon the shoulders of Miles Coverdale. With the encouragement and support of Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer, and publishers Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch, Coverdale published a translation that leaned heavily upon the Tyndale Bible. The new work was called "The Great Bible," which was published in 1539. Again, in every case, ecclesia was translated "congregation," and the word "*church*" never appears in his translation!

But today the KJV still thrives. The KJV has had greater circulation among English speaking people than any other version before or since. The style is one of its greatest appeals. Written in the stately Elizabethan language, it is perhaps the easiest of all translations to commit to memory. It came to be regarded as the one and only true translation, even venerated as sacred. To speak critically of "*the blessed KJV*" is close to the sin against the Holy Ghost in the view of some. Some churches revere it as the only reliable translation.

As some might know, many of our other translations that are around today get its cue from the KJV; versions such as the ASV, NASV, RV, NIV, NKJV, Scofield; just to name a few.

Considering the above, could you see why almost all of our translations today have kept the word "church?" When the influence, popularity, and hold of the KJV is considered and when one looks at the religious world with all the churches, who would dare publish a Bible and leave out the word church? Who would buy a translation if the word church was not in it?

"*Church*" is a dear and beloved word and *Church people* are not going to give it up, nor their beloved Church. How dare anyone publish a Bible without Church in it? For sure it will be a publication failure. No good, faithful member of any church would have a Bible in his home that

did not have the word "church" in it. It would border on blasphemy to leave church out of the Bible, desecrating that holy institution, the church!

I would venture to say that many people have never seen a translation that does not use the word "church." It is little known to Christendom that multitudes possess a "bogus" translation that has been foisted upon the "*church*" by the translators; a "camel" that has been swallowed by many scholars and students alike.

However, several scholarly translations have been made in more recent times. Translators attempted to accomplish many of the same things that Tyndale, Coverdale, and others did. But these translations never sell well because there is no "church" in it!

Robert Young, who gave us "*The Analytical Concordance to the Bible*," published a work which he called, "A Literal Translation of the Holy Bible." He uses "assembly" as the translation of "ecclesia," and the word "church" is not found in it. It is published by Baker Book House. He dared to give us a translation of the word "ecclesia" rather than substituting the word "church." He destroys "the myth of the church" - there is no such thing in the NT Scriptures!

Another bible scholar, relied upon by our brethren in recent years, J.B. Rotherham, put out a literal translation which he called "The Emphasized Bible." He too, never used the word "church." Many others can be cited as well.

Again, such translations are not popular with church-dependent people, because they "*belong to a church*" which is the center of their religious life.

It is significant that this attempt by Tyndale, Coverdale, and many others to rid the Bible of such ecclesiastical words as "church" brought down the wrath of the powerful Clergy upon them. The same has been true in every generation, even to this day . Whenever honest people explore the possibilities that what they are being taught by their religious leaders may contain untruths, they run the risk of inciting their wrath. Many religious men are fearful that they may lose control of the people, their livelihood, and/or their reputation. The most hated people are those who challenge our religious system.

What does all of this mean? It means (among other things) that it is quite obvious that for centuries there have been many scholars and students of the Bible that have been concerned about the use of "*church*" as a translation of ecclesia. Many church leaders and teachers today would have us believe that challenging the word "church" is foolish and that it should not be done. They contend that this kind of criticism is of recent origin, calling it a "*New Age*" movement and that only a "*handful of heretics*" are raising questions about it.

Anyone can see that this is not true. Our study shows that conscientious Bible students have objected to these theological, ecclesiastical words, such as "church" for centuries, and we will continue to do so as long as there are those who insist on conjuring up distorted meanings of ecclesia.

Remember that many in the clergy today derive their prestige and livelihood from a clergy system with its corporate headquarters in a building. A change back to the faith that was once given to the saints rings fear to the order of our institutional church system.

Our translators presumed to know more than the great Author and corrupted the word of God. How can those who profess to be Christians modify what God, by the Holy Spirit has given! The body of Christ is a purchased possession bought and paid for with His blood. He and He alone is the Head and holds full ownership. By changing the frame and form of His body by adding our own rules, and regulations and interpretations, we pollute the pure Scriptural example. We say that we are qualified to further define God's Word; that God didn't finish His Word because man's clarification is necessary.

Can one imagine a more perfidious and deceptive act of man? It truly is repugnant to those who reverently regard the original as the very word of God, and want it to speak to them as He was pleased to give it.

Those who would push aside the Holy Spirit, the teacher and guide to all truth (John 16:13-14) have been a thorn in the side of the Body of Christ from the beginning. They always want to add or clarify or change something. Just like the Pharisees who came before them, they seek to elevate themselves by enslaving others; by taking away the liberty which is ours in Christ. (Galatians 3)

During the so-called Reformation Period, very little changed. The concept of "*church*," along with its structure and format, kept pressing on, even to greater distortion. The people continued to look to teachers for truth and "correct doctrine" and death to the dissenters followed its path.

The focus on the building and a strong one man leadership had not changed since the time of Constantine. "The Reformers" simply went from priest to preacher and never healed the clergy/laity gap that still exists today. Great teachers emerged and we worshipped their eloquence.

Crowds jammed to hear these silver tongued orators. And what did we do? We built **bigger buildings** in celebration of our idols. Christianity became defined by men of skill and oratory, not men defined by servanthood and humility and other fruits of the Spirit.

Though they elevated the Word of God to some degree in the Reformation, they continued many of the lofty customs and traditions they had grown up within the confines of the Roman Church. They adopted from Rome (which was adopted from the pagans) the use of large elaborate buildings with steeples on top. These buildings contained altars and platforms which raised their appointed leaders above the congregation. It divided the congregation from the so-called leadership. Leaders were set above the congregation and were called ministers and pastors.

Though no such practice took place in Scripture, the traditions of pews, platforms, stained glass, and clergy continue to this day. Even during the Reformation, so accepted did these traditions of men become that even the building now became known as the "Church."

People began to believe that the building was the "*House of God*" and called it so. No thought was given to Scripture on this matter or it would have been clearly seen that each of God's people is His house. (Hebrews 3:6; 1 Corinthians 3:16) They would have known that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. (Acts 7:48ff)

As the Reformation grew, it continued to practice many of the customs of the Roman Church, the greatest of which was the placing of mortal men above the Word of God. They began to make rules and regulations not found in the Scriptures. They justified these additions by saying that these things were not forbidden in the Word and would help to define it. Do you think God needs our help?

Like the Roman Church before them, they sought to legislate everything. Since the leaders now placed themselves *above the people*, they now decided who could or could not teach; who people should marry; right down to eating, drinking, and dress. Gossip and slander continued behind peoples backs and became common place amongst the leaders, and all of this being justified by "*watching over the flock.*"

This whole desperate effort to justify from Scripture the man-devised and instituted local corporate church institution is as absurd as it is totally contrary to God's word. And what is really even sadder is that many refuse to see this false teaching and folly for what it really is!

CHAPTER II

ACTS 19:23-41

In Jesus' day, when the government or organization wanted to announce a gathering, they would send a herald, a chronicler, an announcer, who would call out the purpose of the meeting, who should attend, place, time etc.

Those who attended that particular "*calling out*" were called the "*ecclesia*" to that calling.

In Acts Chapter 19 starting at verse 23, we have a very interesting "*ecclesia*" or "*church*" gathering:

"And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver Shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.

Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theatre. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.

And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!'

And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: 'Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.'

And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly." Acts 19:23-41

Here we have an illegal "assembly" made by an illegal "calling out." The Romans were very fearful of assemblies of any kind and had very stringent laws of assembling in any kind of manner whatsoever.

There is a lot in this passage of Scripture than can be commented on. The main thing to point out is that this gathering; this assembly; this community; this "church" if you will, had a purpose for gathering.

As has been said, the KJV translators, as well as all subsequent ones, substituted the word "church" for the Greek word ecclesia in every place it appears in the NT Scripture with the exception of three instances; all three found in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41. Why did the translators translate the word ecclesia correctly only in these three verses in Acts 19? You could see why very easily when you examine the context.

Remember that according to the translators and to their customs and traditions that they have developed, a church is a religious organization or institution; or, the word is used to refer to a building built by men, where people go to do their religious services.

How can they possibly use their incorrect translation ("church") in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41? It wouldn't make sense. It would expose their deception and corruption. So they used the correct translation: assembly, or gathering, or community. The design and the hypocrisy of the leadership among the translators is seen very clearly.

They incorrectly translated ecclesia as "church" over 100 times, except in these three instances in Acts 19. Isn't that incredible? Why? If the Greek word "ecclesia" really means the same thing as the English word "church," why did not the translators render it "church" in these three cases?

The word "ecclesia" could NOT have been translated by the word church because it does NOT have the same meaning!

In the day of Christ and His apostles, the word "ecclesia" was an everyday word that simply meant "assembly;" "congregation;" "community" or "gathering" of people. Any gathering of people, whether religious, political, or even criminal in purpose, was called an "ecclesia."

The word itself gives no indication of the kind or the purpose of the assembly (ecclesia). In Acts 19:32, 41, ecclesia is translated "assembly" and refers to an unlawful gathering, a mob. In the same context it has reference to a "lawful assembly" in Acts 19:39.

In all instances where the word "ecclesia" appeared, if it was in a religious connection or had to do with the Lord's people, the word "church" was substituted. Hence, in Acts 19 the three times the word appears it has no reference to the Lord's disciples and the word "assembly" is given as a true translation.

This flagrant deception of substituting the word "church" rather than providing a proper translation has been a source of untold problems giving apparent justification for the institutional church as we know it today, from the Roman Catholic Church onward!

The fact of the matter is that people could have "*church*" and not worship the true Creator. People could follow a "*calling out*" which was not only unlawful, but basically served no real purpose. For two full hours, the Ephesians screamed 6 words! This was, according to the true Greek meaning of the word, an ecclesia. But,...BUT, according to the translators, this should have been a "*church service*" too! But no, that can't be!

A point to be considered is this: Just because people gather together on Sunday at a place called "church" does not mean they are doing what God calls them to do at such a gathering. There is nothing sacred about "*going to church.*"

But in our Western society, "*going to church*" has become something sacred, as sacred as Diana was to the Ephesians.

In our society, patriotic, law-abiding, moral people go to church. The President of the United States, when he wants to portray his morality, will use television footages and pictures of himself attending church even though he has no interest in the things of God. There is a strong cultural

pull to attend church, not because the Holy Spirit is calling, but because our cultural and/or religious conditioning is calling.

Many of us are familiar with the term "*go to church.*" It is ingrained in us. But there is not a single Scriptural reference to support the idea of "going to church." When a Christian hears the true "calling out" it is the Holy Spirit calling us to Himself, not to some church building where we do all sorts of things which may or may not have anything to do with what God may want us to do.

Thanks to the influence of the Pagans and the Romans (and eventually the Roman Catholic Church), and right down to our so-called "*church fathers,*" we now have church buildings and they have become so adopted as a part of our religious culture that we actually have deceived ourselves to think they are necessary and biblical.

We falsely presume that true spiritual growth and fellowship cannot transpire without one of these "churches." We might ask ourselves, "if the early ecclesia thrived and spread like wild fire throughout the world without church buildings and programs, how is it we have come to believe that we can do nothing without them?"

CHAPTER III

"C-H-U-R-C-H"... "C-H-U-R-C-H"... AND MORE "C-H-U-R-C-H"

So far we have looked at only a fraction of the history that so many Christians are unaware of. There is so much about this issue that could be said. Does it bother anyone (considering the resources of information, concerning history and the original writings of Scripture we have available at our very fingertips) that we are still to this day using a term (i.e. church) not actually found in Scripture; a term that has been "translated" from a Greek word that is not even used once in all of Scripture?

I can hear some die-hard detractors saying: "*Does all of this really matter?*"

They will say, "*that was then and this is now.*"

"*You can't expect the church to be perfect with imperfect people.*"

"*Why do you hate the people in the institutional church.*"

"*Your' re making a mountain out of a mole hill.*"

"*Of course we know that 'church' is not a building.*"

"*We know that it refers to a congregation, or an assembly, or whatever. We know that! And this is what we try to teach to our people.*"

"You are the one who is distorting and deforming the issue! Its been done this way for centuries. It must be right."

Oh really? Obviously, you have not been listening (reading) very well, have you?

Again, let me repeat.....it is very important for us to understand that the Holy Spirit, working through the Biblical writers, did not supply them with the word "church."

This is an historical fact and can easily be checked out.

The Holy Spirit chose the word ecclesia to describe the people who have been *called out of a world of sin* and who are the *"assembly of God."* Simply put, ecclesia means a called out "gathering" or "community." Ecclesia, by stark contrast, bears no connotation whatsoever to an earthy building, temple, shrine, institution or anything of the sort!

Does all of this really matter? The fact is, it only matters if you are interested in Biblical Christianity. It only matters if doing things the way Jesus intended is important to you.

No, I don't expect the so-called "*church*" to be composed of perfect people; I just expect it to be biblical. And no, I don't hate the people in the ecclesiastical system. I hate the system that has ensnared them; that has placed them behind bars; sometimes through no fault of their own.

This is a matter of one thing and one thing only. These are the words and commands of Scripture!

The prevailing view today goes totally against the teaching of the Spirit and the NT. The Holy Spirit gave particular words and particular ways of doing things. A "congregation," an "assembly," a "community," is either based on these words and ways or on something else. And if it is based on something else, then it equates to but one thing: the words and traditions of mere men!

And if that is the case, then such so-called institutions simply cannot be said to be "biblical." They are unbiblical; indeed, anti-biblical, going totally contrary to the teaching of Scripture!

Until we all realize that the Scriptures which God has given are not optional; that they are not to be tampered with; then you are doomed to defeat. The pain and misery of good people trying to make their Christianity work in a system that won't let them be what Jesus called them to be will continue. And it needs to stop.

Why do we build a material building and hang out a sign that announces to the whole world that this is a Baptist Church, or a Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Reformed, or Mormon Church? Why? Surely we say that we know that such a building is NOT the Lord's ecclesia. We say we believe that the Church is people, but we aren't willing to let go of the idea as well as the practice, that "church" is also the place we attend each week!

But, "ACCORDING TO WHAT?" There is no other "church" in the Bible than the people of God. There is never a place; there is never a building called by this name. Why do we insist it exists and that it is an absolute requirement that it exists? When will the leaders have the faith, courage and will to correct their practice and their speech that promotes so much error and misunderstanding? My prediction: THEY WILL NEVER DO SO!

Remember that one of the major reasons that churches exist today is that the works of men may be seen and carried out. As someone so aptly said,

*"It is difficult to get a man to understand something
when his livelihood and salary depends upon his NOT understanding it."*

Is it no wonder that when you read the New Testament, you will find absolutely nothing that resembles the so-called "church" of today?

You will find NO Christian religious church buildings to house passive pew potatoes; NO church budgets; NO salaried clergy; NO clergy period. You will find NO religious furniture pointing all the "laity" in the direction of the "clergy," putting on his one-man show, paid to perform week in and week out; NO "church leaders" meetings held apart from the rest of the congregation, where decisions are handed down to the rest of the brethren who don't know what's really going on. You will find NO solemn, dark communion services where the communicants sip little shot glasses of grape juice, and eat soda crackers; NO big tongue up front on an elevated platform wagging for a bunch of little ears in an audience.

No, despite what any detractors deceive themselves (and others) into saying, the church building model, accompanied by its institutional system of leaders lording it over others, is alive and well.

What do many Christians today talk about? "Placing membership in" and "belonging to," some kind of an organization! Expressions like "being in the church," "going to church," "getting ready for church," "having church," "wearing church clothes," "giving to the church," and "being faithful to the church," demonstrate the effect that such absurdities has had on our understanding, or lack of it, concerning the ecclesia.

It is indeed treated and looked upon purely as an institution or social organization with its various social functions. We cannot deny it; our speech and our actions betrays us.

All the talk about "the church on the corner," "cleaning the church," "painting the church," etc. Will anyone deny this? And again, it's not enough to say, "We know better," or "You know what I mean." People are deceived. They are being deceived not only by the god of this world but also by the "church leaders" in whom many trust.

Look at more of the confusion and deception that the word and concept of "church" causes. Who are you trying to fool?

Just what, for example, does the word "church" refer to in the following statements?

- "He left the *church* years ago." - "It's my month to lock up the *church*." - "The First Baptist *Church*, Inc. was formed in 1971."

- "After *church* let's eat at Applebee's." - "The Bible speaks very clearly about the necessity of *church* membership."

- "Mary is always late for *church*." - "Do you want to join the Smith's and the Wagner's in starting a new *church*?"

- "That is a conservative *church*." - "He who refuses to have the *church* as his mother, most likely does not have God as his Father."

- "We are building an addition to our *church*." - "You are expected to attend all of the stated meetings of the *church* unless providentially hindered."

- "Some of the members filed a lawsuit against the Emmanuel Bible *Church*." - "Take your hat off and don't talk loudly. Remember, you are in *church*."

- "One cannot be a faithful Christian without being a member of a faithful *church*." - "Our *church* recently had a split and another *church* started as a result."

- "How many attended *church* today?" - "Worship will begin at our *church* at 9:30." - "We would love for you to consider applying for membership at our *church*."

- "Our *church* recently installed a new Minister of Visitation." - "If you are looking for a *church* home, we invite you to consider our *church*."

- "Let's meet at the *church* to discuss plans for our *church* softball team." - "Were you in *church* today?"

- "Prayer meeting is on Wednesdays @ 7:00pm at the *church*." - "Trinity *Church* was defeated 10 to 1 by the First Baptist *Church*."

- "I recently ordered some more *church* literature for the classes." - "God intends for every believer to contribute to the mission of the *church*."

- "If you are a visitor and live in our city, we hope you will consider making our *church* your *church* home."

- "Devotion to your *church* is the same as devotion to Jesus Christ." - "You should make conscience of giving one-tenth of your income to the work of the *church*."

Carefully check back through these statements and see how ridiculous and untrue are the words of both *"clergy and laity"* alike when they say: *"Oh, we believe and know that the church is people and not a building!"*

I am sure that the devil heartily approves of such a concept that has brought so much confusion, bitterness, and enmity among men. When we look to God's Word for instructions on how to operate a so-called *"church"* and then find out that there are no such instructions, what do you do? I'll tell you what people do. Some people are so sure that God wants them to have a church that they force ideas into Scriptures that were never intended. It is no wonder everything is distorted and deformed.

As said earlier, one will be hard pressed to find the structure of a typical modern church in the New Testament, but then again, that is the point. These structures, images, concepts, doctrines, are not in the Bible, but when we have been programmed to accept all these things as Christianity, our minds cannot see what is plainly written. We see through all these filters and so see *"through the glass darkly."* As a result, we see a very dark *"God."* And when *"God"* becomes dark, mysterious, hard to figure out and easy to cross, we need someone to speak to Him for us lest we be consumed by His wrath. We then become like Israel who said to Moses, *"You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."* (Exodus 20:19)

Perhaps the greatest evil ever perpetuated upon the people of God is the institutional church; a human organization that makes all the decisions for you and controls all of your religious activities, yea, even your life! This is the most wretched deception of all.

Many people convince their minds that this nicely ordered routine equals *"spirituality"* and now, this makes them feel righteous before God. In this state they are easily pacified, distracted from biblical reality, controlled by their leaders and easily manipulated by heretical teachings.

So the charade continues despite the fact that in the New Testament, there is *"no requirement (pattern) from God"* whatsoever that the disciples *"form or constitute themselves into an organic institutional body called the local church."*

Where is that requirement? Where is that pattern? Where is the record or teaching which proves that disciples were divided into independent, autonomous organizations that we call *"the local church"* corporation? There is no Scriptural proof for such! People have to assume it and then assert such to be true.

We have assumed that what we have today is exactly what they had then. After all, we boldly claim that we follow the pattern! We follow God's word! Therefore, we are the true church! Since we are a *"pattern people,"* it must follow that what we have today must certainly be what they had then! It must be what the Lord set up!

This is our way of reasoning in justifying everything we want to do in our day; from the *"professional windbag preacher"* to *"the local church corporation."* For our *"idols"* we will find justification - in our own mind. We want something we can see and someone to represent us... something physical. Whether we are building a building to reach the sky as the tower of Babel

or an edifice to hold our pastor's meetings on Sunday... we want our own building and God will allow us to see and believe what our hearts are set upon. (Ezekiel 14)

In Acts 7:48, Stephen angered the Pharisees by saying that God "*dwells not in temples made with hands*" (Acts 7:48). Such a statement and change would abolish everyone from the gatekeeper to the high priest who served the old system of the temple. What Stephen's statement said back then would be just as offensive to our spending of billions of dollars of God's money on "church buildings" today.

What he said then is just as offensive today as it was to those Pharisees: God does not dwell in "Churches" or any other building. Our focus is not to be distracted on the material but on the temple of the Holy Spirit. That departure of emphasis has permitted the enemy to come in our midst and pick us off one at a time.

Dear reader, the Truth is at stake here, and perhaps for some, your life is at stake too. What is being said here is either the Truth or it is dangerous error! If you think it is the latter, then prove (test) it for yourself by God's word. Search for the justification for the "*church institution*" in the Scripture. Look for the authorization for such in all of its parts and pieces. See if you can find a "*church member*" referred to in Scripture. Seek the instruction from the Lord for having a building or sanctuary as the place of worship.

Search for the Lord's authorization for a church organization to hire a "*Professional Minister*" (a church employee) at a high salary and excellent "compensation package" to be the Chief Pastor and manager of the corporate Church.

Rest assured though that if you run to your "*pastor*" or to the "*eldership*," what do you think that they will tell you? You know what answer they will give. It will be the same one the Pope would give, if he was willing to give any at all.

Unfortunately, for many in positions of church leadership, they feel that they have invested too much money, time, and education in doing it wrong, to now turn and walk away to do it right. It's easier to justify or ignore your conscience in regards to the Truth of the matter. After all, what will they do with all these buildings?

Remember that without a building, the so-called clergy would lose their power over the people. Without a building, the clergy system would fall. This whole system of clergy/laity with its dominance of "*power and authority over the people*," head-quartered in a building called an institutional church was totally foreign to the vocabulary and the life of the disciples of Jesus.

But, "*it's too late now to change, isn't it?*"

It all depends on how serious your love and commitment is to Christ and His Word.

Ecclesia ! What Has Happened?

The fact of the matter still remains that in the time of the apostles, they did not have institutions, organizations, or corporate structures known as "churches" such as abound in our day. The saints did not "belong to a church" for no such thing existed in that day. They belonged only to Jesus Christ who redeemed and "purchased" them with His own blood.

MEN, in their wisdom, build churches and every one of them, regardless of the brand or kind, are the creations of men! If YOU are a member of some church, whatever the brand or kind, you are a member of something in which Jesus has no part nor lot in!

Today, millions of people around the world actually think that they are just like those early disciples. Just because they make the effort to get out of bed, get the family ready, and arrive at a "church building" with a nice warm pew every Saturday or Sunday morning, many are convinced that they have performed their duty that they think God requires of them; especially the oft misinterpreted verse: "...forsake not the assembling of yourselves together..."

Yes, they "go to church" each week and spend a maximum of about two to four hours together. They stand when they are told to stand. They sit when they are told to sit. They speak when they are told to speak. Someone leads them in prayer. Someone leads them in music. They hear some announcements. Someone passes a collection plate so they can "offer to the Lord their tithes and offerings." Someone teaches them in a class. Then they hear a one hour monologue from someone standing behind a wooden soapbox. Occasionally, they eat the Lord's Supper; one little bread crumb and a shot glass of grape juice. They call it "partaking of the Supper," which has now become a ceremony, separate from anything else they do. Occasionally, they might schedule some other "fellowship," but in reality, they share little in common. But yet...BUT YET, they are convinced that they are "the church."

All of these elements of "the service" deceive people to think that they are fulfilling the Lord's desires by cramming all of these things into a church service each week. People instinctively get themselves into a mode that "if I just do this faithfully every week, it covers all the bases; God is pleased; I'm doing my duty; I am assembling as the Bible says, and I'm growing spiritually."

This is now the "church service" or the "church meeting." And to top it off, the "church authorities" have now made this a mandatory meeting where not only is attendance strictly recorded but were also the peculiar doctrines held by the church are now repeated numerous times over and over again, week in and week out; year in and year out, until your brain is numb with boredom and you are thoroughly convinced that there can be no other truth. To now miss one of these meetings is a grave sin and indicates that you may be "apostate". You have now begun to lose the ability to think for yourself.

It is so easy to fall into the trap of thinking our righteousness is based on and maintained by works and things like church attendance. That is why organized and institutionalized Christianity is so dangerously deceptive. The same was true in the first century. The Apostle Paul was stunned that these believers who had experienced such great freedom and joy in Christ, were now turning back to religious practices. They still believed in Jesus. They still wanted to follow God, but they had allowed themselves to move away from the simplicity of their devotion to Christ and were replacing it, little by little, with religious observation.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul expressed surprise and shock that Christians gave up the "grace of Christ" to return "to the weak and beggarly rudiments... to be in bondage over again" (Gal. 1:6; 4:9). What were they doing to bring on these critical comments by the apostle? They were allowing religious leaders to dictate their man-made rules and regulations that they said had to be obeyed in order for them to be right with God. They were told that they had to be circumcised, to remember to keep certain days holy, to make various sacrifices to God and man, etc., etc. Paul said that if they gave in to these requirements, they would lose their blessings. "Christ will profit you nothing." (5:2).

Men may claim to be led and moved by the Spirit of God, but in reality are simply led and moved with human motivation, human greed and scare tactics. The Holy Spirit could be withdrawn completely from the earth, and most "church services" would continue without knowing anything had happened!

God has never, ever placed the Master role on the Pope of Rome. Neither did He place that role and responsibility upon any other man nor any group or body of men; even if they do claim that the *Eldership* has such authority and control. It is another big lie, like the claim of the Pope. Jesus Christ is the One and only Master and Lord.

In spite of this, *church members*, as well as all *churched people*, are constantly being told by their "church leaders" that you ought to be devoted to your local church to the same degree that you are devoted to the Lord Himself; that the local church is a "**blood bought institution**" implying that our Savior shed His blood on the cruel cross to buy an institution.....something other than people. Can you imagine this?

And speaking of buying and selling, what does an institution; what does an organization; what does a corporation require in order to operate effectively? Why, none other than paid professionals! So now, arriving on the scene is the *paid Pastor, the paid Preacher, the paid Elder, the full-time professional paid clergy!*

Never mind what Jesus said: that all that came before Him, and many who have come after are the same as thieves and robbers. Never mind what the apostle Paul and others had to say.

I thought we believed that the gospel is God's free gift? How do you think the Lord sees the events of today where we have the paid professionals; the "pastors," the "teaching elders" turning around and selling the gift so freely given them - a gift that cost the life of God's Son to acquire? All of these "church leaders" have taken what was freely given them, slapped a price tag on it, and sell it week after week..... for a pay check!

These people are nothing but hireling's (to use Jesus' own words) pure and simple! The Apostle Peter condemned one who tried to buy it (Acts 8:18-24); how much more those who sell it week after week!

The Apostle Paul, in epistle after epistle, condemned over and over again, the one who is making a living off of the gospel. And again, just like with the issue of "c-h-u-r-c-h," I can already hear some of my die-hard "institutional church people" saying, "Oh no! Not our "pastor."

Our 'pastor' isn't in it for the money! Our 'pastor' is so humble; he's so godly; he just looooves the Lord!"

Wherein, I again reply, "Oh really?"

Let's try this experiment. Here is the hireling's test. If he can pass it, you may know that he is not a hireling.

Stop paying him. That's right. Stop paying your "pastor." Let him "*care for the sheep*" at no expense to the sheep. Don't receive a wage. Avoid the appearance of being a hireling. Do it for nothing!

Not only that, let him serve **at his own expense!**

Do this for three and a half years and he will have passed the hireling's test. He will be walking in the footsteps of Greatness; the footsteps of the One that came to serve, and lay down His life for His sheep.

See how long he remains being unpaid like the Apostle Paul!!

See how much he "*looooooves the Lord*" when he isn't getting paid to "love the Lord!"

Tell him he can still minister the word week after week, but also, he will have to get a real job like the Apostle Paul did, "working night and day."

I guarantee you, him, along with 99% of all other so-called "pastors" will be out of there, searching for a new pulpit to fill. It's that weekly paycheck that he loves, and if the church won't pay him, he'll pack his bags and sell himself off to some other church that will! Guaranteed !!!

Rest assured, every single so-called "*man in the ministry*" today lives according to this principle: "No Pay, No Play."

Yes, that's right. There are no exceptions. Every single "person in the ministry" receiving an income from preaching the gospel is a thief; a robber; and a hireling!

The Apostle Paul, over and over again, condemns those who have turned "the ministry of the word" into a full-time paid job. He condemns those that have made a living out of it. He condemns those that have turned the gospel into "*a means of GAIN*". In short, he condemns EVERY SINGLE PAID pastor/elder THAT EXISTS TODAY. (See, [Should Pastor's Be Cared For?](#))

Why haven't you heard this before? Why hasn't this teaching of the Apostle Paul been "broadcast" widely and proclaimed from pulpits across this land? Why is it that the "institutional church" along with the "church leadership" has consistently avoided teaching and preaching on verses like these?

Well, to even ask such questions is to answer such questions. The reason why the "church" and its "leadership" keep quiet on this issue is because **they themselves are the target of Paul's wrath.**

They are the ones guilty of having turned "*the ministry of the word,*" i.e. preaching, into a full-time job.

For them to preach this from their pulpits would be the end of their livelihood. They have been forced to choose between God, and mammon – and guess what? They've chosen mammon. They have been faced with the choice of picking what they love more - their salaries, or the truth; and truth has lost out.

The very people who are in the best position to inform their congregations of the truth of this matter, turn out to be the same people who have a "vested interest" in keeping quiet.

Indeed, the wolves have been placed in charge of the hen house, and are doing their best to keep the hens ignorant of the slaughter of truth going on. These people are only motivated by private ambition, greed, and a lust for power and authority. The money is good. They love the recognition. They love the feeling of power and control. They love the sheep pen, but they do not love the sheep.

Jude warned, "*These are hidden rocky reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you, shepherds who without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots*" (Jude 1:12). They are hirelings, self-proclaimed shepherds feeding themselves. They flee when the sacrifice becomes too great, or most assuredly, when the money runs out!

Give your so-called pastor the hireling's test, and see for yourself!

This whole arrangement; this whole man-made cacophony of an institutional church system run by a self-serving hierarchical team of spiritual monsters is a great deception and a horrible error!

There are no words too strong to demonstrate this deception and shift. In fact, the words that come to mind are: abomination, heresy, and blasphemy. There is no other way to explain the devastation and damage of distorting and deforming Christ and His body.

This anti-scriptural buffoonery has deceived millions of unknowing, often unthinking people into actually believing that there really is an institutional church in the Bible.

Men have usurped the authority of Christ as Head and have built around denominational titles and names separating His body into corporations and institutions of men. We no longer gather

around the name of Jesus, but the name of a building or a pastor or a board of elders. We have literally robbed Christ of his rightful place and therefore His glory in His body has departed. Because of this we are not, and have never been equipped to build a Glorious body without wrinkle and spot! We have replaced the ministry of the Holy Spirit with the works of men. We have replaced first love (a true love and obedience toward Jesus) with the works of men.

What is being done might look good and professional, but it is not God. *These things indeed, though they have an appearance of wisdom in self-devised religious observance and lowliness of mind and ill-treatment of body are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.* Col. 2:23

This dastardly system only serves to further dividing the body and isolating the laity.

An Ecclesia Indeed

The Holy Spirit was ever present and worked with those early believers; those first disciples. They had a supernatural foundation (Jesus) and a supernatural builder (Jesus and the Holy Spirit). The early believers came out of the kingdom of this world and became a part of the kingdom of God. They understood the kingdom concept taught by Jesus. They were Jews who understood a kingdom and a king.

To the Jews, they were now a part of a new kingdom and Jesus was their king. Israel with its kings and high priest was a thing of the past. Their building was now made of living stones and Jesus was building them together. In Scripture, believers were likened to a body, a temple, a house, a bride, etc. Jesus was the foundation of His building and He was the Head of His body and the Husband to His bride. The early believers had no clergy and laity. As believers they were "called out" indeed of the world into the kingdom of God. They were truly the called out ones.

It has all been so simple. It began with Jesus. Then, His disciples. They believed in Jesus. They followed Jesus. They lived like Jesus. His Spirit permeated them. They told everyone they met how knowing Jesus had changed them from the inside out.

They spent as much time together as possible. Every day, they congregated from one home to another. They shared stories about what had happened to each of them. They prayed together. They helped each other to become stronger, by teaching and encouraging each other. They ate a full meal together, pausing during each meal to remember Jesus by eating unleavened bread and drinking wine, as he had shown them. When one had a need, the others supplied it out of what they had. When needed, they even sold what they had to help others.

They shared all things in common. They were a community of believers.

And blessed be God that Christ has never stopped building His true ecclesia, nor has He needed man to restore His works. No "*organization*" or "*institution*" rests upon Him. Nothing is substituted for His ecclesia. He is our only foundation, our Savior, our all.

The ecclesia of Christ describes the most beautiful relationship known to man. The word was chosen by the Savior and man certainly cannot express it better. When Jesus said *"I will build my ecclesia"*, He was not talking about an institution or a corporation or a bunch of local bodies. What He promised to build was His assembly, His group, His gathering, or His people. It is a collective term that applies to all those who make Christ first and serve Him with their life.

In Acts 15 at what is called the Jerusalem Council, James said: *"Simon has declared how God at first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name."* (V.14). This is the meaning of ecclesia.

1 Peter 2:9-10 says

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

That is the meaning of ecclesia! Notice all of the descriptive terms used in this passage, each one emphasizing a different facet of this ecclesia. How can we fail to understand?

Jesus came to this earth to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Was He talking about a lost institution? No, He came to save man who was and is lost in sin. *"For the son of man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them"* (Luke 9:56).

Doesn't that tell us something about the ecclesia? The ecclesia refers to those who are being saved, that is, people.

We are a blood bought PEOPLE, not a blood bought institution!

In the same manner we might consider the redeemed which is another term that is interchangeable with the ecclesia. It is not a synonym but a term referring to the same group. Redeem means to buy back. What was bought back? You and I! People! Institutions don't sin and institutions are not accountable to God. People are lost in sin and people are accountable to God.

Who are the ecclesia? Those people who realized they were in sin and were helpless to do anything to save themselves; who heard the story of Jesus and His redeeming blood and have responded with love and obedience born of that love; who put Him first in their life; who, because of their mutual love for Christ, have a love and concern for one another to the point that it is an identifying characteristic that *"ye may know them"*; who follow the lead of and imitate the life of the older and more experienced of their number, as they lead with love and an exemplary life.

Simply, they are God's people, the followers of Christ. He is their High Priest and nothing or no one stands between them and their Savior. They are not *"devoted"* to nor serve institutions,

organizations, or men who love to label themselves as "*duly authorized*," but they serve their God and their fellow man through love.

It is an Ecclesia whose existence does not depend on forms, services, ceremonies, clergy, churches, pulpits, pews, vestments, organs, endowments, money, kings, governments, or any act of favor whatsoever from the hand of man. It has lived on and continued when all these things have been taken from it. It has often been driven into the wilderness, or into dens and caves of the earth, by those who ought to have been its friends. Its existence depends on nothing but the presence of Christ and His Spirit; and they being ever with it. This Ecclesia cannot die.

This is the only Ecclesia of which no one member can perish. Once enrolled in the lists of this Ecclesia, sinners are safe for eternity: They are never cast away. Not one bone of Christ's mystical body shall ever be broken. Not one lamb of Christ's flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand.

This is the Ecclesia which does the work of Christ upon earth. Its members are a little flock, and few in number, compared with the children of the world. One or two here, and two or three there; a few in this community and a few more in the next.

These are they who shake the universe; these are they who change the fortunes of kingdoms by their prayers; these are they who are the active workers for spreading the knowledge of pure religion and undefiled; these are the life-blood of a country, the shield, the defense, the stay, and the support of any nation in which they are passing through.

Why would anyone want to clutter that picture with institutions or organizations?

Community:

Probably the best description of ecclesia would be a called out "community." This is because a community can exist without reference to organization of any formal kind and without reference to meetings at set times and places. It refers simply to people who live in a common area or who are united by a common bond or in a common purpose. This is parallel to the Christian meaning of ecclesia: the people who live in Christ, who are united by their faith in the gospel of Christ and in relationships of Christian love. The community of God in Christ is a community of faith working through love. All distinctions of the flesh, whether racial, ethnic, sexual, economic, political or religious, disappear in the Christian community.

But what do we have today? In this day, "*church*" and community are different.

Church is a building. But a community is a body of people.

A church is a place you visit occasionally. A community is something you are.

A church has an *installation service* and selects and appoints men to be "*elders*" and "*deacons*." A community already has their old men ensconced; living amongst the people as fathers with their families.

A church is used only on special occasions of religious significance. A community is people whose religion lives with them every day in all occasions of life.

A church follows the patterns and ways of the world in putting men into "*offices*" or "*positions*" or "*places*" of authority over others. A community follows the patterns and ways of Jesus in His instructions: "NOT SO SHALL IT BE AMONG YOU!"

A church is created to be special. It is created to appeal to the senses. It is created to attract some sort of divine atmosphere of reverence, with stained glass, attractive pews and religious music. A community lives in the din and discord of the world.

A church is served by a clergyman who says prayers, performs duties, presides over our religious gatherings, calls on the ill and bereaved, gives sermons and accompanies our children on summer outings.

A community is served by a leader who lives with his people as counselor, friend, and comforter. He abides in them, and is a steady source of strength and peace.

A church is made of lifeless stone and wood. A community is made of living, active believers in Christ.

A church is constructed by men to serve their purposes. A community is established by Christ to do His will.

A church is known by its facility, doctrine, and pastors ability to preach or lead. A community is known by its love.

A church building must be maintained against deterioration by the labor of men. A community is sustained and renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the body.

A church is sustained by the monetary support of its attendees. A community is sustained by the living Christ who will never leave or forsake them.

A church will eventually crumble to ruin. The Body of Christ, the community, will be lifted up to Him forever.

CHAPTER IV

PARRHSIA

Another facet of ecclesia in which many believers (as well as non-Christians) were striving for within their assemblies (ecclesia), was that of "**freedom of speech.**" Since the exercise of free speech was so important, "*ecclesia*" was often identified with another important Greek term, *p-a-r-r-h-s-i-a*.

ParrHsia (parresia) is a word that literally means "freedom of speech". It is translated "*waxed bold*" by the KJV in 1 Thess. 2:2 and Acts 13:46. Other versions render it "*speaking out boldly*". In Acts 9:27 and 29, it is rendered "*spoke boldly*". Also in Acts 26:26, it is translated "*spoke boldly*" or "*freely*."

One writer, speaking of the parresia concept in the New Testament, says that it was:

"The right of every citizen to stand up in the public assembly and express his honest opinion."

Its opposite was given the name "*sycophancy*" or shameless assent. Allowing someone to have their way without speaking up and supporting your view was viewed as a great fault.

Outside of the assembly (ecclesia) "*... parresia represented the expression of the speaker's opinion without regard for the feelings of others.*"

Parresia was crucial in every good relationship and indeed, "*freedom of speech toward God*" is referred to several times in the New Testament, although the word is usually translated "confidence" in that context. (2 Cor. 10:2; Phil. 1:14; 1 John 3:21)

Another old writer said:

"It is better to have parresia even if not a soul shall understand what one is saying than to fall into step with popular opinions, to harvest the lush praise that falls from the favor of the multitude."

This was the essence and character of the ecclesia in the New Testament. Parresia was set apart to represent the freedom of speech common to the believers and to every Greek citizen within their communities (ecclesia).

"There is no greater loss than to lose it (freedom of speech)."

It needs to be emphasized again that Jesus used the term ecclesia when describing what he intended to build rather than the Greek term "*synagogue*" which He was both familiar with and could have been expected to use.

"It is striking that Jesus' followers did not describe their meetings and the community represented by them as a "*synagogue*" for the word would have been natural for a group which sprang from Jewish roots."

Jesus' zeal for teaching the "*equal footing*" that He intended to be present within the scope of His community is seen in His choice of the Greek term ecclesia. Today however, there is no greater "*un-equal footing*" seen within the modern institutional churches than the repression of speech!

Authority, let alone, the privilege to speak within the "*institutional churches*" is granted solely by the "*church leadership*" and it is given only to those that will stay within the boundaries of their particular orthodoxy. This current practice is totally foreign to the essence and spirit of

parresia and against the will of the Savior for his ecclesia. Speaking from a context of controversy and persecution, the Hebrew writer admonishes the brethren,

"Do not cast away your freedom of speech (parresia), which has a great reward."
(Hebrews 10:35)

The principle found in the above verse teaches us to maintain our freedom of speech even in the face of persecution. Open discussion was highly prized in the New Testament assembly as it had been in Greece. In fact, discussion (as in the Greek ecclesia) was used as the Christian method of learning.

The Greek word *dialegomai*, the common Greek word for "discuss," is the word used during Christian meetings. The meaning of *dialegomai* in classical Greek is expressed by our lone word dialogue. It means to hold a conversation or to talk openly. Used by the philosophers, it came to mean conversation with teaching as its object: one debates and learns in so doing.

Unfortunately, as we've learned about other mistranslations, the true meaning of *dialegomai* is hidden by the KJV and as usual, other translations have followed suit. For example, a favorite text of modern "preachers" is found in Acts 20:7. The KJV renders it thus:

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached (dielegeto) unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

As you can see, by translating *dielegeto* (a derivative of *dialegomai*) "preach" rather than "held a discussion" it would certainly be easy to get the idea that this was a "speech" or "sermon" rather than a discussion.

Though the modern practice in all institutional churches of any stripe is that of "*giving sermons*" and "*preaching from the pulpit*," the word group for "giving a speech" or "give sermons" is never found within the New Testament ecclesia. Instead we have "discuss" or "start a discussion," or "dialogue", the true meaning of the Greek word.

But again, the translators gave an incorrect rendering. They inserted the word "preach" instead of *dialegomai*, "dialogue", confirming yet again their love affair with the medieval practices and traditions of power hungry and lust-filled men.

So now we have in the church institution the notion called "*the centrality of preaching*," taken from Acts 20, a situation where the Apostle Paul spoke for a long time. But many fail to notice, and others even refuse to acknowledge, that verse 7 specifically states that the purpose of their coming together was "to break bread" (fellowship) not to hear a sermon!

Remember, there were special circumstances surrounding this particular meeting, for it was the last time Paul would ever see them. If the apostle came to your assembly, wouldn't you want to prolong your time together in order to hear what he had to say? Even though the specific word used here is *dialegomai*, from which we derive our English word "dialogue," implying a give-

and-take with the listeners, men still insist in twisting the Scriptures to gain their own ends. What Paul said certainly provided the substance of the gathering, but he did not talk non-stop for hours. There certainly would have been discussion and audience participation. Paul was concerned about what was on the hearts of others too.

This is just yet another despicable and disgusting trick of the translators, a trick which has been kept up and running through the centuries, right up to our modern day clergy, who are ever so eager and willing to stoke the fires and fan the flames to gain their own ends.

Do you still think that any of them are possessed with good intentions? Think long and hard about it while you search the musty halls of tradition to support a church institution concept.

Have we not blown up the ego of the "clergy" until they feel that they need not answer to anyone for what they teach, or fail to teach? What rules do we see (spoken or unspoken) inside an institutional church that the so-called "authorities" have established?

No one questions the public speaker from the same audience, but waits until after "church" when no one is around to hear the question, except the speaker. Many times the group leaves the "church" with a one-sided view of the lesson, again "proving" that what the speaker said is from God.

To question a pastor/elder today, or "call one on the carpet" for something he taught publicly is almost considered a mortal sin. The church institution has been taught by man that group obedience to the "church authorities" in all things is from God. What power engulfs mere men when the group believes this! They are taught that to question them is to question Almighty God. Does this sound unlikely? Then try questioning them on a tradition held and taught by them. Perhaps you can try questioning them in regards to the subject matter of this article?

My guess is that you will be pounced upon to a pulp! How sad, and yet how revealing.

Men who hesitate to submit their thought process and conclusions to fair public examination must have some good reason not to. Preachers who preach only to the choir will never know whether what they preach has enough substance to it to stand the heat of public examination. Men who would deny freedom of speech to any others must have deep roots of doubt about the truth of their own convictions or their own ability to present it and defend it publicly.

Yes, brethren. Free speech is the foundation of our religious freedom.

CHAPTER V

AUTHORITY AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

The Scriptures demonstrate over and over again that Truth has always been hated by the masses of mankind, but especially by those who hold so-called "*positions or offices of authority*" inside a religious system.

Men who would assume positions and titles abound in every sort of religious institution. There are many men who would receive acclaim without service. There are many men who become intoxicated with the lust for power. There are many men who would gladly earn a living pontificating on religious matters.

The picture of a drill sergeant barking orders to a marching platoon is nowhere to be found in Scripture, but IS found in the church organizations of men. Many “*church leaders*” of various institutions have thought that this is the kind of authority that they are to possess in order for them to “*rule*” over God’s people. Their teachers, their seminaries, along with their carnal hearts told them to rule this way. This has caused untold hardship to many individuals and families in many institutional churches. The need to “*keep people in line*” by force or coercion is not a Scriptural principle, but IS seen all too often in an institutional/corporate church system.

Can we see why Jesus said that those in His kingdom are expected to reject titles and positions of rulership; even the title or position of guides?

You didn’t know He said that? Please read on to see that He most certainly did; in the clearest of terms as well!

Jesus took a group of social nobodies and endued them with the gospel message. They were a scruffy group to say the least. There was obviously a great contrast with the pomp and “*holy*” demeanor of the Scribes and Pharisees. Human nature, being what it is, seduced even the disciples with a desire to be greatest in the Kingdom.

Jesus, while continually challenging the narrow-mindedness and self-righteousness of the Jewish leaders, insisted that things were going to be different in his community. When His disciples came to Him and asked who would be greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus answered:

"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you turn and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."(Matthew 18:3-4).

"Just a minute," He said. "You guys need to change your standards of operation. You are looking at things the wrong way. You need to change your attitude or you will not enter the kingdom at all."

Does this sound like the apostles were going to receive even a hint of position, title, and institutional rulership? If you're still not sure, then let's proceed further.

In Matthew 20:20-28, Jesus was worked over by the mother of James and John wanting, what else, for her sons to be greatest in the kingdom.

"Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right hand and the other on the left, in your kingdom."
(verse 21)

Of course, the other disciples made a great show of indignation as though they had not wanted the same honor for themselves. So Jesus expounded on what His impending community structure is going to be like. The leadership in His assembly or community would be unlike worldly authority and the ecclesiastical system of things represented at that time by Jewish Scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish Sanhedrin (elders), and Roman secular rule.

Jesus rejected the authoritarian structure of his own religious heritage as well as anything that would approach the empires and kingdoms of men. Jesus explains this plainly as he continues.

*"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles are lords over them, and those who are great exercise authority (or are tyrants) over them. **YET IT WILL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU**; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

"Greatness is attained through service, NOT positions or titles. You want to attain greatness in My kingdom then serve. Those desiring esteem in my assembly must set the example in serving! You will not exercise authority over my people!"

How utterly ironic that this is exactly the type of leadership style Christ specifically warned His disciples not to practice!

If that left the disciples in doubt about what positions they were to enjoy in the Lord's community, He certainly cleared it up by attacking the prevailing system of the religious leaders and their love of titles and position in Matthew 23.

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitude and to his disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. ..They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But you, do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, who is in heaven. And do not be called leaders; for One is your leader, even the Christ. But those who are great among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Matthew 23:1-12

Jesus, in these few sentences, is making it very plain what the nature of leadership in His community was going to be. His leaders would NOT assume titles or positions. *"But you, do not be called Rabbi!"* They were not to assume the title or position of Rabbi (master, teacher).

As if this was not basic enough to persuade them, He continues in this vein by saying, *"And do not be called leaders ."* Even though the KJV translates the word "leader" master, the correct translation could actually render the Greek "guide". Vine gives it this definition:

"KathHgHtHs is properly a guide, to go before, to guide, translated master, a teacher, Matt. 23:10 (twice)."

Jesus emphasizes this very point while instructing those who would later be called apostles. "Don't even let someone ascribe to you or 'ordain' you with the position or title of leader or guide".

Don't be called Dr. Smith.

Don't be called Preacher Smith.

Don't be called Pastor Smith.

Don't be called Minister or Reverend or Elder or Deacon Smith.

Is this not a true application of what Jesus was saying? If not, why not?

Another example was before the feast of Passover. Jesus must go, but first, there was something He must do; something He desired very earnestly. He would draw away from the crowds, and gather the twelve to eat the "Last Supper," a meal filled with types and shadows, the fulfillment of which were only hours away. He longed to reveal the prophetic significance of this meal to His disciples, and it would soon be manifest before their eyes.

When the Supper was over, Jesus got up from the table, and the disciples, thinking He was performing the usual ceremonial hand washing, kept their seats. But something was wrong. Why was Jesus straying from the traditional format? Maybe He had grabbed that servant's apron by mistake. Why is He filling that water basin? Now what is He doing? Surely not!

He knelt before them one by one, until every dirty foot in the room was clean. Then He said, *"Do you know what I have done to you?"* They were speechless. Never before had they seen a King wash His servant's feet. They saw with their eyes what we can only imagine, *"God with us,"* washing human feet.

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." John 13:17

AGAIN, we see that the model of leadership in God's ecclesia is not the CEO Business Exec; it's not the "Chairman/Pastor" sitting on the *Board of Elders*; it's not a group of men *ruling*, and *reigning*; barking out their demands of *authority* and *headship* and *submission* to every beck and call. No, **it's the household slave!**

For from His knees in the upper room, Jesus said, *"For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."* John 13:15

Let **THIS** example be before us like frontlets between our eyes!

Yes, Jesus did leave us an example to follow - one that stands in stark and total antithesis to the current notion of "Church Leadership"!!

This model from heaven, like oil, does not and will not mix well with the waters of a “*local church institutional*” rule of **despotism**. And many of these “*pastoral despots*” will spend large portions of their life seeing to it **THAT IT WILL NEVER MIX WELL!**

It is interesting to note all the instances in which Jesus avoided even the appearance of the ruling class. From his birth to his grave, he chose the most humble means.

He really was born in a barn. His baby clothes were swaddling clothes, mere rags wrapped about him. His crib was a feeding box for livestock. Common shepherds came to pay Him honor, while many others chose to ignore His lowly birth. At the Jerusalem dedication, His parents could only afford a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, which was the offering of the poor. He grew up in the household of a working carpenter in the lowest of all the towns in lowly Galilee. He made himself of no reputation. Isaiah prophesied that He had no form nor comeliness, nor anything about Him that would attract carnal men. That final week of His life on earth, He chose to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, not as a conquering king on a great horse. He washed the feet of His disciples that last night. He died in the most shameful way possible, the death of a criminal with two common thieves, although He was innocent. They even buried His body in a borrowed tomb!

Those who posture themselves to “*rule over God’s people*” refuse to see Christ in this light, or if they do, pay the most pathetic, empty lip service imaginable, and then turn around next week and do just the opposite! The Lord’s call to “**let this mind be in you**” falls upon deaf ears to the majority of those in “*leadership positions in the local church.*”

They possess absolutely nothing of “the mind of Christ.” Historically, and indeed, right down to this very moment, the “*institutionalized local church*” of today has looked nothing like the Serving Christ. It has traded in the servant’s towel long, long ago and has replaced it with a business suit and tie. Many today are above the washing of feet, as kneeling has become so far beneath the so-called “*Sacred Pastoral Office*” and the “*ministerial dignity*” of the professional clergy. How far we have fallen from the divine standard only God fully appreciates.

Instead of ever wanting to have the Lord Jesus as our example, our Divine mandate; instead of wanting to set before our eyes the image of the Lord of heaven on His knees serving, washing the road-weary feet of His disciples, what do we see? Do we see love constraining? Do we see love bowing low? Do we see love wrapped in a servant’s towel?

No. This is what we see. We see men, ever looking to be as the world! We see men setting up and operating “*their churches*” along the lines of Fortune 500 companies! We see men hollering and screaming with spittle flying out of their mouths: “**WHO ARE YOU TO QUESTION MY DIRECTION AND AUTHORITY?**”

We see men defying the Lord, commanding that ... “You must address me as “Pastor.””

We see men commanding submission unto themselves, teaching that “....submitting to me is submitting to God....”

We see men seizing upon, and then usurping *"the authority of Christ."*

We see men operating their *"local church institutions"* like military bases; like slave camps; like mental hospitals.

What have we done? We have gone back to the weak and beggarly elements. We act as if the life of Jesus and His example was a myth and the cross at Calvary a fantasy. We are not the family for which God planned. We are an organization of our own design.

What else do we find concerning *"duly authorized"* men having the *"upper hand"* when we read the rest of the New Testament?

Paul warned that this human tendency was right around the corner as well. Speaking to the "elders" (literally, old people. See the explanation that follows) of the Ephesian community of believers, he warned:

"Pay attention to yourselves and to the flock in which the Holy Spirit placed you, to feed the assembly of God which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you who will not spare the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking distortions, to draw away students after themselves." (Acts 20:28-30)

Notice the specific nature of these people who would draw disciples away from the Lord. They would *"rise up"* among you. They wouldn't appear from outside their ranks. They would speak perverse things. They would draw away disciples after themselves. The focus was going to be removed from Jesus and be placed upon themselves.

Diotrephes was a great example of this kind of mentality. He rejected the apostle John and others that he didn't approve. John describes the arrogance of this man in his third epistle.

"I wrote to the assembly, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us." (3 John 9)

In this body, there are to be no positions or titles given or accepted, either theologically or in practice. Diotrephes didn't hold a gun to anybody's head when he assumed a position of eminence. He had his band of followers. They may have followed him for a variety of reasons but they followed him just the same. John describes the situation further.

"Therefore if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, talking trash against us with evil words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and casts (from the assembly) those who wish to receive them."(3 John 10)

Where did Diotrephes get this authority to exclude believers from their fellowship; even John? Think about it! He didn't get this authority from Jesus even though he may well have claimed so. He assumed it for himself and the people believed and accepted it!

His authority came from all those who allowed it to happen; those who had no Scriptural right to do so. The people may not have "*called him Rabbi*" or "*teacher*" in theology, but did so in PRACTICE. Just as the Israelites failed to listen to Samuel, these believers failed to listen to Jesus and the apostles. They preferred instead to select "*church officers*" to mediate their discipleship and then, after all was said and done, they were tyrannized by them. They failed to obey Jesus' warnings of appointing clergy.

Nowhere do we read anything whatsoever in the New Testament about some "*local church*" selecting and appointing men to be "*Elders*" or "*Church Officials!*" Why is that?

Where was any Church told to do such a thing? Where do you read of a Church installing men into the office of Elder? Where is the necessary inference that a Church was ever told to do such or actually did it? Look for yourself! It isn't there. Yet preachers and other church leaders teach this idea just like the Lord or His apostles gave such direction. Ask your preacher or *The Elders* to show you the book, chapter and verse for this practice. They won't because they can't!

Dear reader, if you think I am misrepresenting or exaggerating the practices of the current institutional/local church system, you need to open your eyes as to what has been happening.

What is being presented is the teaching and its fruit, of a controlling clergy. Again, if it is true, as most institutional/organized churches teach:

- that the Board of Elders or The Session is in charge of all the affairs of "the local church" and
- that the Eldership, etc., is to make all of the final decisions, with the final, authoritative word; and
- that the sole role of the "*members*" is to obey The Eldership's rules, plans, and programs, as if in so doing *they are obeying Jesus Christ and that to be un-submissive to the Elders is to be un-submissive to Christ Himself*;

...then why is there not even one letter in the New Testament addressed to *The Eldership*, or to *the Board*, or *the Session*, or to an institution, at any place, at any time, in any letter, **about anything?** Why?

The Corinthian saints had a wide variety of problems that needed to be resolved. Paul addressed a long letter to "*the church (ecclesia) of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling...*" (1:2). This letter was written to the saints and they were to execute Paul's instructions relative to all their problems.

Apparently, Paul thought that they, the saints themselves, as individuals and working together, could handle everything. Paul does not even mention such a corporate body as The Eldership or the Elders! Isn't that interesting? They had no Church Officials or Church Officers. Paul wrote to "the saints," told them what to do, and they did it! In the second letter, he wrote to the saints again commending them for their obedience to his instructions.

Yet today it is so different, as you can imagine. Today, the saints have no responsibility in the church institution except (1) to be taught (2) to pay, and (3) to obey.

Were there any elders at Corinth? There is no specific mention of such. Were there any elders at all in the New Testament? Certainly there were "elders" in the New Testament sense of that word. I am not talking about "*duly selected and appointed Church Officers,*" because there was none of these anywhere among God's people until the last of the apostles had died and Satan with his great deception got underway.

Today, "elder" has been made into a title, exactly the thing that Jesus has forbidden! As mentioned before, Jesus explicitly forbade titles, both the giving and the receiving of them in Matthew 23. "Elder" comes from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which simply refers to an older person. Within their culture, they were worthy of respect and deferment simply because of their age. In Leviticus 19:32, the Scriptural background is given for this respect.

"You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old person, and fear your God: I am the LORD."

Concerning elders in general, the term was only used to describe elderly people. In the cultural usage in the time of Jesus, it meant people who are at least (about) age 60. The Hebrew word (*zaqen*) refers to those who were able to grow beards which were fully white. The "beard" stipulation was contingent on having Jewish racial stock, but the age stipulation was not.

The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament says that the term "*always refers to old men (once to an old woman)*" or to a subgroup of those elderly people. The Greek term "*prebus*", "*presbutes*", "*presbuteros*" was used in the Septuagint as a rendering of the Hebrew term (*zaqen*) given above. These are the terms which are used in the New Testament.

The old person was not only revered in Jewish culture, but with this respect came grave responsibilities. Because of their age and assumed wisdom, they were expected to guide those who were younger. This leadership was not something they could relinquish since they never asked for it. They received it because they grew old. The same principles could be applied to fathers. Fathers have the responsibility to raise their children in the training and discipline of the Lord. This is not a responsibility they have any right to shirk. They have no right to give this responsibility to others. This responsibility was not earned or asked for but came through the natural process of parenthood.

As old people, the *presbuteroi* or the elders became the prime group to guide the brethren. This was their responsibility. They were guides! The weight of age coupled with an exemplary life was worthy of emulation. These were the "elders" mentioned in the New Testament.

There was nothing of "*rulership,*" nothing of being "*duly authorized,*" nothing of an "*eldership board,*" nothing of "*exercising authority,*" nothing of "*ministerial dignity,*" nothing of "*occupying a sacred office,*" **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING OF THIS!**

Power hungry, lust-filled, greedy men are the ones who have designed this system for "*appointing and installing officers*" over the people whom they can now control. As we have

learned, these diabolical seeds were sown centuries ago and is totally contrary to the teaching of Jesus and the rest of the New Testament.

The Lord has never intended any man, or group of men, to hold a position "OVER" others, and to exercise special authority by which to "RULE" them. Elders were to GUIDE and SERVE others, being EXAMPLES.

According to Jesus, not even the apostles would "exercise authority" over the people of God. *"Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. NOT SO SHALL IT BE AMONG YOU"* (Matt. 20:25-26).

This is very significant. If Jesus emphatically withheld "*divine authority*" from the apostles, surely, He did not delegate it to elders.

The example of Jesus is the most powerful argument against the idea of a ruling clergy. Did He model one thing, only to build another? Did He come serving, only to elevate His people's status later down the road? We think not!

It is the "*spirit of antichrist*" which speaks, not only of anything that replaces Christ, but also who practices things which He explicitly forbade! Christ's likeness in a thing determines its legitimacy. Does it reflect Him in what He has said or not? If not, it is none of His. It is NOT of His doing. It is NOT of His workmanship. It is NOT reflecting His image or His character. And neither is it His "*Church!*"

Behold the anti-Christ in all his glory before men, and shame before God.

CHAPTER VI

SATAN AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

In Ephesians 6, Paul warns:

*"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"*

Most Christians are totally oblivious to the spiritual warfare that is constantly being fought, both from within, as well as from without.

Yes, we are at war against the spiritual armies of the evil one. If you think that's not real, then you're already a casualty.

It was not long after Jesus left this earth that Satan came among the disciples and began to change their focus and consequently, what they were doing. Using his "*craftiness*" and his "*burning arrows*," Satan changed the center of their attention from Jesus and each other, to an organization; a building called *the church*. He changed what they spent their time thinking about and doing; from serving the Lord, to serving *the church* and it's been that way ever since.

Anyone who has ever participated in the building, maintenance and operations of a church building knows how time-consuming that can be. Many conscientious people believe they are serving the Lord when they are serving only the needs of church-owned real estate with an uncontrolled appetite for time, effort, and money. Just think of the time, energy, and money each building takes that otherwise would have been spent doing the things the first century Christians did.

Not only that, instead of depending on the Lord for the words to say, the things to do, and the places to go, as the early disciples did, Satan taught us to build theological seminaries, preaching schools, leadership training schools, ministerial academies, and to conduct endless *pastoral workshop conferences*. How else can the church find qualified ministers, pastors, preachers, elders, deacons, if they don't have a system to train them properly in that particular church's doctrine? Think of the time, effort and money siphoned away from the work of our Lord with that stratagem of Satan's!

Then, there is the whole mentality of "*image*" and "*formality*," Satan's chicanery at it's finest. When you read the New Testament, you don't see anything very formal among the early disciples. Can you imagine Paul, placing himself on an elevated platform (stage), behind a pulpit (which he must have to hold his notes) at the Corinthian church plant with all lights focused on him, talking to a group of people whose seating is arranged for the best view of him (even though they are looking at the backs of each other's heads)?

Can you imagine the Apostle Paul, teaching at a pastors workshop conference, telling those assembled:

"... Sitting on the platform appropriately is vital. Wear the right socks, never cross your legs in such a way as to show the people the soles of your sandals...."

More advice from the Apostle: *"...You're working on your house on your day off, and you discover that a trip to the local market is necessary. Always change your clothes before you go out in public. Never let the people see you in a context other than your sacred office and your pastoral dignity."*

Yes indeed, image is everything, not only to the world, but also to virtually all "organized/institutionalized local churches," who are in all aspects, **an exact replica of the world!**

Can you picture Jesus giving this kind of "workshop training" to the disciples:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, how you look is what really matters. Create thou a good impression. Forget what I said earlier to you concerning having only one coat. Bringest thou two in case thou mayest be seen in public by those who payeth their tithes in great measure. And never, never let them smell the fish!"

Satan has really "done a number" on us. Satan and the institutional church is alive and well. He has taken our focus off the Lord and each other, and has us focused on other things instead. He has successfully clouded the understanding of millions. He has changed the emphasis to form and structure, to law-keeping, to right behavior instead of the right spirit, to cleansing the outside of our dishes instead of the inside; from being faithful and serving our Lord to being faithful to and serving our institutional church.

Don't kid yourself. Our adversary really knows what he's doing. This war is serious and on-going! The New Testament is replete with warnings of false teachers and teachings, of lying signs and wonders, and of corrupt men who would seek to draw followers after themselves.

But God has not left His people defenseless. He has indwelt us with His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth and provided us with the example of Christ, His teachings, the teachings of the apostles, indeed all of the Scriptures.

There is the ability to test all things and to be discerning, which is the responsibility of all believers. If the believer is to be armed against the deceptions of the enemy, and to remain free from his oppressive regime, then he must exercise discernment with continual vigilance. If this defensive weapon is seized and taken from you, then you are an easy prey for any who would desire to take you captive.

Yes this war is serious and for many, the time has come to realize that the enemy is right under their noses, week in and week out.

Because of this, one can very easily observe the fiendish trend in the Body of Christ that has been around quite a while. This trend is to scorn and belittle those who would exercise their God-given self-defense weapon of discernment.

Those who would obey Scripture and "test all things" are mocked and ridiculed from the pulpit, and labeled "Pharisees." They are called "divisive," "un-submissive," having a "proud, haughty spirit." The one unpardonable sin is to question someone's belief, or dare to say that it might be wrong.

These "institutional church leaders" demand you climb on the bandwagon, and if you cannot agree, then you must remain silent at all costs. They call for us to experience now, and evaluate

later. Adam and Eve had no experiential knowledge of good and evil. Then Satan called their attention to the attractiveness and desirability of the fruit, and enticed them to experience for themselves. In their later evaluation, they knew that they had been wrong to ignore what God had said on the matter, but by then the damage had been done.

Those "*in the church*" who would remove the defensive weapon of discernment are binding the minds and hands of the people. They are preparing God's people for the slaughter. But, why are they doing this? Why would they want to expose millions to the myriad deceptions of the enemy with no protection? Why do they take away what the Father has given?

The answer is that "*dumb sheep*" are no threat to "*church rulers.*" This is what the "*system*" is supposed to produce. Few, if any, grow in this system. Few, if any, learn. Few come to be born from above, become filled with the Spirit, and have their very beings changed as a result. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. It is meant to produce dumb sheep and to KEEP THEM DUMB!

The Church has become a slaughterhouse slick with the spilled blood of saints who have been seduced by the proud and arrogant spiritual overseers inside the system.

The faithful plod forward to the killing floor, their trusting eyes fixed on their leaders. Error and deception is running rampant. Charlatans rule the pulpit; the video and CD catalogues; and the bestseller lists. Falsehood and deceit is being dispersed around the world.

From the beginning, Satan has always been present and active in persecuting and deceiving God's people. Make no mistake. It is a battle, and much is at stake.

Will you ever hear this from "*the pastor and his pulpit?*" Never!

When God created Adam and Eve, Satan was there. When God tested Job, Satan was there. In God's dealings with Sodom and Gomorrah, with the nation of Israel, with kings, and prophets, Satan was there. When Jesus was tested in the wilderness, Satan was there. In Jesus' dealings with Peter, Satan was there. In Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Satan was there. Whenever we look for the source of all the lying deception of the world, Satan is there.

Where is Satan now?

The apostle John tells us that Satan has a "*synagogue*" too. Does that sound strange?" It shouldn't. Remember what Paul said in 2 Cor 11:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

Today, Satan has "false apostles, deceitful workers, and ministers of righteousness." (i.e. his pastors, his reverends, his elders, deacons, overseers, etc.)

Where then would we expect these false apostles and ministers of righteousness that belong to Satan, to reside? In *"The synagogue of Satan!"* And what exactly are the things that Satan's ministers do that prepare them to *"deceive the whole world?"* The apostle tells us again:

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."

Where do we find a *"synagogue of Satan,"* with false apostles, and false ministers of righteousness, witnessing to the world with power, and signs and lying wonders?

In a haunted-house with a sign out front saying: "Welcome! Worship with Satan and his Demons?"

Where is the synagogue of Satan? The synagogue of Satan is located "in the organized/institutional local churches!"

(Revelation 2:2) *"...you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars."*

Where did the Ephesians try those false, lying, apostles? In some pagan temple or some other pagan religion? No, "in the church." Jesus Christ says: *"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write...I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and did try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and did find them false."*

Where did Jesus know these lying apostles? *"In the church!"* What good would "lying apostles" be to some pagan religion? Where did Jesus say the synagogue of Satan is located? *"In the church!"*

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again: I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they art not, but are a synagogue of Satan." Rev. 2:8-9

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none opens: I know thy works...Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie." Rev 3:7-9

All of the seven churches were well aware of many pagan gods and pagan religions. These seven cities in Asia were filled with MANY PAGAN GODS. False apostles, and lying Jews, and synagogues of Satan are all located in the Church! Where do you think Satan's dwelling place is? Where is Satan's throne located? "In the church!"

"Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison...These things says he that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwell, even where Satan's throne is; and thou hold fast my name,

and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." Rev 2:10-13

Satan cannot imprison "*members of the church*" unless Satan is in the church. His throne is in the church. His dwelling place is in the church! His synagogue is in the church!

And don't think that Satan just makes occasional visits to "*the church.*" No, Satan is permanently in the church until God sees fit to remove him. The word "dwelleth" (kataoideo) means to "*house permanently.*"

Satan not only has his false apostles in the church, his congregation of lying Jews in the church, his synagogue in the church, his very throne in the church, but Satan himself dwells permanently in the church. Satan does not attack the Church from without, but from within.

Where do we find them who "*say they are apostles [of Jesus Christ] and are not?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:2).

Where do we find them who have "*left their first love?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:4).

Where do we find them which "*say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:9).

Where do we find "*Satan's seat [throne]?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:13).

Where do we find "*where Satan dwells?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:13).

Where do we find "*the doctrine of Balaam?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:14).

Where do we find "*them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I [Jesus] hate?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:15).

Where do we find "*that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:20).

Where do we find them who are *lukewarm and spewed out of Jesus' mouth?* **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 3:16)

Where do we find them that "*have a name that you live, and are dead?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 3:1)

Where do we find them that "*are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 3:17).

Where do we find "*the DEPTHS of Satan?*" **IN THE CHURCH**, of course Rev. 2:24).

Does anything change or turnaround in our present situation? Yes. It gets worse!

Where do you find the Biblical phrase “minister/servant” being turned into “*Chairman/Duly-authorized head/Eldership Rule*”? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do we find men bringing the gospel for money? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where is the place in which you are told to go and show your greatest devotion to Jesus Christ? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find *religion* and *liturgy* quenching the Spirit and replacing Christ? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find “the pastor putting asunder what God has joined together?” **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do we find mortal men claiming to be “*clothed with the Authority of Christ*?” **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do we find sins of gossip and slander acceptable? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a place where those in so-called “leadership positions” are placed upon pedestals? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a place in which you never question the leaders? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you go to a place and see that there are the performers and there is the audience? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a sanctuary “*filled with God’s special presence*?” **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a place in which “*pleasing man is the same as pleasing God*?” **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find men binding heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laying them on men's shoulders but they themselves will not move them with their finger? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find the simple believing every word? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find the blind leading the blind? **IN THE CHURCH!**

When people were converted to Christ and His gospel, did they attend the synagogues to “*worship and fellowship*”?

No! They were persecuted in the synagogues! They left the synagogues. They left “*the mother Church*,” if you will.

Jesus said, "I will build My Ecclesia..." (Matt. 16:18). Jesus didn't say that He would purify or purge the existing church. No, Jesus built a New Ecclesia; His Ecclesia "MY Ecclesia."

And so it was in the religion of Judaism that the people learned of God and the Law of Moses. But when they learned of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they were forced to **"COME OUT OF HER..."**

In 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, we read:

*"And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. **Therefore, come out from them** and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

And again, in Revelation 18:4-5,

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

The Christians in the earliest centuries understood what it meant to "come out from among them and be separate." There was a cost to count that few of us can even compare to; for they gave their very lives for the truth.

As Christians we have been called out by God into His royal Assembly; His family. It's no coincidence that Ecclesia has this very thought in mind. For not only has God, in His Word, shown that we have been called out from among the world, but also even the RELIGIOUS world!

In Jesus' (and the apostles') day it was the religious world of Judaism. Judaism was the epitome of organized religion. It was filled with rules, rituals, ceremonies and observance of holy days and religious meetings. God called His people to come out from that camp and to be joined with Christ. In fact, there is a prophecy in Isaiah where God showed His utter disgust for man's religious worship (which had become lip service and going through the motions but void of any sincere heart).

The people had become so self-deceived with their religious worship rituals that they actually believed they were righteous because of them. Sound familiar? Doesn't the same problem abound today? I found this passage very interesting in the Message Bible. It certainly gets right down to the crux of the matter. Read it and then compare it in your KJV or ASV.

Isaiah 1:12-17:

"When you come before me, who ever gave you the idea of acting like this, Running here and there, doing this and that; all this sheer commotion in the place provided for worship? Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings. Meetings, meetings, meetings; I can't stand one more!

Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out! I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning. When you put on your next prayer-performance, I'll be looking the other way. No matter how long or loud or often you pray, I'll not be listening. And do you know why? Because you've been tearing people to pieces, and your hands are bloody.

GO HOME and wash up. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings so I don't have to look at them any longer. Say no to wrong. Learn to do good. Work for justice. Help the down-and-out. Stand up for the homeless. Go to bat for the defenseless."

God's Word sounds a loud call to all of those who are His that we are not to be about the business of building and concerning ourselves with earthly cities (religious centers and temples) here on earth (as the Jews did), but to keep our eyes peeled for the city yet to come. That's where it's at! That's where we are to store up our treasures.

If you don't think so, you have fallen prey to the spirit that rules inside the walls of the Babylonian/Institutional church. God is in the business of not only building His True Ecclesia, but also delivering His True Ecclesia from a Babylonian captivity of religious bureaucrats and controlling spirits.

You will not change the Synagogue of Satan. You will not teach the Synagogue of Satan. You will not convert the Synagogue of Satan. We are to "COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE" and James tells us to "Submit yourselves therefore to God. RESIST THE DEVIL, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Once you are delivered, you will learn very fast just how little interest indeed many of your supposed Christian friends have in God's Truth.

CHAPTER VII

DIVISIONS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

Paul wrote *"to the church (ecclesia) of God which is at Corinth..."* (I Corinthians 1:2). The word *"ecclesia"* has no limitation in and of itself. So to identify that specific part of God's people to whom he is writing, Paul added the limiting phrase, *"which is at Corinth."* Isn't that simple and clear?

It is this same way in every case in the New Testament. Paul was NOT writing to an institution, organization, or body corporate. He was NOT writing to an independent, autonomous functioning unit, such as *"the local church"* of today. There was no such thing then! When Paul

wrote *"to the church of God which is at Corinth,"* he wrote to God's people at Corinth; all of them as individuals! He wrote to those individuals at Corinth who were *"called to be saints."*

Paul's letter to the saints, *"the church of God in Corinth,"* dealt in a large measure with the divisions and schisms among God's people there. In the first chapter he deals with this problem directly. (I Corinth. 1:10-16). He told them that there should be *"no divisions among you."* The word *"you"* is used in an individual sense, referring to each and every saint.

In verse 12, Paul describes the kind of divisions he means: *"...each one of you says, I am of Paul,' or ' I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ."* Paul asked, *"Is Christ divided?"* The answer is an emphatic "NO!" Christ is not divided. You are His Body, and His Body is one . Therefore, you should not be divided and separated one from another.

But what is the teaching of institutional churches today? Each *"local church"* has its own membership list of those who belong exclusively to that formal organization. Many also claim that God has charged Christians everywhere to form themselves into *"local churches"* with certain duties that only it can do. In fact, they also claim that disciples cannot do these *"certain duties"* except through the *"local church."*

Supposedly, the church has one program of work to do and the Christians have another. Do you read anything like this in your Bible? No you don't! You never read anywhere in the New Testament about anyone even being a *"member of the church,"* let alone forming one!

The disciples were NOT *"members of the church."* They were the church!

The current teaching today is that every Christian is required by God to "join or become a part of" some institutional church unit. Today we often hear of those who move from one church institution to another by doing what is called *"transferring their membership"* or *"identifying themselves with"* a new institutional body. Again, we read nothing in the New Testament about such action!

Between the groups represented above, there is no real relationship or ties between these institutional units. Each one acts and does its own thing as if it was the only church institution in the world.

There is also a definite competitive spirit between and among these *"local church institutions."* Although it will never be admitted, this can easily be detected once you have been around one for a number of years.

Look back at the graphic above and decide if this kind of division is from God or man. What is the real difference, if any, between what we have in our separate, independent divisions called *"local churches"* and what Paul condemned in Corinth? Both are *"divisions"* of God's people!

Paul said to the saints at Corinth that he could not speak to them as *"spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and*

divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men ? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?"
(I Corinthians 3:1-4).

Paul, in no uncertain terms, calls their divisions carnality, or stemming from the flesh, not from God.

Division among God's people is carnality; and carnality is sinful. Correct? Is this true of all divisions among us?

To paraphrase Paul:

"For you are...carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal? For where one says, "I am a member of the First Baptist Church" (division?) and another says, "I go to the Covenant Reformed Church (another division?), and another says, "I'm a member of Pastor Jones' Church, (division) are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"

There is nothing said in the Scriptures for dividing God's people, His Ecclesia, into independent, autonomous, institutions such as we have today that we have named "*the local church.*" There is no requirement from God for such. If so, where? Are we following God or the ways of men?

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE, THE FAMILY AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

As stated many times on this site, countless marriages and families are in total shambles as a result of the false teachings and practices of the institutional churches around the world.

In an authoritarian, abusive institutional church system, those in "*church leadership positions*" reveal their true colors over and over again when it comes to human relationships within the family, especially those of a husband and wife. The Holy Scriptures are twisted and trampled under foot by these spiritual monsters; these wolves in sheep's clothing; all for the purpose of gaining their own carnal ends.

I have personally known of many families that have been destroyed through the false teachings espoused inside organized/institutional local churches. So-called "*church elders and pastors*" inside these man-made institutions have "*counseled*" many wives and husbands to depart from their spouse because one of them dared to stand up and challenge what was being taught from the pulpit.

And many wives in particular have succumbed to that evil counsel because they have been falsely indoctrinated to the point that they think "*The Pastor*" is to be obeyed to the same degree as you obey God Himself! Many are being taught to place the institution (the church) above

their family. Many are being taught to place the institution (the church) above their own husband and his wishes.

If a husband for example becomes dissatisfied with what is being taught and decides to leave that "*local church institution*" and attend another, his marriage will now be put in jeopardy by the "*reigning overseers*." Some wives have been so brainwashed concerning "*the local church institution*" to the point that they have actually said to their husbands,

"...Until you return to our former church, our marriage is never going to be the same! My church is first and foremost in my life; not you!"

Can some of you NOW understand the dastardliness; the religious cockamamie; the base and utterly despicable theological buffoonery that these spiritual monsters shamelessly advance?

Can some of you NOW understand the slavish and servile mentality that is exhibited from "*church members*" who have imbibed this trash?

Do I really blame these types of women who speak and behave this way? Not totally. Remember! They are victims. They are examples of an out-of-control tyranny inside the institutionalized "*Christian*" church today whom they have allowed to "*reign and rule over them*."

There is absolutely no difference whatsoever with what we see happening here, to what we have known of other cults.

Remember Waco, Texas years back? Remember, where out in that Texas desert, a group of about 100 "*Christians*" willingly allowed themselves to be turned into a human barbeque, as a demonstration of their loyalty toward their "*church*" and "*pastor*," David Koresh?

How about in the jungles of Guyana? Remember back then, in South America, where more than 900 "*American Christians*" put their trust, and their faith, and their "*submission to their spiritual overseers*" into action and partook of the communion of death in obedience to their "*church*" and "*pastor*", the Rev. Jim Jones?

What we see happening today might not be as drastic as *obedience unto physical death*, though I am certain that these cases will and DO occur, concealed no doubt under a great cover-up, but nevertheless, obedience and loyalty TO A MAN-MADE INSTITUTION and obedience and loyalty TO A MAN-MADE SPIRITUAL DICTATORSHIP is definitely occurring as we speak.

And make no mistake about. This obedience and loyalty IS BRINGING DEATH AND DESTRUCTION to marriages and families all over the world for the exact same reasons by which death and destruction occurred in Waco and Guyana.!

And what are those reasons? "*Church members*" willingly giving up their minds and their souls at the institutional church doors; allowing themselves to be induced with the godless spiritual

narcotic of "*institutional church rule*," slowly and deliberately being administered by their "*church overseers and pastors*."

Having now been deprived and numbed to any sense of right or wrong, they mindlessly, without any shame or twinge of conscience, follow and obey **everything** they are told to do within those institutional walls.

Even if it means destroying your own family "*for the higher good*," the higher good of course being in conformance to "*the wishes of your pastor and his local church*."

This is what happens when we follow the ways and the teachings of men. How many times in the Scriptures have we been warned over, and over, and over again concerning man's ways and traditions; taking heed to what we hear; testing and proving the spirits, etc. But unfortunately, it is very rare today to see a "Berean". But then again, wait a minute. Wouldn't that require thinking; something a lot of Christians that I know haven't practiced in years!

Instead of the Scriptural order of God, Christ, Man, Woman, "*in an institutional local church system*," it has now become God, Christ, pastor/church, man, woman!

Instead of the Scriptural command to wives that they be subject to their own husbands in everything, "*in an institutional local church system*," it has now become wives be subject to your own husbands in everything.....domestic!

Instead of the Scriptures telling us that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ also is the head of the Church, "*in an institutional local church system*," it has now become "THE ELDERSHIP" being head over BOTH OF THEM.....EVEN AS Christ is head of the Church!

And instead of having, What God has joined together, let not man put asunder, "*in an institutional local church system*," it has now become "Let the 'pastor' put asunder, what God has joined together."

It doesn't get much crazier than this. I am reminded of one radio talk-show host who used to say, "*Its sick out there folks, and getting sicker.*" Little did he know that his phrase is even more applicable in the religious/institutional church realm, rather than in the social/political realm!

It's easy to see that when an unbiblical doctrine like the "*local church institution*," coupled with its anti-biblical, man-made "*authority structure*" is espoused, misery and trouble are only moments away.

The powers of evil naturally go where there is sin, and then, they only produce more sin.

The Babylonian/Institutional Church system of today abounds in both sin and evil spirits.

For many of the simple believers who attend these local church institutions, it's time to stop casting your pearls before these **spiritual PIGS**. The deceivers that occupy these pulpits are

smart and they are clever, and they understand human nature. They know how to deceive and they know how to destroy.

Until the people's eyes are opened and they finally come to realize and act upon the fact that there is a pompous, manipulative, and deceitful ruling class of "*church leaders*" who will stop at nothing to advance their destructive, self-serving agendas, they will be doomed to a lifetime of bondage and darkness.

If only the people will have the eyes to see and the courage and bravery to stand up and say NO!

Many need to heed the admonition of the apostle Paul: "*Neither give place to the Devil*" (Ephesians 4:27)

CLOSING REMARKS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death.* Proverbs 14:12

We are all by nature, so slow to fully accept anything that is contrary to our present beliefs, even if those beliefs are false. Once we have been programmed with a belief, be it true or false, we will act as if it is true! We then instinctively seek to collect facts to support that belief no matter how false it might be!

No one will be able to convince us otherwise unless by and through the aid of the Spirit of God Himself, we will then study and be READY to change.

We all like to believe we are brave and will stubbornly deny that we are cowardly. But in reality, the opposite of bravery is acquiescence or conformity. The brave person never invests in another human being or a group of human beings or an institution (passed off as the body of Christ) with power to speak to him for God. To be brave is to seek God's will without the intimidations so commonly used today in many "*churches.*"

Truth has nothing to fear by probing, discussion, and debate. Only orthodoxy is threatened by such exercise. The promise still stands that *knowing the truth will set us free.*

All throughout time, God has carried the Truth forward one person at a time, or two at a time, or a small group at a time. A study of church history will demonstrate that adequately. Thank the Lord indeed that for many today, the experiences of the local, institutionalized church system are coming to an end as the True Ecclesia of God, the community of true believers, withdraws more and more from this man-made system and its godless hierarchical structure, to rekindle a direct relationship with their Father in heaven through the one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus the Lord. (1 Timothy 2:5).

Make no mistake about it though; God does indeed have a membership. Oh yes He does! But that membership is UNTO HIM, not to some corporate, institutional structure that people can go to once a week. Such structures and activities are contrived by the depraved minds of men.

When Jesus calls us into His Membership, He is not calling us to weekend duty. He demands our life and intellect. He expects us to turn our backs on all rivals, pick up our cross and die upon it daily if necessary.

Can you just imagine the Lord Jesus Christ going to the state to seek papers of incorporation and a tax free status?

No such entity recognizes "*the voice of the True Shepherd*" who alone is the Head of His own un-institutionalized and un-incorporated body.

So we come to the end of our study. What we have been examining in this article are the fruits of a "*local church institution.*" Its members are the product of an anti-biblical, unscriptural system that feeds off of human pride and a lust for control. They have commandeered what God gave through His Son, a simple, direct, unencumbered relationship with Him, and have fashioned unto themselves their idol, their golden calf: "***The Local Church Institution.***"

But even as Isaiah cried, "***Lord, who has believed our report?***" (Isaiah 53:1; Rom. 10:16), even so, who has believed us? Yes, who?

Have you believed this report that has just been given to you? It is almost frightening to see how few professing Christians truly believe and understand God's Scriptures, and how fewer yet, obey them!

Christ's sheep have been corralled, mistreated and imprisoned by thieves and robbers for many, many centuries. The feelings, the thoughts, and the questionings of the average "*Christian church member*" today are, in some respect, really no different from what we've seen in Tyndale's day (Back on page 1).

The typical, average Christian back then had the same stirrings of the soul but had no way of proving or disproving their suspicions concerning *church* because of the same fear that was instilled in them by their "*overseers*" too! If they did speak up, their lives would be endangered by the very institution that claimed to "*care for them.*"

The word "heretic" kept them silent, for everyone knew the result - burning at the stake.

Today, the results are somewhat different, but the principles and the practices are so similar.

Still confined, still abused and still anesthetized with that hollow, far-away look in their eyes, many Christians today have viewed the Father's greener pastures from afar. Beyond the walls of the institutional/organized sheep pen, the green pastures beckon, but...BUT, they must not go forth!

“*Church authorities*” have done everything to insure that “freedom,” True Freedom as revealed in the Scriptures, is never realized in the heart of institutionalized church members.

Consequently, they will be regularly reminded of the meetings and the stories told, like urban legends told around a campfire, of the supposed “*uncertain fate*” of those that left and never returned, and the horrors of the many and “*mysterious dangers*” lurking beyond the institutional walls. Warned of the rebellion of feeding outside the confines of the organized/institutional sheep pen, and handed yet another stale “*Pastoral*” biscuit to chew on, they withdraw back and languish away, somehow convinced it is their duty to do so.

Freedom has been once again successfully strangled by the “*church authorities*” all because the heart in which it dwells naturally longs for it.

What a sad and pathetic state of affairs. It has been said that many Institutional church members today are likened to caged animals at the zoo. Many Christians settle into their “cages” week after week, sitting in their pews, not even knowing what’s really going on. Calm and quiet, with their hollow, far-away look in their eyes, there they stay; tricked into believing that this is what’s best for them; that this is what their Creator’s plan has been for them all along. So they quietly sit; slothfully satisfied in their *captivity*. The thought of having to “*hunt for their own food*” sounds too much like work. Many wouldn't even know where to begin. The “*zoo*” has made life easy for them. Why leave? The “*zoo*” has convinced them that **THEIR CAGE IS FREEDOM!**

And this is what we call “*church!*” Capturing a group of Christians; herding them in the same “*building*” and saying, “*Look.....We’re God’s Institution....We are Christians assembled together for worship and fellowship under the Authority of Christ!*” It’s a lie! It always will be a lie! Many just assemble upon command without having the slightest clue of what Christ and His Ecclesia is all about.

Until a Christian is free from an organized/institutional church system and planned religion, he or she will never really know what it means to be a Christian.

This **Distortion**; this **Deformity**; this doping of the mind is perhaps the most heartbreaking of all. Many in the “*church*” today are indeed likened to these caged animals at the zoo. With one difference. Those at the zoo are watched over, cared for, and are treated like human beings.

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