

GLOBAL SCHOOL OF MINISTRY
COURSE 108
THE JESUS CONCEPT OF CHURCH

(A Teaching Note of the Global School of Ministry, London, England and Waxahachie, Texas)

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SCRIPTURE TEXT : Matthew 16:18, 19; John 17:21; Ephesians Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

INTRODUCTION

In this course we look at the Jesus concept of Church. This course has a singular outcome which is to equip participants to understand the original intention and purpose of God in creating the Church of Jesus Christ. With this knowledge we will be instructed on why a reformation of the present day Church is absolutely necessary. This will be based on restoration of the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the Church is wrenched out of the hands of men and denominations to receive the full ministry of the Holy Spirit. This will be possible as the Lord brings into being a new generation of Christians who love the Lord passionately and prove it by obedience to His Word in every detail **John 14:15; John 15:14**. It is this kind of revival that the Church desperately needs. Are you hungry to experience the glory of the Lord in this dimension? The saints of God who will make a covenant with Him by sacrifice through total consecration to His will based on minds renewed by the pure water of the Word are those He will use to upset the status quo and return the Church back to the original purpose and path of the Lord - **Psalms 50:5; Romans 12:1, 2**.

SCOPE

This course will enable us to grasp these fundamental truths that are hidden within the Word of God but covered by the veil of religion and denominational preferences. We will focus on:

1. The mystery of the Church which was hidden until revealed particularly through the Pauline Epistles especially the books of Romans; 1 Corinthians; Galatians and Ephesians.
2. What the Lord Jesus had in mind when He shed His precious blood as a dowry to purchase a Bride, the Church.
3. How the Lord intends the Church to live on planet earth as His Body, expressing His nature, manifesting His presence and power in a clear "other worldly" lifestyle.
4. How the Lord expects the Church to prepare for His return as His Bride.
5. How humanistic ideas have bought into a Satan inspired grand strategy of offering the redeemed of the Lord an alternate "church" structure and pattern which trades in the souls of men who exist as statistical figures that are not discovering and fulfilling their God ordained purposes - **Revelation 18:9-13**.

REASONS FOR SEEKING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIVINE PLAN OF GOD FOR THE CHURCH

Everything created by God is for a specific purpose. For that purpose to be achieved it is imperative for the creation to discover, accept and remain in the centre of the divine master plan. When God gave Moses instructions to build an earthly tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant, He gave express instructions with minute details and commanded Moses several times not to deviate by an inch from the pattern he was shown on the Mount - **Exodus 25:40; Exodus 26:1-37; Exodus 27:1-21**.

By the same measure and even to a greater degree the Lord requires those who say they are ministers of the gospel to be careful how they build the Church in order to conform to the master plan He laid out. If an earthly tabernacle required great care to build, how much more does the Body of Christ require greater care? The Lord will on the last day put His plumb line to the work of all who claimed to be His servants. Then when it is too late to make amends it will be discovered that some will receive commendation for building with gold, silver and precious stones while others will discover, to their ignominy, that they deserve condemnation for building with base materials classified as wood, hay and stubble – **1 Corinthians 3:5-15**.

Thus, on the last day the last shall be first while the first shall be last. An usher who served faithfully; a widow, though unsung, faithfully cleaned toilets in great crusades in her city, may get to heaven to receive crowns of glory and honour while great and mighty men and women of God barely manage to squeeze into the Kingdom because they built their ministries for fame, for money and for other base motives using worldly

methods. God is not mocked and is not obligated to accept and reward works performed in disobedience to His clear directives.

WHAT THE TRUE CHURCH IS NOT

The true Church of Jesus Christ is not any of these things:

1. A building. A building does not make the Church. A building can offer a religious identity but is not necessarily the Church in itself.
2. A denomination or sect. A denomination or sect is a man made religious organisation based on a human interpretation of some aspects of the Word of God.
3. A racial, cultural or ethnic enclave. The Church is not a gathering of people from an exclusive segment of humanity such as a racial, cultural or ethnic group.

WHAT THEN IS THE CHURCH?

The Church is the totality of human beings who put their trust for salvation in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, relying on the shedding of His blood as the basis of their righteousness. The Church was conceived before the foundation of the world for it was in that time that the Lamb was deemed as slain - **Revelation 13:8**.

Jesus came to demonstrate the basis of the Church which is the unconditional love of God showered on undeserving humanity - **Romans 5:6-11**.

Of all the biblical descriptions of the Church, three particularly stand out:

1. **The Body of Christ**

This immediately conjures up the image of an organic whole which is complete only when connected to its Head, even the Lord Jesus Christ and with one another. We thus receive the firm revelation that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church - **Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:4; Ephesians 4:15-16; Ephesians 5:29-30; Colossians 1:14-18; Colossians 1:21-22; Colossians 1:24**.

For this reason every true believer is part and parcel of one new family of God. Racial, cultural and ethnic cleavages are taken away so that our organic union in Christ can be manifested - **Ephesians 2:10-21; Galatians 3:27-29; Colossians 2:18-19**.

As a Body the Church is a living organism of life giving cells (individuals releasing the love of God, His grace and gifts to build up or edify others in a matrix of mutual support) - **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**. When any body of believers live out this paradigm the result is a living, loving fellowship that manifests the presence and power of Christ - **Ephesians 4:7-16**.

As part of Christ's Body we are judicially of the same substance and nature as Him. It is our responsibility to understand who He is in us and who we are in Him so that we can hunger after righteousness and hate iniquity. For as He is in the world, so are we called to be - **Hebrews 1:9**. This is why Paul prayed earnestly for believers in **Ephesians 1:15-23** and **Colossians 1:21-29**.

The basic unit of a local expression of the Body of Christ is two people according to **Matthew 18:19-20**. The Lord guarantees His presence whenever two or three people are gathered in His name. By so doing the Lord wants His servants to avoid the tendency to despise small beginnings or to rate success on the basis of numbers. God is the Lord of the harvest and He grants increase according to the good pleasure of His will - **1 Corinthians 3:6**. The Lord will therefore have us do His work with a relaxed mind devoid of strife and undue anxiety for "success".

2. **The Bride of Christ**

The Church is also pictured as a bride that was procured through a very expensive bride price – the blood that Jesus the Groom shed – to redeem her. What this connotes is that the Church is not independent of Her Groom and lives for His own good pleasure. The first demand of this concept is that the Bride-Church needs to allow her Lord to wash out spots, wrinkles and other such things as a prelude to manifest His standard of holiness - **Ephesians 5:22-33**. We who are part of the Body are automatically called upon to abandon our selfish lives and agenda filled ways and yield entirely to the Lordship of Christ, just as a true wife would be subject to her husband.

3. **A holy building or habitation of God by the Spirit**

Ephesians 2:18-22 pictures the Church as a holy building of God built by the Holy Spirit. This is consistent with what Paul the Apostle declares the individual believer to be, the temple of the Holy Spirit - **1 Corinthians 6: 15-20**. We need to bear this concept of a holy building of God in mind by ensuring that we follow the master plan laid out by Jesus Christ, Lord of the Church. We are not permitted to build whatever we like, otherwise the structure will collapse in due time. Engagement in the process of growing the Church requires every participant to understand the divine master plan first, follow the Master's instructions and keep to His directions - **1 Corinthians 3: 11-15**.

It is certainly laughable for any minister to undertake the church growth process based on a revelation or strategy which essentially sets aside the clear provisions of scripture. It matters less if such worldly methods are presumably "successful" in terms of "souls won" or number of denominational fellowships or "churches" planted. Any church, so called that is man centred or built on humanistic methods will not stand the fire of God. We need therefore to emulate the wise man while shunning his foolish counterpart in **Matthew 7: 24-27**.

When the Church is what it ought to be in any given location or geographical territory, four things of strategic importance happen, without effort:

1. All men know instinctively that Jesus is alive as people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds dwell together in love and unity - **John 13:34-35; John 17:21**.
2. The Church is grown by the process of spiritual osmosis as the world is drawn in to experience the refreshingly different principles and lifestyle we live out - **Acts 2:41-47; Acts 6:7**.
3. God uses the Church to show principalities and powers in heavenly places His manifold wisdom as the Holy Spirit energises and uses ordinary men and women to do exploits, deliver captives and roll back the curtain of darkness - **Ephesians 3:10**.
4. The urgency of the Kingdom is kept alive on the front burner and everything we do on earth is validated to the extent that they conduce to getting us ready for the soon return of Jesus Christ.

As much as it is good to do social projects and plant many churches we must be careful that these things are not allowed to blind our eyes from reality: the Church must be and operate according to the master plan of its Head.

It is possible to expand membership as a function of ambition, application of human methods and ideas. True and lasting Church growth however is that which comes from building according to plan and with the right spiritual values and materials. The road to hell is still the broad one with its glitz and glamour appealing to the soulful realm of humanity - **Matthew 7:13-23**. May God get the present day Church out of the broad way of manmade church growth projects that appeal to the soul and switch on to the biblical concept which results in empowerment of the spirit man by the indwelling Holy Spirit. When this happens, the redeemed of the Lord can proclaim the message of the Kingdom as witnesses of the crucified and risen Christ.

CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE PAULINE EPISTLES

It is clear from a deep study of the scriptures that the gospels concentrated on presentation of the person of Jesus Christ, His teachings and supernatural ministry. He essentially came to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God and to call forth as many as would respond to the mercy of God. After His resurrection Jesus spent about 40 days expounding the concept and nature of the Kingdom - **Acts 1:3**.

The Apostles were so filled with expectation of the Kingdom that when Jesus was to ascend on high they were rightly concerned whether He was about to inaugurate the Kingdom - **Acts 1:6-7**. The Lord had to remind them that the time of manifestation of the Kingdom was in the hands of the Father alone and that there was an interregnum during which they were required to be His witnesses as people in the world but not of the world - **Acts 1:7-8; John 17:1-20**. Perhaps because of their cultural mindset as Jews the disciples did not fully apprehend the hidden message of Jesus that between His resurrection and His return there would be a Church Age whose duration no man could predict.

The Lord had to specially arrest Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus to use him as a vessel of bringing forth the revelation of the Church; a revelation which was hidden through the ages. That revelation is the Church as God's instrument of breaking down the middle wall of partition which separated Jews and Gentiles into mutually opposing people groups to create one new man, even the saint of God - **Galatians 3:27-29; Ephesians 3:1-21**.

To understand the Church therefore is to understand the mystery of the ages. It is to understand the power of the gospel to save and regenerate mankind irrespective of race, gender or ethnicity into the Body of Christ which, at the consummation of the age, becomes the Bride. He will come to unite with His Bride to be all in all when the Kingdoms of this world are handed over to Him who is the designated King of kings and Lord of lords - **1 Corinthians 1:18-31**.

STRUCTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The New Testament Church is on two interrelated levels:

The New Testament Church is on two interrelated levels: the City or geographic or territorial church and the local assembly. A local assembly is not to be known by size, budget, building or denominational affiliation. A local assembly is automatically brought into being whenever two or three brethren are gathered in the name of and for the purpose of exalting Jesus Christ - **Matthew 18:20**. The local assembly is not to be over organised to the degree that the Holy Spirit is stifled. It is also not to be run as a family owned business or religious corporation. It is the saddest of facts that today Christians endeavour to comply with laws of man to the degree that most local assemblies are now parasites of governments looking unto the State for sustenance in the form of grants to execute their projects and other governmental cash back schemes.

There is nothing wrong with receiving the riches of the world. When, however, a church is driven by the need to receive hand outs from Government in order to function, something is terribly wrong. When such hand outs are to be obtained by false accounting, the situation is worse. The real disaster however is that many a pastor is willing to do all to comply with civic laws and care a lot less about the master plan of He who gave His life for the Church. We all need to do well to examine in detail the word in **1 Corinthians 3:1-16** to know the fate which awaits those who build out of order.

The local assembly is part of the Church in the City. Thus brethren in each city or geographic area are all part of the same Body of Christ, facing the same supra issues and challenges. Senior ministers who have five fold leadership calling are set over the areas. Their function is to:

1. Ensure that what is preached and taught in local assemblies are sound doctrine.
2. Ensure that all believers receive impartation from the five fold in order to be matured, equipped and released into ministry. The five fold - Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are not just gifts. They are recipients of the headship gifts and offices of Christ. No Christian can purport to be living for the Kingdom and refuse or neglect their collective ministry. Any church which shuts out or refuses to receive any or some of the five fold is simply operating outside Kingdom order and runs the risk of divine disapproval. The five fold are not decorations. Each office carries specific anointing and grace from Christ Himself to release into the Body for its perfection and proper functioning.

Ephesians 4:11, 12 is not a suggestion, it is a command. It is not something a pastor or local assembly can choose to accept or ignore. It is at the heart of the proper Kingdom governance pattern of the Body of Christ. Those who purport that some of these gifts and offices died with the end of the early apostolic generation are engaged in the worst form of sophistry and will stand before the judge of the whole earth on the final day to account for their perfidy.

3. Ensure that divine order and discipline are maintained and ministers function with proper oversight.

It is instructive that most of the Pauline epistles (apart from **1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon**) and most of the other epistles were addressed to city churches rather than individuals or local assemblies. In order to enhance the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom, it is essential that city churches be restored. There is no other way than this approach if we are to demonstrate that truly we are of one stock. In the coming days when persecution will be rife, the Church must rediscover the necessity of cooperating with the Holy Spirit to see the emergence of the City Church model which will demonstrate to the principalities in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God.

Also the epistles to Timothy and Titus were instructions on how to run city churches and local assemblies as well as qualifications for and lifestyle of those who are called to lead God's people. It is wrong for the Church to disregard clear provisions of scripture and in the bid to be more acceptable to the world, adopt patterns, strategies and corporate structures and practices which combine to create institutions that are short on God and long on humanism.

DISTINCTIVE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES

1. A true New Testament Church at both City and local assembly levels receive the leadership gifting of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. Working in harmony these ascension giftings exist primarily to synergize their perspectives and anointing on the saints under their charge to bring maturation and equip them to do the work of the ministry - **Ephesians 4:11-12**.
2. In a true New Testament Church every believer is open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit who releases the gift or cluster of gifts necessary to function optimally - **Ephesians 4:12-16; Romans 12: 3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; 1 Peter 4:10-11**. It is the discovery of these gifts and their exercise to edify other believers and to engage with the great Commission that constitutes ministry. This is the core of the priesthood of all believers - **1 Peter 2:9; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 1:8**. Only saints who are functioning according to their gifting are actually demonstrating the power of the Kingdom of God.

FUNDAMENTAL INGREDIENTS FOR BUILDING THE CHURCH

1. **Holiness**

Every assemblage or group of people who claim to be part of the Church must prove so by manifesting the righteousness they received in Christ Jesus in every day conduct. The devil controls the lifestyle of those who are unsaved. Those who claim to be Christians are supposed to have received a new nature when they received Jesus as Lord and Saviour - **2 Corinthians 5:17**. The New birth experience is an absolute minimum for entry into the Church. Whoever is not born again is not yet part of the Church, notwithstanding their good deeds. The Lord calls His own to be separate through other worldly holy living - **1 Peter 1:14-17; 1 Peter 2: 9-12**. Any assembly of people who are not placing a high premium on holiness is not a church but a social club. The idea is that when the Prince of this world comes seeking, he will find nothing in God's people to latch onto just as he found nothing in Christ.

2. **Love**

God is love and it is out of His abounding love that He caused Jesus to be the propitiation of our sins - **John 3:16**. We are thus inducted into the family of a loving caring, compassionate and merciful God. No wonder that on the eve of His passion, Jesus commissioned the Church to live by the principle of love as a cornerstone lifestyle - **John 13:34-35**.

Dr Cosmas Ilechukwu, President of the International Ministers Fellowship, rightly captures the essential nature and character of the Church in his classic book, the Church of His Vision. He asserts on page 15:

“The Church is a company of those who love Jesus and one another because they have received the love of God in our hearts... The Church is a company of those who share in the nature of God who is love (1 **John 4:7**). They have been called out of the world and made peculiar by the love of God such that they constitute a corporate witness of His love to the world overrun with hate and violence”

3. **Unity**

The Body of Christ is one organic whole comprised of several members. The Bride of Christ connotes oneness of the Church - universally and locally. We are actually grafted into the Body to be one. The Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of unity. Those who are called into the Body therefore ought to find in their hearts a kinship spirit with other true saints. This is the glue that causes brethren to stick together in the local assembly. It is also this same spirit that causes Christians to be able to connect with fellow Christians in any part of the world – individually and as a group – for relationship and fellowship. In **John 17** Jesus extensively besought the Father to cause a rare level of unity in the spirit to be the hallmark of those who are in Him - **John 17:11, 20-23**. Any believer who is unable to enjoy fellowship anywhere in the world because of absence of his or her denomination should do well to check up whether their faith is genuine - **Ephesians 4:1-6; 13-16**.

4. **Service**

Every member of the Body is called to serve one another. It is a major pillar of the Church that we all are challenged to passionately utilise our gifts and callings to strengthen, edify, encourage and bless our brethren, in love. If there is anything we are permitted to compete for it is to manifest the grace of service. A vibrant and spiritually active church will emerge from this tendency and in the end all of us will be blessed - **John 13:1-17; Luke 22:24-27; Ephesians 4:12-16**.

5. **Charisma**

By this we mean the measure of the Holy Spirit that the individual believers received from God. For 30 years Jesus essentially lived an ordinary life. At the age of thirty He presented Himself to John for baptism. There at Jordan the Father approved His life and ministry. To commission Him the Holy Spirit came to indwell the earthly body He wore. Everything Jesus did from that day – from facing the temptation of the devil to His resurrection was done in the power of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus, the Messiah needed the Holy Spirit to function on planet earth, we need Him the more - **John 7:38-39; John 14:14-18, 25-26; John 15:26; John 16:7-15; John 20:22; Acts 1:8**.

The Church is alive when all those who are of Christ are hungry and pay the price of faith and quest to receive the demonstrative dimension of the precious gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift is then expressed and manifested in dynamic individual and corporate prayers, activation of gifts, callings, administrations and operations of the supernatural abilities needed to do the work of the ministry.

6. **Kingdom mindedness**

The church is not an end by itself but a means to an end. The ultimate purpose of God is to restore His Kingdom on earth. The Church is the present phase of that process when Jews and Gentiles alike are called to be part of the Body of Christ. In building up a local assembly or city church therefore, the people of God should be preoccupied with how their preoccupations and activities will create the enabling environment for the King of Kings to rule the Church. Man made structures is thus torn down. Humanistic projects are shoved aside so that the larger interests of the Kingdom are given priority. Ecumenism is exposed for what it is: an alternate kingdom which will lead the Church not to the King of Kings, but to the great usurper. In a Kingdom paradigm we realise that there is one King whom the true church is subject to. Therefore it is easy to receive other servants of the same King, extend right hand of fellowship with them and enable them to fulfil their own assignments. Together then we focus on proclaiming to all who care to listen that the King of Kings is coming back soon to set up the eternal Kingdom of God. We thus present salvation for what it truly is: a precious gift through which mankind can connect back to its maker and King.

7. **Leadership**

A true Church rests also on a vital pillar of genuine leadership. The role of leadership in directing the Church of Jesus Christ is well documented throughout the New Testament. Jesus Himself called 12 men specially to train and release them as Apostles - **Mark 3:13-16; Luke 6:12-16**. Towards the end of His ministry, He was graduating another 70 people from His School of Ministry - **Luke 10:1-24**. In the Pauline epistles we see a further articulation of the kind of leadership Jesus had in mind. **1 Corinthians 12:28** suggest a pecking order which, when juxtaposed with **Ephesians 4:11, 12**, make strife unnecessary. It was in God's plan that leadership teams would steer the saints to attain the fullness of their divine purpose and potentials. For this reason, we see that even city churches had teams of preaching and ruling elders to oversee them - **Titus 1:5**.

8. **Grace**

Grace is God's ability made available to human kind through Jesus Christ. Grace and truth came by Christ to supplant the legalistic mosaic order. When grace is evident the people of God do not struggle to live and do right. It comes effortlessly. The power is not of them but of Christ - **Philippians 4:13**. In a good assembly, the spirit of grace is self evident from the greeters/ushers to the teachers and preachers.

9. **Regular incidence of miracles**

When people of God get it right, signs and wonders are the normal lifestyle of the Church - **Mark 16:15-20**.

10. **Exaltation of the Word of God**

A true New Testament assembly is built on the solid foundation of the Word of God. The Word is exalted as the compass to guide us in the present and be our compass for the hereafter. The Word is thus at the centre stage of our activities and belief systems. We appropriate the Word to transact with Abba Father. We also rest in the fidelity of the Word to accept the mind boggling truth that God would dare, in Christ Jesus, to pay the price for rescue of humanity from the clutches of Satan and sin.

11. **Accountability/Transparency/Vulnerability**

Jesus calls on His saints to be converted and be as little children - **Matthew 18:1-4**. The Lord of the Church knows that nothing destroys fellowship more than pride and superficiality in relationships. Those who are called into fellowship at any level must prove it by being open and transparent with each other. They should be vulnerable and let all guards down otherwise they will essentially remain "strangers" to each other.

CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND ITS MANDATE ON PLANET EARTH

In this age of the internet and with such powerful online communities as we find on Facebook, there is the tendency to consider the "Church" as dead. This tendency is largely borne out of how Satan has skilfully engineered in the mind of some teachers a misconception of what the Church is.

The Church is not and can never be the building, contrary to what religious folks would have us believe. The Church is also not the denomination, contrary to what religious leaders think. Denominations have in the last 100 years or so done more harm than good. They have been built on strife, competition and a wrong emphasis on dogma of men as opposed to the clear word of God. Each denomination is flawed because their very existence is proof of the triumph of humanism. Above all, denominations divide the Body of Christ and make John 17 of none effect.

The Church is not physical. It is an invisible spiritual entity far beyond the imagination of mere mortals. The Church is the Body of Christ, the habitation of God by the Spirit. The Church of Jesus Christ is not an "I" but a "We" concept. It is not a "mine" but an "Our" concept. For those who proclaim that it is dead, the Church cannot die. It came into being on the sure foundation of the blood shed at the Cross of Calvary by its Head and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not just come to redeem the individual penitent sinner. He also came to announce the Kingdom of God and call out a people peculiar unto Himself who would be His Church and body on planet earth through whom He would be made manifest. The Church is to be His witness until He returns. Some of the ordinances He decreed for His Church - including baptism, washing of feet and breaking of bread/communion were designed to keep this truth in focus.

Psalms 42:1-2 describes the heart of a Christian who yearns for more of God and **Matthew 5:6** speak of the readiness of God to fill up such a heart. You have every cause therefore to expect, in faith, that the Lord will satisfy the yearnings of your soul. **Hebrews 10:24, 25** offers strong reasons why everyone who is redeemed by the blood should be open to the specific leading of the Holy Spirit to be part of a local assembly. It is necessary to state, clearly, that the Local Assembly is not the Church. It is but a local expression of an invisible, universal entity.

The Local Assembly God will place you in however, cannot be a religious corporation or family owned religious empire. God will never place you in a spiritual dead end where your gifts and callings will atrophy. God will not place you in a religious environment where you are put down and discriminated against because you happen to be a woman or of a particular racial or ethnic stock. He will not put you in a place where you are discriminated against because of your lower income or educational qualifications.

God will not force you to consult Him before you take up membership of a Local Assembly. He will not force you to leave the Assembly if all that they do are contrary to His laws. God will not force Himself on you. God will respect your capacity to choose for yourself if you decide that His opinion does not count. God has a perfect will for you in everything concerning your life. If God cares for who you marry and what career to pursue, shall God not much more have a perfect will in where you receive spiritual nourishment to be all that He created and redeemed you to be? If the Word of God clearly articulates why you should not live in isolation but be joined to a local expression of His universal Church, it makes sense that God will have you fellowship where He is worshipped in Spirit and truth.

It makes sense that God will join you to a group, not on the basis of your personal preference or the charismatic nature of the preacher. He will NEVER place you where you are a spectator, perpetually warming the pews. He will not join you to a place where your money or intellectual brilliance or contacts/social reach will enhance your stature. God will join you to where you will be a specific functioning part. You are a spiritual asset that is loaded with capacity to make a difference in the life of others. You are created and redeemed to also receive constant spiritual nourishment in your spirit and soul and from other brethren who are in fellowship with you.

The local assembly is still a necessary part of God's plan for His Church and the Kingdom. However, because of the massive corruption that strange doctrines and practices have inflicted on the Church, the Lord has ordained three experiences designed to renew and revitalise the Church. These are Reformation, Restoration and Revival. The Lord will be bringing forth expositions on what these three words mean and why those experiences are so necessary.

God is raising a breed of true saints who realise that the Kingdom of God they receive in their hearts and its lifestyle they subscribe to makes it impossible for them to live with closed minds which is what denominationalism requires. These are saints who realise that the Church of Jesus Christ is one and that He calls all of us in the light of the truths of **Galatians 3:13-29** to live differently. These saints realise that every blood washed fellow is our brother and sister and we owe them the same obligations demanded by God.

Yet these brethren do not separate themselves and live in isolation. No, they are going back to the bible to discover and apply all the express provisions in the master plan God gave for building His Body on earth. They do not want to take chances to build with combustible substances. There are many places and groups of people across the world where these experiences are already happening and the power of the Church is being demonstrated again.

We will be open to the Holy Spirit to present through the Holy Bible a further revelation of what the Church is, its mandate and its relationship with the Kingdom of God. We will see the lifespan of the Church vis a vis the Kingdom of God, the powers of the Church and its authority

We will see clearly why Satan hates the Church with perfect hatred and why He will do any and everything to discredit and bring the Church to opprobrium. We will also see the extent of the dangerous rift he is

engineering within the Church just to dissipate her strength and make the Church incapable of engaging with and overcoming his schemes.

ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

In writing to his protégé in **2 Timothy 2:14-15** Paul was used of the Holy Spirit to aver that people should know how to conduct themselves in the Church. Here are some ordinances that are unique to the Church of Jesus Christ and ought to be practiced irrespective of sophistication or geographic location:

1. Water Baptism - **Matthew 28:18-20**.
2. Washing of feet - **John 13:1-17**.
3. The Lord's Supper/Communion - **Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**.
4. Child dedication.
5. Financial Stewardship based on the three fold ownership of God (creation, redemption and providential care). Faithful tithing, generous giving, thoughtful support of God's servants who labour amongst the flock - **1 Corinthians 9:9-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18**.

Some Core scriptures that describe the lifestyle, nature, power source, structure and ordinances of the Church: **John 12; John 13; John 14; John 15; John 16; John 17; Acts 1; Acts 2; Acts 6**; all of **Acts; Romans 6,7,8, 9, 10, 11; 1 Corinthians: 12, 13, 14,15; Galatians; Ephesians ; Philippians; Colossians; 1 & 2 Thessalonians; 1 & 2 Timothy; Titus; Hebrews**.

WHY CONGREGATE?

Reasons we should be part of a living, loving organism at the local level (a local assembly) and not just rely on the internet and television for edification are:

1. We connect to activate a "fuller measure" of the presence and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. This happens automatically as two or three believers gather in His Name - **Matthew 18:20**.
2. We congregate to worship God together. In any group of believers some come cold or troubled or burdened and therefore stiff to worship. As more passionate brethren engage with the Lord the fire in them spreads and gradually engulfs others. Worship is contagious - **Revelation 4:8-11**.
3. We unite in prayer to achieve results that are beyond individual effort - **Matthew 18:18-20**.
4. We aggregate our individual strengths to meet individual needs and challenges to the degree that all are blessed both spiritually, socially and economically. There is something each one is programmed by God to release to bless others - **Ephesians 4:15-16**.
5. We create a living platform for the Lord to use the leadership gifts and offices of the five fold to perfect us to know and do the work of the ministry - **Ephesians 4:11-16**.
6. We challenge and exhort each other to look beyond temporary needs and challenges in order to apprehend eternity and the crown of life - **Hebrews 10:24-25**. Brethren exist not just for when things are good but also for times of adversity.
7. There is a place we hold one another accountable to live right and walk in the light of the Word. In Church we are accountable to the leaders (**Romans 13:1-7**) as well as to one another -**Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:1-5**.

The Church is not made up of a crowd or defined by the building where the meetings take place. Even within "living churches", there is a Church within the Church. The true Church of Jesus Christ, the Church which is His Body, comprises people who receive five distinct blessings that flow from Him.

1. **Redemption. John 19:30; Romans 5:6-21; Galatians 3:13**

When Christ pronounced "It is finished" in **John 19:30** He was pronouncing the effective payment of the price for redeeming man from the overlordship of Satan. It was an overlordship that Satan acquired legally when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and obeyed him. Since that day Satan had a legal right to keep man as a slave through the principle of sin. The gospel is good news because it announces to humanity that the yoke is broken and freedom from Satan, sin and death is made possible by the blood that was shed. A redeemed person is legally and spiritually free of Satan - **John 8:34-36**.

2. **Justification. Romans 3:21-26; Romans 5:1-22**

When a sinner genuinely repents of their sin and calls upon God for mercy the response of divinity is amazing. The sinner is not only forgiven, they are deemed not to have sinned at all. This is what the Bible refers to as justification. The outcome of justification is righteousness; the precious gift of the nature and character of God which is imputed to the saint. Saints need to have this truth branded into their hearts: God does not keep a record of any sin that is brought to the blood of the Lamb in sincerity.

In the Old Testament **Micah 7:18-19** captures the essence of justification: our sins are cast into the depths of the sea by God. It is Satan, in his office as accuser of the brethren (**Revelation 12:10**), who dredges up old sins and brings them to remembrance. By doing this he seeks to rob you of the joy of salvation and weaken you into a soulless state of worship which goes like a yo-yo according to the state of your emotions. Neither you nor any Christian has any business dredging up your past. While it may sound good from a religious point of view to do so occasionally, that lifestyle negates the work of God and actually causes you to doubt whether God saved you or not. In justification your slate is wiped completely clean so that you can begin a new life in Christ Jesus so that you can take your place as a citizen of the Kingdom of God - **2 Corinthians 5:17**. This is in no way an excuse for people to carelessly claim salvation when they are not saved. Justification is only possible because redemption by the blood of Jesus is a complete sacrifice, acceptable to the Father. The Law could not justify anyone because no one had power to keep all the precepts. The blood of animals and birds could only cover or atone for sin on a temporary basis, hence the necessity for multiple sacrifices to deal with various infractions - **Galatians 3:1-39; Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39**.

3. **Adoption. Galatians 4:1-7; Ephesians 2:11-19**

Whoever wills is invited to a spiritual transplant. From being part of the Kingdom of darkness a penitent sinner who puts their faith in the blood that was shed is conveyed into the Kingdom of God - **Colossians 1:13**. By the fact of the redemption price which was fully paid by the blood that Jesus shed, the saint is now adopted into the family of God with full rights and privileges as a son indeed - **Romans 8:14-17**. We become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This glorious privilege is not to be tossed away by ignorance or permission of barriers of the devil and human beings to hinder our maturation in Christ. Those adopted into the family of God are not judged by their race, colour, gender, socio-economic status or geographical location. **Galatians 3:13-29** is quite clear on this. Therefore a person who has been adopted is to be known to no one by natural qualities. No one is permitted to know us after the flesh but by the Spirit. The adopted sons that the world is waiting for are to be carriers of the presence of God and dispensers of His power. They are to take the Church from the building to the community to demonstrate, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the fact that Jesus is alive and reigning. As we stand anywhere and everywhere as His witnesses, sceptics, agnostics and even principalities and powers in heavenly places cannot but stand in awe at what they see - **Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:10**. According to **Romans 8:19** a day is coming when the whole creation will see the full manifestation of the redeemed of the Lord.

4. **Inheritance. Ephesians 1:7-14; Ephesians 3:14-21**

The so called prosperity gospel has done incredible damage to the psyche of saints. The spectacle of the redeemed of the Lord chasing after the fancies of this world and seeking satisfaction from them causes pain to the Lord. At the Cross Jesus paid the supreme price so that Satan will let go of his claim to be the "god" of this world - **2 Corinthians 4:1-2**. In Christ Jesus the saints have all things that pertain to life and godliness - **2 Peter 1:3**. For this reason the Lord Jesus gave us an unflinching formula; one on whose success He personally stakes His reputation: saints should seek first the Kingdom and its righteousness, trusting God to take good care of all their mundane needs - **Matthew 6:25-34**. The Lord in effect says we have an inheritance in Him that is secure and certain. We will be outlining in full the Covenant blessings of Calvary cross in a companion document.

5. **Grace. Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 1:3-11; Ephesians 2:1-10**

It is by grace that we come into the Kingdom and it is by grace that our walk therein is sustained. Grace is that special ability we receive from God to live out our faith not on the strength of our natural impulses. With the grace we receive in Christ we can literally do all things and manage every estate of life we find our self in - **Philippians 4:10-13**. Grace takes away pride and boasting. Grace endows us with a supernatural capacity which staggers those around us. Brethren, we need this grace which some one defined as "God's riches at Christ's expense".

Ephesians 2:10 sums up this awesome revelation of a saint: a masterpiece of God's own workmanship. It is for this reason that Paul prayed earnestly for believers to receive spiritual understanding of who they are in Christ and who He is in them - **Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 2:4-7**.

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