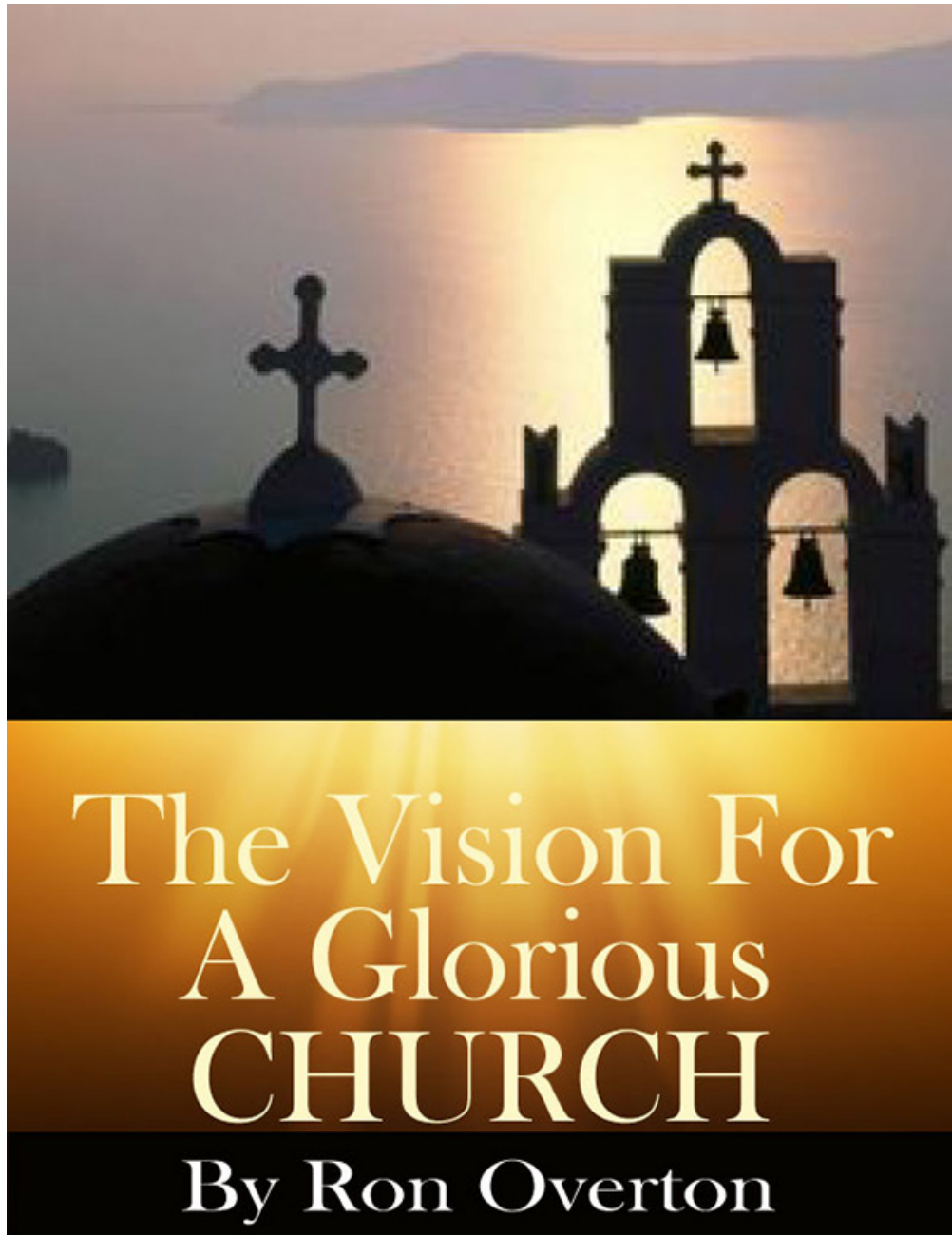


A GLORIOUS CHURCH



The Vision For A Glorious CHURCH By Ron Overton

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A GLORIOUS CHURCH

INTRODUCTION...

God has put a strong, unquenchable desire inside of us to help establish order in the body of Christ and help bring about His glorious church across America and the world. In January 2002, the Lord downloaded a vision into us for the church, prophets have since proclaimed it over our lives, and most importantly the word of God has confirmed every part of it – God spoke it, the word of God confirmed it, and our lives since becoming Christians have reflected it.

Is there not a cause...currently, there are over 2000 various religious organizations and / or denominations in the United States alone and the Lord Jesus died for one! Never before has there been such a cry for more of God, more of the real God vs. coming to church to be entertained. Never before have so many people sensed that change is in the wind. Never before have so many prophets spoke of change about to occur in the body of Christ.

Dutch Sheets spoke of a Shift in 2006: *I heard Him say, "Restructure, restructure, restructure."* ¹ Restructure, Restructure, Restructure...this word *Restructure* summarizes the vision the Lord downloaded into our hearts and confirmed by His word in 2002...this word *Restructure* summarizes what we have walked out in faith since 2002...this word *Restructure* is what we believe has prophetically already come to pass and is about to be made manifest throughout the body of Christ.

Ruth Helfin Ward, author of the book Glory, wrote this in her book in 1990:

One night in Jerusalem, I was carried away in the Spirit and saw the last-day revival. I saw a large platform. It was the deepest platform I had ever seen. I have stood on very broad platforms, but never one so deep. On the platform there were at least a hundred stretchers filled with critically ill people. I knew that they were there because of the miracles that were taking place in the meetings. I saw television cameras and reporters from all the major networks, and knew that they were there recording the great revival. I saw America ablaze with God, and I knew that when the revival had fully been ignited across America, Dallas, Texas, would be the center of it. ²

Many other prophetic words have also linked the Dallas/Fort Worth area with a powerful move of God to shake this nation. In December 2002, when we first presented this plan to a group of friends, one of those who heard such prophetically declared that this will be the biggest transformation to come to the church since Martin Luther. Chuck Pierce from

¹ Dutch Sheets Website www.dutchsheets.org "Shift for 2006"

² *Glory, Experiencing the Atmosphere of Heaven* by Ruth Ward Helfin, pg. 219

Glory of Zion International prophetically declared a few months later on February 9, 2003:

There is coming a move of God to transform the church that we have not seen since Martin Luther in the 1500's.

We can't plan a move of God, we simply must be obedient and do our part – God will cause the increase and receive all the glory. But we believe the re-structure of the church, the glory of God, and a transformation not seen since Martin Luther's day, are all about to occur and we are determined to do our part.

We believe a return to small local community churches, designed to reach their local communities is coming back to the body of Christ. A local church full of Holy Spirit power, not just religion, where pastors and evangelist will be able to reach the lost and disciple new converts much more effectively. We believe a complete restoration of church governance with the God appointed apostle, prophet, and teacher gifts serving in the rightful place will occur in the church.

HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT

A Little History Concerning Us

My wife Phyllis and I live in Arlington, Texas. We have two grown children and a daughter-in-law. Tyler and his wife Savannah are both teachers and live in Oklahoma City. Jessica graduated from Abilene Christian University in December 2020 and just started teaching. Phyllis is an awesome wife and has a powerful ability to encourage and uplift all those around her. She loves ministering on nutrition and God's diet plan to keep our bodies healthy.

My children attended public school in Arlington but it did not start out that way; much to the contrary. After learning - probably falsely learning - about how they put subtle messages in textbooks to brainwash students, we vowed never to attend public school. The Lord started dealing with us about the matter soon after He downloaded this vision in our hearts in 2002, saying I called saints to be salt and light to this world. God called the saints to establish the His kingdom on earth and have dominion over the things of this world, not to run from situations. Still, it was a struggle my wife and I had to overcome.

Seems like everywhere we went we would hear why we should be in public school. What nailed it for us was a dream my son Tyler had about him preaching the gospel in a public school. After we heard him share that we said, "ok Lord, you got our attention." As we enrolled our kids in the Arlington Independent School District in the Fall of 2003, I was still on pins and needles. We just so happen to be zoned for Wood Elementary where Ms. Sandy McNutt was principal. At the kindergarten welcome meeting held by Ms. McNutt right before school started, we felt like we had just attended a church service. Every self imposed shackle came off during that meeting allowing us to enjoy our school years. We will be forever grateful to this awesome women of God, Ms. McNutt.

I was raised in a Catholic home with six other siblings: three brothers and three sisters. My dad was an officer in the military. That along with spending the majority of my schooling years in South Dakota may have slightly tainted my view of the world. Not sure if it was the military or being raised in a Catholic home, but the strong upbringing complete with discipline, no sparing the rod, and the requirement to attend church every Sunday made a very positive impact on my life.

My family remains a strong pillar and influence in my life today. My first job after graduating from the University of Missouri-Rolla in 1980 with a Civil Engineering degree was with Shell Pipe Line Corporation in New Orleans. It was there that I had the opportunity and pleasure to spend much quality time with two my great aunts – Sisters Canice and Cansius Lastrapes, identical twins and both nuns. One great aunt has since died, but they were truly a blessing during my time in New Orleans.

I remember the time they gave me two cup holders that hook in your car window to hold drinks. Back then, they did not make cars with cup holders already built in. They both firmly instructed me that these cup holders were not for beer. I thought, yah, right and

went on about my business. It was quite sometime later that I opened one of the cup holders and placed a 7 oz Miller pony in the holder. Sure enough, no sooner had I done that, that the cup holder collapsed and the beer spilled all over the car and me. Before I got too mad and frustrated, I remembered what my great aunts had strictly warned me and I broke out in amazement!! I should have got a clue back then that God was trying to get my attention.

Growing up in Catholicism, I knew God or about God, but I never knew Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I did all the stupid things that many teenagers do and tried to make sure I did not miss out on anything fun or that I thought was fun - drinking, partying, and acting unruly. I got exposed to pornography at an early age and not sure if it was that exposure that caused such or not, but I started living a sexual promiscuous lifestyle through my college years and years in New Orleans. There were many times I had made the resolution in my heart that I was going to stop living this lifestyle, but I guess the pleasure of sin or what I thought were the pleasures of sin outweighed my desire. But sin is a passing pleasure.

Hebrews 11:25, "By faith, Moses when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer the affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin."

Everything changed in 1986 after my heart was severely broken after coming out of an immoral relationship. I was transferred to Houston in 1984, and moved my then girlfriend in New Orleans to Houston in 1985. All the ugly ways I had treated girlfriends came back on me in this relationship. I know the bible is written to Christians but I sure felt like I was reaping what I had sown. When we broke up in 1986, I was so relieved to be through, but at the same time my heart was devastated. I took two days off work because I could not get out of bed; I was hurting.

I knew a little bit about God, but did not personally know God and I did not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. On my couch in the middle of the worst period in my life, I cried out to God and said,

"I'm tired of living this type of lifestyle; I'm going to live for the Lord."

I did not know that this was a salvation cry. Being born again, sanctified, Holy Spirit filled, were all foreign words to me. I later realized that right there, lying on my couch, the life of Jesus penetrated by dead spirit and I was born again. The bible says,

Romans 10:13, "Whoever calls on the name of Jesus will be saved."

As I picked myself up over the next several days/weeks, people started coming into my life and helped minister to this hurting young man – it was truly fascinating. For some reason, which I now know was the Lord, I went out and bought a bible. I never owned or read a bible before, but recalled my roommate in college saying that the King James Version was the best bible. I remember how I ashamedly went into a Target Store on the

Southwest Freeway in Houston and purchased a King James Bible – I felt so embarrassed as I placed the bible on the checkout counter, hoping no one would notice it!

Another friend in college, Andrew Smith, and a young lady I worked with at Shell, Pearl Burton, are the only people I remember sharing with me their stories and testimonies about the things of God, though I do not recall hearing God's plan for salvation from either of them. Andrew fascinated me in college – at times while many of us were loud and unruly in our apartment, Andrew would start to share from my roommates family size bible with those present. Regardless of what we were doing, the room would always get very quite. I remember being blown away that he could flip back and forth throughout this huge book and find scriptures!! Pearl's son was born with hydrocephalus, abnormal amounts of fluid on the brain causing enlargement of the skull. She shared with me how the Lord healed her son when he was born. I respond and said if I knew a God that could perform miracles like that, I would not be sitting behind this desk but out telling the world! Little did I know that I was prophetically speaking of my own future life.

I began to read the Bible starting at the very beginning in Genesis. I was totally amazed at the stories – here's Moses, Abraham, just like in the movies. Here's Charlton Heston in the bible!!! This stuff concerning the plagues in Egypt and the Red Sea splitting really happened! It was truly an exciting time!

In the Catholic Church, there is a season forty days before Easter called Lent when Catholics are suppose to give up something in preparation for Easter. During Lent in the Spring of 1987, I decided to give up lunch and attend church everyday at a small Catholic chapel in downtown Houston. I had long since realized that many of the teachings of the Catholic Church were not for me, but it was really all I knew and making a change never occurred to me. After the Lent season, I continued attending the Catholic chapel during my lunch period, not knowing I was born-again, but knowing something was different with me.

In the late Spring / early Summer of 1987, I had a dream and in that dream John the Baptist was baptizing people and he said:

“Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand, but one is coming after me whose sandal straps I am unworthy to unfasten.”

This dream was so real, I woke up afraid, scared and not knowing what to do. Nothing so real had ever occurred in my life. I thought, “I'll call the nuns, they'll know what to make of it!” I did not think to talk with the two people who first shared their stories to me and never did call the nuns. I simply just keep reading this bible and going to church. I thought in order to have a dream like that, I must be doing something right.

In the fall of 1987, about six months after the John the Baptist dream, the Lord Jesus appeared to me in a dream at a place where we grew up on St. Onge Street, at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota. I was standing underneath the carport, next to a support pole and He came walking up the driveway and said,

“Ron, I want you to know that the kingdom of God is at hand, the end of the world is upon us, I want you to go out and prepare the way. I can’t be with you any longer, but I want you to go prepare the way.”

I thought, Wow!!! This was so real, so vivid a dream. Not knowing anything about redemptive truth, I literally thought that I was the only person who had a revelation of Jesus! The way I, and most Catholic’s I knew approached life was that you were either Catholic or you were not, period! My exposure to other Christian religions was very limited. Unfortunately, I started bragging and boasting to myself that I had been touched by God. A friend asked me to attend this church called Lakewood, and I responded, “I don’t need Lakewood, I’ve been touched by God.” I quit reading the bible, quit attending church during lunch break, and began to slip back into my old lifestyle. But this time, I could not make myself happy living in sin and I felt horrible.

Something inside was different. I started volunteering my time at various community service events or activities. I tried the Big Brothers / Big Sisters organization, began tutoring at a public library to help those less fortunate and began volunteering with Shell sponsored community fix-up projects; but nothing seemed to satisfy me. In March of 1990, while volunteering at a Shell community project, I met Sherry (Fontenot) Brooks. Sherry glowed – she was different than any person I had met before. She attended this church called Lakewood Church and was planning to take a week vacation to volunteer at the church’s World Convention. I thought she must be out of her mind, because I knew she only had two weeks vacation and to spend one of them working at a church seemed to be a waste!

I kept asking what is different about this young lady. Why does she listen to a Christian radio station? I don’t know anyone who listens to that music station! Sherry recommended that I watch the movie Jesus of Nazareth that was playing on TV during Easter week that year. So I did. During the last hour of the movie, from the crucifixion scene to the end, I began to cry uncontrollably, even through the commercials! After the show ended, I lay in the bed and continued to sob crocodile tears for thirty minutes more! “What is going on here? Why are these tears pouring out of my eyes?” I determined that I was going to attend Lakewood Church to understand what would cause a person to volunteer a week of her vacation and to see if I could figure out what in the world was causing me to cry uncontrollably!

My first service was April 22, 1990. I sat way in the back, right next to the exit door so I could make a quick get away if something happened. When they started praise and worship, I felt like I had found a slice of heaven. When Pastor Osteen began preaching, I said, “Who told him that I was here? Who told him my testimony?” Though I was a long way from the platform, Pastor Osteen felt like he was three inches away from my face. When he delivered the altar call, I thought, “Hey that’s what I did three and one-half years ago!” For the first time, my eyes were open to the redemptive truth of the cross! I realized that my cry out to God back in 1986 was a salvation experience. I got water

baptized and baptized with the Holy Spirit on May 6, 1990, and began attending Lakewood church regularly.

From 1990 to 1999, I set out on a track to know this Jesus and serve Him in any way possible; I lived thirty-one years in the world, I've got a whole lot of catching up to do. I immediately began working in youth ministry, and after a year of service at the church, became a prayer partner and sought to serve where ever possible. I married my awesome wife Phyllis in 1993 and we began to grow together in the Lord. Two beautiful children came along, Tyler and Jessica, and our family continued to grow in the things of God.

But inside, this visitation from the Lord burned - I had no clue exactly what it meant, but reasoned that reaching the lost for Christ had to be it. There was a whole world out there, even right here in America where many people, like I, had not heard the message of the cross. My attempts to go "*prepare the way of the Lord*" never proved successful. Looking back, I now believe the Lord had His hand on me waiting for a different time and season. So I basically was content to sit and absorb the word as much as possible and served in the various ministries in the church. I had the wonderful honor of being ordained by Lakewood Church and Pastor Osteen in 1995.

When Pastor Osteen died in January 1999, my wife and I thought surely this was the time to "*go prepare the way*" but the Lord had a different plan in mind. In February 2000, the Lord spoke to our hearts audibly and said,

"Lay down all our dreams and come to Arlington to help Gary & April Simons start their church."

And so we did. Resigning from a twenty year engineering and operations management career with Shell Oil Company, we came to Arlington to help build High Point Church.

In 2001, a series of three powerful words from the Lord were imparted into my heart. On February 26, 2001, I was reading the story in Matthew 19:3-8 where the Pharisees were questioning Jesus regarding divorce. When Jesus told them it was not okay, they responded, "Why then did Moses allow a certificate of divorce?" Jesus responded and said,

Matthew 19:8, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

When I read this passage, the Lord exploded in my spirit that,

"The church today is the same way, it is not the way it was supposed to be from the beginning but because of the hardness of our hearts, I've allowed it to be so."

Looking at the state of the church, this was not a huge surprise. People in the world can look at the church, with all the division and strife and know we do not have our stuff together. But I really did not understand the purpose of why he was telling me so.

On May 1, 2001, another powerful rhema hit me:

Leviticus 9:6, "This is the thing the Lord commanded you to do and the glory of the Lord will appear to you."

What did the Lord command the Israelites – build the tabernacle on earth exactly like the pattern shown Moses on the mountain. I remember thinking there's an exact order to God; God is a God of order. The tabernacle in the wilderness is a type and shadow of the church, the only difference being the veil, representing the flesh of Jesus (Hebrews 10:20), which was torn when Jesus died.

Acts 7:38, "This is he who was in the congregation (or church) in the wilderness."

In October 2001, a third powerful rhema from God hit me! A friend of mine, Mick Moffitt, shared the story from 2 Kings 9:14-19 during a cell group meeting we were having at our home. The story is about the apostate king Joram and how Jehu re-discovers the things of God and seeks to overturn Joram. While Jehu is riding his chariot towards Joram's castle, Joram twice sends out a watchman. When the watchmen ask Jehu is it peace, Jehu responds,

2 Kings 9:18, "And Jehu said, "What have you to do with peace? Turn around and follow me."

When the word "turnaround" was mentioned, cannon went off in my spirit concerning a turnaround anointing. I thought, "We have all been anointed to turn things around." I laid hands on every one that night, anointed them with oil and spoke that they were anointed to turn sinners to Jesus.

It was not until January of 2002 that the purpose of these three powerful rhema words spoken to my heart from the Lord made sense. I had inquired from a friend of mine, Pam Anderson, if she could provide some literature on the prophetic. She gave me a book on the apostolic, Apostolic Strategies Affecting Nations, by Jonathan David. Reading this book was like reading something I had written myself – I identified with all of it. A section concerning the commissioning/call of an apostle outlines that an apostle is someone that the Resurrected Lord Jesus comes out of heaven and gives a direct commission. I thought, "Could that be what happened to be back in 1987?" Could my search for my purpose in life be over?

For quite some time, I had been struggling with a step of faith that I knew I needed to take, but was petrified to do so. But I believe that it was that step of obedience and faith in January 2002 that released the flood gates of heaven to pour down revelation concerning this message for the body of Christ. For two weeks at the end of January and beginning of February 2002, the Lord began downloading into our hearts this vision concerning order and unity in the church. During this same period, my wife had a dream

of a baby being born breach, feet first. When the baby came out, one side of its face was marred and the other side was spotted all over. When she shared that dream with me, the Lord quickly brought me to:

Ephesians 5:27, "That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

The Lord then spoke these words to me:

"Similar to what is mentioned in the book of Revelation, the baby represents the church; being born breach is 180° incorrect (Matthew 19:8); the visitation in 1987 was a commissioning to be an apostle of God; He has anointed me to help turn the church around (2 Kings 9:14-19) and put it in proper order (Leviticus 9:6). Do so, and the glory of the Lord will appear."

We thought, "wow, what a powerful revelation - the present day church of the Lord Jesus Christ is 180° out of order and we are going to be used to help set it on its proper foundation." It took fifteen years of walking by faith and growing in the Lord to discover the purpose of the visitation from the Lord in 1987 meant. Numerous prophetic words started coming immediately, most from total strangers, to confirm the above calling.

Prophetic Words

February 9, 2002 - Barbara Wentroble

You've lived for this moment, you will not be denied (a major transition, major change is about to take place).

March 5, 2002 – Pastor Richard Fletcher

You have strong organizational skills; you are a leader amongst leaders. I see you holding conferences with leaders, your gifting is need outside of this local body, the nations are open, and the doors are open. Rally the body of Christ. You have two kids, a boy and girl. Your son is older and a real fireball evangelist and your daughter is very musically gifted. (I had never met Pastor Fletcher and he did not know I had two children, much less that my son was older than my daughter).

April 7, 2002, Jerry Savelle's Sunday Service Message

What's Next - Many in the body of Christ are saying the next big thing that will happen is the rapture. But I beg to differ; I believe God is going to unify his church. It seems impossible, there's so much division and strife in the body it appears very unlikely it will happen. But my bible says it will occur.

May 5, 2002, - Steve Sampson, Prophet, Evangelistic Center, Kansas City

You know I can see the...you've just been bothering me all morning, I feel so good about your life, brother. I feel your life so hitting the mark, it's going to hit the mark with more accuracy, more accuracy. That life, that destiny that God has birthed in you, God's going to make up lost time, God's going to accomplish more, He's going to restore the years the canker worm, the palmar worm, the locust ate away and your life is going to hit that mark, the Devine destiny is working in you brother. And there's going to be more accomplished, the acceleration of the Holy Spirit is on you. God is going to speed things up, and like the Hebrew guys that came out of the furnace without a smell of smoke, that's your testimony.

May 5, 2002 – Pastor Crane, Evangelistic Center, Kansas City

I see radical change written across your forehead

January 2-3, 2003 – Chuck Pierce's Apostolic / Prophetic Roundtable

I'm so glad to meet the arrow that God has kept back in His quiver until now to transform the church.

You have the answer / plan from God birthed inside of you. And there's some connection with Amarillo (I was born in Amarillo)

You have been kept in dark places your entire life; these dark places have been a good thing, but there's coming a day when the glorious light will come flashing through, and you will know what to do.

February 8, 2003 – Barbara Wentroble

The Lord says, "Son, there's even been a time when, in the same way that Joseph had his robe taken from him, that there are those that have tried to take your robe from you. But God says tonight, Son, because you have been willing to walk in integrity, I am re-clothing you in this hour says the Lord and I am mantling you as My Apostle says the Lord, for God says that you've had a submissive spirit, and you've had a servants heart, and God says you've been willing to sow and sow and sow, but this is your reaping season, and God says I call you out of captivity tonight, I call you out of obscurity tonight.

The Lord would say, Son, do not hesitate, for God says this is an hour of escalation, this is an hour when suddenly I will drop the plan in place says God and I will put the people and the resources in place.

God would say, Son, tonight do I robe you once again with My mantle, and God says when I robe you in this mantle, no man, no system will be able to take back that I have put upon you."

October 23, 2003 – Emmanuel Kure (Nigerian pastor, Conference at Colorado Springs)

America's destiny is to establish order – in politics and in the church.

A LITTLE HISTORY ON THE CHURCH

The Book of Acts - what more needs to be said to describe the early church. The bible documents how the early church was governmentally organized; full of signs, wonders, and miracles. Nothing has passed away, the same Jesus back then is still alive and well today and the same order for the church back in the Book of Acts days is required today.

On the following page is a general timeline showing the history of Christianity. Around the year 100 A.D. is generally considered to be the end of the Apostolic Age. Unfortunately, the Apostolic Age was never supposed to end. All of the original apostles had been martyred and the Christian church was well established, as noted in:

Ephesians 2:20, "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone."

Up until the year 300 A.D., the church could best be described as a Book of Acts church. Though many cults existed in the form of Gnostics, Hellenists, Maricons, etc, there was not much division within Christianity. The church was simply called "the church." Paul's letters were addressed to the church at Corinth, the churches of Galatia, the church which was at Jerusalem, etc. Most church meetings were in people's homes, mainly due to the fact that whenever they tried to construct a church building, the non-believing Jewish community or Gentile idol worshippers or Romans would not allow such and persecution set in.

The entire face of Christianity changed during the reign of Constantine, the Emperor of Rome. Constantine accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and was born-again around 312 A.D. Being so consumed with his new found religion, he outlawed the persecution of Christians, established no-tax laws to benefit the clergy, and was the first person to separate church and state. Unfortunately, Constantine and the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., did much to separate the church from its Jewish roots. Though many Christians had begun to worship on the 1st day of the week, Sunday, Constantine made it Roman official law and made it coincide with the pagan "sun-goddess" day, all done to distant the church from its Jewish roots.

The separation of church and state and the separation from Jewish roots were both never intended and were major factors in the demise of the church. I believe this is when Satan successfully took the church off of its apostolic foundation. Christianity was established as the religion of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church (Catholic meaning universal). For the next 1200 years, the church slowly became a powerless religion governed by man vs. God. During the period between 300 A.D. and 1500 A.D., I believe the church lost its apostolic foundation.

One of the downfalls was the church merging with many pagan holidays and celebrations, contrary to God's word and warnings of what would happen.

1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Do not be deceived, evil company corrupts good habits."

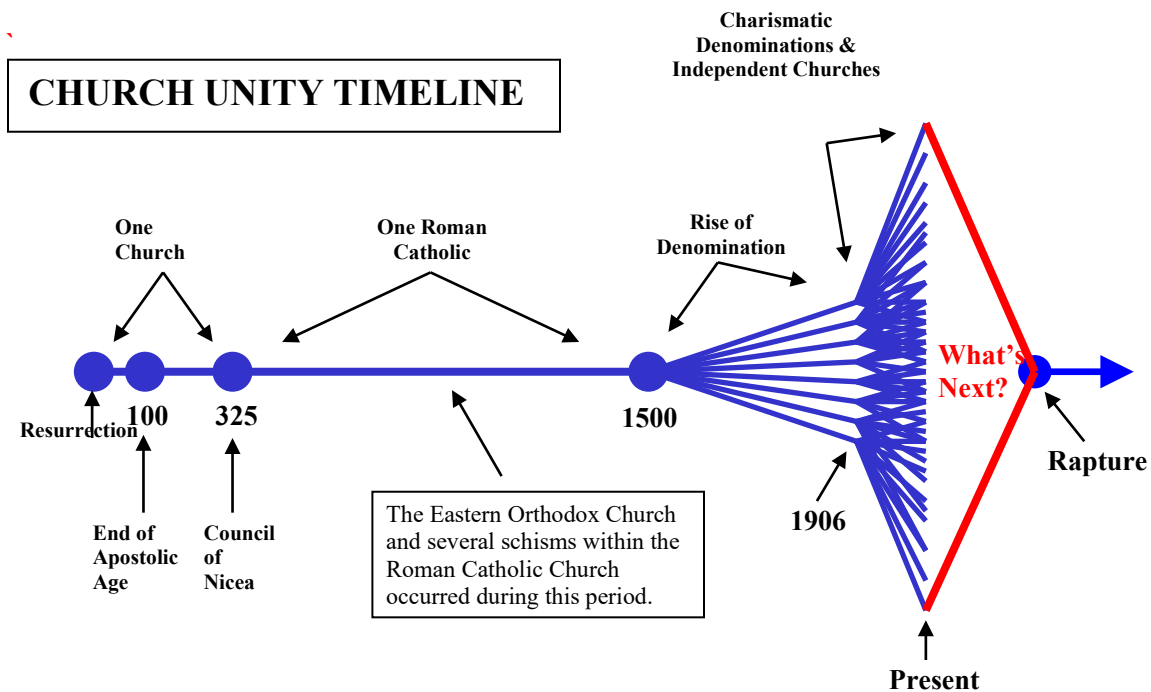
And many times in the Old Testament, God warned His people not to mingle or intermarry with their enemy's, but rather to destroy them all. In Joshua 6:17-19, the Israelites were instructed to destroy everyone in the city of Jericho, except Rahab.

Joshua 6:18, "and you by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things."

Unfortunately, Achan took of the accursed things and caused the army's of the Lord to be defeated in their next battle at Ai. Almost every holiday we celebrate today can be traced back to the church merging with pagan holidays:

- Many of the traditions celebrated during **Christmas** were originally a winter solace celebration, commemorating the middle of winter and summer was near. The church decided to celebrate the birth of Jesus at the same time to appease the pagans. Jesus Christ birth was never annually celebrated in the bible and though we do not know the exact date, it was not in December.
- The Roman Catholic **St. Valentine's** quest to win souls for Jesus resulted in the church deciding to celebrate this saint during the pagan love festivals in February.
- The Roman Catholic's **St. Patrick** was successful winning the country of Ireland for Jesus by merging with the Celts and Druids in Ireland.
- **Easter** got it's name from the pagan goddess of Eostre, a goddess of fertility, with the hare being it's symbol due to its rapid re-productivity.
- **Halloween** was again the Roman Catholic church deciding to celebrate All Saints Day on November 1, the day after the Druids celebrated their dead spirits.

In the late 1400's / early 1500's, God began to raise up certain reformers in the church with the likes of John Hus, Martin Luther, John Wycliff, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, etc. Being successful, these all led to the rise of the many denominations, most still in existence today. Were these reformers apostles? Did they fully understand all aspects of the bible? We are not sure what they were, but I believe God used them all to slowly start bringing the church back to its original apostolic foundation.



In 1906, the Azusa Street Outpouring led to the rise of the Charismatic church and Pentecostal denominations. I believe the outpouring was a true release of the five ministerial gifts on the body of Christ, the true pastor being the first unveiled.

Since Azusa Street, the body of Christ appears to have been through many stages of releasing ministerial gifts in their full manifestation. In the early to mid-century, the evangelist gift was released on the body of Christ in the likes of John G. Lake, Oral Roberts, and AA Allen, to name a few. During the mid-century to 70's, the teacher gift seems to have been released and powerful teachers of faith rose up through out the body of Christ. In the 80's and 90's, the gift of the prophet began to be released and today, the body of Christ seems to fully embrace this gift. Apostles began to be released on the body in the 90's and at the turn of the century.

It now appears that all five ministerial gifts have been fully manifested to the church and I believe the Lord Jesus is about to "turn His church around" to put it in proper order. Why God chose to fully release the ministerial gifts starting with the pastor, evangelist, teacher, prophet, then the apostle is anybody's guess. But biblically, this order is 180° incorrect, just like the vision and dream the Lord showed us.

1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues."

Apostles are the first order in the church, not the last, as the order in which they have been presently revealed to the church. Apostles are foundational builders. If the

foundation to a house is on top, what will happen to the house? It will collapse, which is another way of saying the church will turnaround. So is the current church out of the will of God? Absolutely not, especially since God has allowed it and He is sovereign and can and will do anything He pleases:

Psalms 135:6, "Whatever the Lord pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places.

However, the church is not in biblical order and is definitely not in unity. In the summer of 2002, I was at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. The prayer leader was crying out for 300,000 souls to be won for the Lord in Kansas City! During the prayer, the Lord spoke to my heart:

The previous moves of God have been because I am a sovereign God, but the next move of God will be when the church is in proper order.

An apostle is not a pastor who decides that he's out grown the pastoral office and now it's time to step into the office of an apostle. An apostle is not someone who merely networks with other churches. The apostle is not self-appointed or appointed by another man.

2 Corinthians 12:12, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

An apostle is someone, very similar to the apostles of the bible, who flows in signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. Establishing churches and providing governmental oversight to the local body of churches are a couple of the major areas an apostle will work in. In addition, I believe an apostle is someone who the Lord Jesus comes down out of heaven and gives a direct commission to, similar to the original eleven apostles, Paul's Damascus road experience and my personal experience.

The church is a five-fold ministry, not a pastor only ministry. The five-fold ministers were designed to work together, none being better than any other. The pastor was designed to oversee his flock, and know his flock and his flock know him. A true pastor, though he should be apostolic, was not designed to evangelize the world. A pastor was not designed to appoint elders, and associate pastors. A pastor was designed to oversee his flock – training and raising them up in the things of God – and being able to identify people with their calling.

And I believe the glory of God is coming back to the church, where signs and wonders will be a common occurrence, similar to what is described in Acts 5:12-16.

My concern today is similar to Paul's in bible days.

2 Corinthians 11:28, "...besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."

My concern is for all the churches, all denominations! In the eyes of God, there's not a black church, a Hispanic church, a white church, a Baptist church, a Catholic church, an Episcopal church, etc. There is just the kingdom of God, with the church or called out group being the vehicle by which the kingdom of God is advanced on the earth.

Romans 10:12, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

ORDER

The message that Jesus preached during His ministry on earth was centered on the gospel of the kingdom of God. All throughout the gospels, Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God:

Mark 1:14-15, Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Luke 16:16, The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.

Our mission as saints is all about establishing and advancing the kingdom of God on this earth by getting more lost souls to repent and enter into the kingdom of God. In a kingdom, there is a king, and in the kingdom of God, our king is Jesus. And in the kingdom of God, everything is based on relationships; our relationship with Jesus and our relationship with one another.

Mark 12:30-31, And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

But also in a kingdom there is order. And the church is God's orderly design in the New Testament to advance the kingdom of God on this earth.

In the Old Testament after King David had rest from his enemies, he decided to bring the ark of God back to its proper home on a new cart pulled by oxen. When the cart stumbled, Uzza died when he reached out to keep the ark from falling; he had touched the presence of God! David's anger was aroused against the Lord for what he later found out was his own fault. He was supposed to carry the ark of God exactly how Moses originally instructed, on acacia poles with four men versus on an oxen cart.

1 Chronicles 15:13, For because you did not do it the first time the Lord our God broke out against us because we did not consult Him about the proper order.

There is a definite order to the things of God!

Leviticus 9:6, "Then Moses said, "this is the thing the Lord commanded you to do, and the glory of the Lord will appear to you."

What did the Lord command them? To build the tabernacle exactly like the pattern God showed Moses on the mountain, not one iota out of place! Everything had to be made exactly like God instructed. Why, because the tabernacle on earth was to be made exactly like the tabernacle in heaven. If they built it exactly like they were instructed to do, then

the glory of the Lord would appear to them. And that is exactly what happened throughout the Old Testament; they erected the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord consumed the meeting place.

Exodus 40:18-35, "So Moses raised up the tabernacle, fastened its sockets, set up its boards, put in its bars, and raised up its pillars. And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. He took the Testimony and put it into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, hung up the veil of the covering, and partitioned off the ark of the Testimony, as the Lord had commanded Moses..... Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

2 Chronicles 5:5-14, "Then they brought up the ark, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up.....indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever, "that the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.

We serve a God of order. The New Testament is governed by the exact same God and the exact same need for order!

1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues."

God's order for establishing the church was to appoint first apostles, then prophets, then teachers, then after that miracles would occur. Why are there not miracles occurring in the body of Christ like in the Book of Acts, especially in the churches in America? Could it be because the church is out of order!

Ephesians 2:19-20, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ was designed to be in a specific order. Not every man or church for themselves, not whatever seems right in our own eyes, but a specific order to establishing the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In October of 2003, I woke up one Thursday morning and the Lord put it into my heart to fly to Colorado Springs and attend a conference featuring several Nigerian pastors. The only problem was the conference was starting that day, that Thursday! Miraculously, by 10:00am, I was on a plane to Colorado Springs at an incredibly low air fare, and by that afternoon, I was sitting in the conference, just in time for them to introduce the speaker for the afternoon session, Emmanuel Kure. While Mr. Kure was conducting his session, he spoke concerning a quiet time he had with the Lord a few years earlier while in Florida. During this quiet time, he was asking the Lord what was the purpose for America? Why did you create this country? The Lord responded to him,

America's destiny is to establish order in the world – in politics and the church.

I thought, wow! What more confirmation do I need for what God has called me to for! I fly all the way to Colorado Springs from Dallas and the very first speaker I hear, and the very first thing that speaks volumes to me, is exactly what the Lord has placed in my heart to bring about order in the church. God is so incredibly awesome!!!

HOW A CHURCH IS FORMED

Matthew 16:16-19, Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Jesus has always wanted to build His church, and build it in order. You will not find any denominations in the bible, you will not find any churches with names on their marques, it was all simply "the church" formed and fashioned by the hand of God through His Son Jesus. You will find apostles, prophets, teacher, pastors and evangelist.

The best way to understand God's order in the church is to study how the church was formed in the bible; starting from ground zero, just like in the Book of Acts. No, we are not laying a new foundation. The original apostles labored to lay the foundation of the church. They did not have the New Testament as a guideline; they wrote the New Testament, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

We have the New Testament as a guide – we are not laying a new foundation – just re-establishing the foundation that was designed from the beginning.

1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues."

The Apostle

God starts out to form His church with an apostle. An apostle is organizational, foundational, and a builder of God's word and the kingdom. Throughout the New Testament we find how the early church followed this format.

Acts 8:14, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them."

Peter and John being two apostles. They were sent to Samaria to help organize the saints into a church body. Every church that the Apostle Paul started followed the same format. Paul would enter a city and visit the synagogue or other public gatherings. When he was asked by the synagogue leadership, he would start to expound on the revelation that Jesus was the Messiah, then receive new converts.

The great commission was spoken to eleven apostles, not every disciple that was around at the time.

Matthew 28:12, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

The Greek word for apostle is *apostolos*, and means "sent one." This is someone who is going with a particular mission to a particular destination.

Hebrews 3:1, "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus."

Jesus was the Apostle, or sent one, sent to earth with a direct commission and He was sent to heaven with a direct mission to take our prayers and words of faith before the Father. Jesus is sent for the specific purpose of being our mediator in heaven, taking our needs before the Father.

The name Paul means small, probably meant to keep Paul humble before the Lord. Paul, the small one, also calls himself an apostle. The word apostle originated with the Phoenicians. It was a military term from the Phoenician Navy. The highest ranking military officer in the branch of the military was called an apostle. He would correspond in rank to our admiral. The word "apostle" also means "the one of highest rank."

Paul was called to be an apostle during his Damascus Road experience. The Lord called him to be a voice for Himself to the Gentiles. Apostleship, like all the other offices in the body of Christ is a matter of grace and not of talent. It is the gift of God. A talent is something you are born with, such as athletic ability. Grace comes from God the Father. The offices in the body of Christ come from God the Father and from Jesus. Notice again

1 Corinthians 12:28...And God hath set some in the church...

Ephesians 4:11 says ...and He (Jesus Christ) gave some...

Galatians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)"

It is not "of man," singular, or "from men," plural. The office of an apostle is not appointed by individuals or chosen by committees. It is not something that you can appoint yourself to. It is not a network of churches headed by someone who has the ability to gather several churches together.

It is God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who set apostles in the Church. Paul was saying, "I was not elected by one man, namely Peter. And I was not elected by any group of people, namely the 120. But I was chosen by God the Father and the Lord Jesus

Christ.” The Lord Jesus Christ actually comes down out of heaven and gives a commission to His chosen apostles. He gave a commission directly to the eleven disciples, called the great commission. 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 notes how the Lord Jesus was seen by the twelve, by over five hundred brethren at once, then He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Now there's no scripture that says an apostle must see the risen Lord, but all the apostles in the bible did.

2 Corinthians 12:12, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

It is pretty clear that signs, wonders and mighty deeds are the signs of an apostle. And the bible examples confirm such. God work unusual miracles by the hands of Paul according to Acts 19:11. A miracle seems awesome enough but God worked unusual miracles through Paul's ministry. The anointing for healing transferred through handkerchiefs or other articles of clothing. Peter's ministry was also marked with the miraculous. One of the first apostles I met, or at least a person who called himself an apostle said that apostles do not have to flow in signs and wonders. I looked at him and said, "Well you don't believe the bible, because that's what it says."

The Prophet or Prophetess

Next, an anointed prophet is established in the church. A prophet is a revealer, motivator, and director of God's word. God causes a prophet to come along side an apostle to provide direction directly from the throne room to advance the kingdom of God. The prophet speaks and the apostle builds. Even in the Old Testament, God used a team of an apostle and prophet like individuals to carry out His plan.

In Ezra 5:1-2, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews, namely Zerubbabel and Joshua, about building the house of God. Zerubbabel and Joshua, apostle types, rallied the people and began to build the house of God. Notice that the prophets worked alongside the apostles! The prophets did not speak revelations from heaven, then go out and build themselves! It was the apostles who built.

I believe God is requiring that the body of Christ work together in this next move of God. No longer will it be singular focused, or a single point man, but a five fold ministry team effort to advance the kingdom of God on this earth.

Nehemiah also had prophets speak direction in his life. King David had the prophet Nathan hold him accountable, and the New Testament apostles had prophets speak into their lives.

Acts 11:27-30, "And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability,

determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

The prophets spoke, the disciples acted and relief was carried to Judea by the apostles.

The power of God accompanied by a team of these two offices in the body of Christ is incredible.

Acts 17:6, "These two that have turned the world upside down..."

While working in youth ministry at Lakewood Church, I used to encourage young people by saying that it only takes two fired up young people for Jesus to turn their world upside down; using this scripture as a base. Though two fired up for Jesus young people can be very effective to advance the kingdom of God, the two people mentioned in this scripture are Paul, anointed apostle, and Silas, anointed prophet.

Acts 15:32, "Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words."

Rarely did the apostles or prophets travel alone. Paul either traveled with Barnabas or with Silas or with other companions along side him.

Ephesians 2:19-20, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

The apostle and prophet together make up a powerful team to build the foundation of the church!

Most of our knowledge concerning prophets comes from the Old Testament. The Old Testament is filled with prophets, most Old Testament books bearing their name. A prophet was called a seer in the Old Testament because he saw and knew things supernaturally. Only kings, priests and prophets had the spirit of the Living God in the Old Testament. Everyone needed the prophets to hear from God. In the New Testament, all born again believers have the Spirit of God and can hear from the Lord themselves. Prophets confirm words but their ministry in the New Testament is more so for the direction of the church.

The revelatory gifts: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, or discerning of spirits plus the gift of prophecy should be routinely manifested in a prophet's life. All saints including the other ministry offices possess the ability to have an occasional revelatory gift operate through him / her, but this does not make them a prophet.

Teachers

Next, God adds a teacher. A teacher develops principles, specifics, and an understanding of God's word. They dig deep into the revealed word of God. Of the three ministerial gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28, the gift of a teacher is least spoken of in the bible concerning how this office functions with the other gifts in the church. The Greek word for teacher in 1 Corinthians 12:28 is the same word in numerous other occurrences in the New Testament.

Hebrews 5:12-14, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Paul was saying that every believer ought to be teachers after spending much time in the word and after they have put to practice the word that they have been taught. Is this different from the office of the teacher? Yes, I believe it is. The office of a teacher is appointed by God – these teachers mentioned here have acquired knowledge through being taught or through their studying the scriptures. I believe the main difference is how much influence the person has. A teacher may impact the body of Christ; where as the everyday believer will not have such a broad impact.

Let's look at Apollos:

Acts 18:24-25, "Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John."

I would say Apollos was a teacher; an eloquent man and mighty in scriptures.

1 Corinthians 3:6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

Paul, while trying to set the church at Corinth in order, had to expound the fact that neither he, nor Peter, nor Apollos were anything, they all simply performed their God given gift to advance the kingdom of God. It was God who gave the increase and deserves the glory, not men like the church at Corinth was doing. Using Paul's planting analogy, apostle's plant but in order for what's planted to grow, it needs be watered, or taught. A teacher does just that.

Some would say that Apollos was a teaching Apostle. 1 Corinthians 4:9 Paul makes a reference to "us," the apostles. Who is the "us" referring to? Paul and Sosthenes wrote the book of 1 Corinthians so the "us" may refer to those two. 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul uses "us" to refer to himself and Apollos. Either way is not critical to the teaching in this book, but Apollos definitely taught.

Are apostles better than prophets and teachers? Absolutely not! Are prophets better than apostles and teachers? Are teachers better than apostles and prophets? Absolutely not! Are apostles, prophets, and teachers better than saints of God? Absolutely not! We are all in this together. God is no respecter of persons, but God is a God of order who set His order in the church.

The Pastor

Of all the revelations the Lord Jesus opened my eyes to, how the office of the pastor is filled was the most eye-opening and confirmed by the most scriptures. The order of the apostle, prophet, and teacher was clear to understand. What I did not understand is how pastors and evangelist fit into the order! They were not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and the word pastor is only used once in the New Testament in Ephesians 4:11.

Many times in 2002 after the initial download of what God was calling me to, I would try to figure out the pastor and evangelist role in the church through scriptures but could not seem to make sense of it. Sure, these two gifts are the most understood in today's church, but I wanted biblical understanding. Come on God, I would say during pray, where is the pastor? While crying out to God for revelation one whole week in September of 2002 in Kansas City, the Lord spoke to me that:

“The Pastors were in the church!”

And I spoke back and said, "No they are not in the church, because 1 Corinthians 12:28 only says apostles, prophets and teachers are appointed in the church." He responded:

"They are in the church!"

It just added to my frustration. The next Saturday, I drove back to Arlington, arriving around 3:00am Sunday morning. I decided to shower and shave before going to sleep in preparation for church service later that morning. While shaving, I had this brilliant thought about the pastor and evangelist: "Maybe Paul wrote 1 Corinthians before he wrote Ephesians - you know 1 Corinthians comes before Ephesians in the bible - and Paul did not have the revelation concerning pastors and evangelist when he wrote 1 Corinthians; that was why he did not list them there!"

Then the Lord spoke clearly to me saying,

“No Ron, don't you remember how Paul told Timothy & Titus to appoint elders.”

I immediately began to jump and shout for the supernatural revelation that the Lord revealed! Wow! God You were right - like He's ever been wrong - the pastors were in the church. To understand it, we first need to examine what an elder is. An elder in the bible is the same identical person as a bishop, an overseer, a pastor and a shepherd! There are all the same person!

Elders, Bishops, Overseers, Shepherds and Pastors

In Acts 20:17-28, from Miletus, Paul wanted to gather all the elders of the church at Ephesus. This would be Paul's last journey to Ephesus and he wanted to impart some words of encouragement into all the elders over the church at Ephesus. Paul first calls them elders,

Acts 20:17, "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. "

But the amazing thing is that after he exhorts the elders for a while in verses 18 - 27, Paul calls the same people bishops / overseers,

Acts 20:28, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood."

In verse 17, Paul calls them elders, but in verse 28 he calls them overseers and shepherds of the church of God. They are not different people, the elders did not leave and all of a sudden the overseers came in - elders, overseers, and shepherds are the same people. The English words overseer and bishop have the same exact Greek meaning. The Greek translation for overseers and bishops is **episkopos**. Why the translators used two words, overseer and bishop, for the exact same word is amazing in itself. The term elder is translated **presbuteros**. A group of elders or presbytery or eldership mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:14 is translated **presbutrion**. A presbytery is made up, for one, of several elders.

Paul uses the same exact references when he wrote his letter to Titus.

Titus 1:5-7, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you, if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money."

Paul first tells Titus to appoint elders in every city. Then in the next sentence Paul calls the very same person that Titus was suppose to appoint a bishop. Why, because a bishop and an elder were the exact same person, the overseer of a local church body.

The word pastor is only mentioned once in the bible, that being in Ephesians 4:11. The Greek word for pastors and for shepherds is **poimen**, meaning a herdsman, or overseer of an assembly of Christians. The phrase in Acts 20:28 to shepherd (**poimaino**) the church of God means to feed the people, feed them the word of God. That is what shepherds of pastors do, they feed the saints.

Another reference of the same:

1 Peter 5:1-2 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed; shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly.

Peter uses the same words when addressing the pastors; he calls them elders (**presbuteros**), serving as overseers (**episkopos** or **here episkopeo**) and wants them to shepherd (**poimaino**) the congregation or to feed them. Peter calls himself a fellow elder (**sumpresbuteros**). Peter was a part of the presbytery.

While referring to Jesus, Peter calls him both the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:25, "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

Peter calls Jesus the Shepherd and Overseer. Peter is referring to Him as the **poimen**, the pastor, the chief shepherd and the **episkopos** or overseer or bishop. Peter was able to do this because the shepherd and the bishop are the same person. The term shepherd here is translated **poimen** and it is the exact same Greek translation for word pastor used in Ephesians 4:11. So,

- Elders, bishops/overseers, shepherds and pastors are all the same person
 - An elder is who they are
 - Bishop / oversee is their function
 - Pastor / Shepherd is what they do, feed the flock of God

The presbytery mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:14 is translated **presbutrion** or a group of elders that are in that particular city or region. What an elder does is oversee a particular flock or group of people and he shepherds or pastors or feeds them the word of God. The elders, the bishops/overseers, pastors, and shepherds are biblically all the same person!!! Understanding that fact makes how their role in the church comes about easier to explain.

The revelation that all the terms for pastor were the same came to me earlier in my walk with the Lord, but I never tied that revelation to this vision for a glorious church until the Lord spoke at 3:00am that Saturday morning. Look at what Paul tells Titus and Timothy to do:

Titus 1:5-7, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you, if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money."

1 Timothy 3:1-7, "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Every pastor or elder in the bible was appointed by an apostle. Pastors did not start churches on their own, pastors did not appoint elders to help them run the church. There were no senior or associate pastors of a church in the bible. The only way pastors became leaders of the church is when they were appointed by an apostle with confirmation by the Holy Spirit as outlined in Titus 1:5-7 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7, both mention exactly that.

Acts 14:23, "So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

Who are "they" in this scripture? They are Paul and Barnabas, two apostles. God's Divine order was for pastors to be appointed by apostles and for pastors to shepherd the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. So just like the Lord spoke to my heart, pastors are in the church. When a group of believers begins to grow, just like Paul instructed Timothy and Titus, an apostle looks for saints of God in line with 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1! Then the apostle appoints them over that church.

I think where the church today missed it is calling Timothy and Titus Pastoral Epistles or letters where Paul was giving instructions for a pastor. But Timothy and Titus were not pastors; they were apostles! The books of Timothy and Titus are apostolic epistles, not pastoral ones. To prove the point, let's look at the book of 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 1:1, "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This scripture says that the entire book of 1 Thessalonians was written by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. The entire book is written in the third person, e.g. we give thanks, our gospel, etc. And,

1 Thessalonians 2:6, "Nor did we seek glory from men either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ."

We, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, were apostles. Timothy was an apostle, not a pastor. The books of Timothy and Titus were instructions for apostles, not pastors! And God's

order for the office of the pastor was for an apostle to appoint him into such, after the qualifications noted in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 were met.

James 5:14-15, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

The prayer of faith mentioned above can not work unless the elders, or pastors, that are appointed by apostles, come together in faith. These are not the elders below a pastor; these are pastors of local churches that are appointed by an apostle, that come together to anoint with oil and pray that the person would be healed. I look forward to the day when pastors routinely can come together and pray the James 5:14 prayer of faith to save the sick and the Lord resurrecting their sick body.

Please note it is the prayer of faith that will save the sick. Anyone can pray the prayer of faith over the sick, given they have sufficient faith to do so. Here, it is implied that the elders, when they come together, will have such faith.

Bishops are not pastors that have been promoted to govern more than one pastor or church. The Apostolic Age was never supposed to end. Though the Lord Prayer is a prayer recited before the resurrection of Jesus (we now pray to the Father in the name of Jesus), it specifically calls us to pray on earth, as it is in heaven; we are supposed to pray the will of the Father in heaven down to earth. There are no sick people in heaven so God's will is for us to be healed. The same can be said for order in the church – there's only one church in heaven, so we should believe God for such on earth. If order was important in the early church, the same order is needed now. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever; He nor God have ever changed.

The Evangelist

Very little is mentioned in the Bible concerning the office of the evangelist. We know Philip was an evangelist and that Paul instructed Timothy to do the work of an evangelist:

Acts 21:8, "On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him."

2 Timothy 4:5, "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

I believe the office of an evangelist works closely with the office of the pastor, e.g. one saves the lost and the other disciples new converts. The evangelist has a burden for lost souls. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Jesus Christ to them. Many were converted to Christianity through Philip's preaching, especially after seeing the signs and wonders that the Lord worked through Philip.

The apostles that were still in Jerusalem came to Samaria after they heard about the success of Philip's ministry. The Bible does not say specifically but I believe it was to establish and bring order to the church there.

Overall Church Order

The churches in the Bible all had a very similar organizational structure: they were local works; they had apostolic leadership; they had several elders (or pastors) amongst the local church body; and most sent out apostolic teams for various works.

The Church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1)

James, an Apostle, Leader (Acts 15:13)

Elders / Pastors, shepherding the flock (Acts 15:6 & 22)

The Church at Antioch (Acts 13:1)

Paul and Barnabas, Apostles, given leadership (Acts 11:25-26)
(Acts 15:35)

The Church at Ephesus

Timothy, an Apostle, charged to stay as a leader (1 Timothy 1:3)

Elders / Pastors shepherding the flock (1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Acts 20:17)

Timothy to rebuke / correct elders (1 Timothy 5:17-20)

The Churches in Crete

Titus, an Apostle to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5)

How the prophet, teacher, and evangelist flowed with the local church leadership is not clear. I do see a day that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ will return to local churches, led by true shepherds after the heart of God that will be in direct communion and fellowship with each other, and will be appointed by or approved by apostles.

The church in Ephesus gives us the clearest picture of God's order in the church.

Acts 20:17-20 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church...how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you and taught you publicly and from house to house.

In Bible days, the churches meet in people's homes. We know that the church in the city of Ephesus had more than one elder – Paul called for the "elders" of the church – and he then later tells them how he taught them publicly or in public forums and from house to house. The scriptures do not say such but it is safe to assume that the houses Paul taught them in each had an elder to oversee that flock of Christians.

CHECKS AND BALANCES IN A LOCAL CHURCH

The United States Government was designed with a system of checks and balances to assure no one branch of government became too powerful or acted beyond their boundaries. I believe our founding fathers were following the hand of God as best they could when establishing democracy in America.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has the same checks and balances built into it, all based on relationships and team leadership versus one individual making decisions. That team leadership was called the presbytery, normally comprised of all the elders/pastor in a local city, plus the apostle.

National presbyteries similar to the Jerusalem Council's, were convened that were made up of apostles and elders as well. The bible does not list prophets, teachers and evangelist as part of the initial Jerusalem Council but I would have no issue of any of the ministry offices being a part of a presbytery.

Apostle / Prophet / Teacher

Matthew 16:16-18 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Ephesians 2:20, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone..."

God's design was to have the church built on the Rock of Jesus Christ. Peter was the first person that had the revelation that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one. After Peter's revelation, Jesus proclaimed that He would build His church on "this rock;" meaning on Peter's revelation that He Himself was the Christ. Christ was not Jesus' last name. In the Greek Christ is Christos, meaning the anointed one, the Messiah. The church was not built on Peter; a few verses later in Matthew 16:23, Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind Me Satan!"

After that, the foundation of the church was to be built on the foundation of the apostle and prophet. The apostle and prophet work together as a team; one to prophetically speak, the other to build. One to give direction, the other to organize. And this team is able to keep each other in balance. The apostles, like Peter, are ready and eager to build and unfortunately, without the prophet, will stay building in one place. The prophet speaks direction, but without the apostle, there is no one to build on his/her direction.

The teacher is able to effectively communicate the apostolic / prophetic message to the body of Christ.

Apostle / Pastor

1 Timothy 5:19-20, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."

Paul was instructing Timothy, his young apostle protégé, how to keep order in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ at Ephesus. Timothy was a young apostle placed at the church at Ephesus. Timothy was not a pastor but an apostle.

Acts 20:17, "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church."

In Acts 20:18-27, Paul begins to exhort the elders at the church at Ephesus because he knew that it would be his last visit there. Then,

Acts 20:28, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Notice that there were several elders or bishops or overseers or pastors at the church at Ephesus, not one bishop presiding over the entire church at Ephesus. Paul had placed his young apostle protégé Timothy to work with the church and bishops at Ephesus.

The church in Jerusalem had the same structure where James was the apostle working with the elders. The 1st Jerusalem council convened to hear the matter concerning circumcision of the Gentiles:

Acts 15:2 & 6, "Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question... Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter."

The apostles at Jerusalem worked directly with the pastors/elders; they came together to consider matters that influenced direction in the church. Evidently, James was the recognized lead voice amongst this group in that he had the final say so on matters.

1 Timothy 5:17-20, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine...Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."

Paul instructs Timothy to reward those elders who rule well with double honor. Paul also instructs him to rebuke those elders that are sinning, after confirmed by two to three witnesses, in the presence of all so that the rest will learn and fear.

I believe this scripture is fairly clear that:

1. The congregation can approach the apostle concerning a problem with their pastor.
2. The apostle working with the pastor must have two to three witnesses before even receiving an accusation against a pastor.
3. If confirmed, then the pastor should be rebuke in front of the other pastors so that all may learn and grow.

Paul also instructed Titus, an apostle:

Titus 3:10, "To reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a man is warped and sinning, being self-condemned."

Clearly, the Lord Jesus wanted to maintain order and holiness in His church and had a process for addressing such. Can you imagine if pastors were held accountable by more than their self-appointed Board of Directors? Can you imagine if the congregation had an avenue to address a problem area with someone else besides the pastor? Of course, I believe the bible states that you should address the problem directly with the pastor first of all:

Matthew 18:15-17, "'Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.'

I believe Jesus outlined the exact same process in the above scripture. First, you go to your brother, regardless if he is a pastor. Pastors are not above correction. No where in the bible does it state or imply that the congregation should not raise issues, just raise issues in an orderly fashion. If wrong, the pastor will repent and correct himself. If not, and the person still feels the need to address the situation, then two or three witness are used either to either approach the pastor again, or go directly to the apostle over the body.

The congregation has a part to play in keeping the pastor whole and away from sin and resulting deception. Unfortunately, congregations today sit and watch their pastor fall into sin and say nothing about it, leaving without saying a word, or even worse, stay put and simply overlook the issue. How many church splits could be avoided if only someone would say something! How many fallen pastors would still be around today, if only someone would have said something!

Some organized denominations have a process similar to what's described above. Many independent churches do not have an adequate checks and balance system. If deception and sin could creep in and distort and destroy the early church, then it could easily happen (and has happened) in the church today. And without God's ordained orderly process for addressing such, many churches have fallen prey to the devils deceptive ways.

SIZE OF A CHURCH

Jesus said:

John 10:14, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

John 10:27, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

A pastor should know his sheep. Paul charged the pastors at Ephesus:

Acts 20:28, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Pastors were not designed to appoint elders (or associate pastors) underneath them to help them pastor the congregation that the Holy Spirit via appointment by the apostles has made them overseers (bishops). Pastors were designed to know their congregation and the congregation should know the pastor – there should be a relationship between the pastor and members of the congregation that goes beyond the Sunday morning pulpit. Yes, there is a need for someone to head other ministries within a church, e.g. children’s church, youth, etc. But these are not the pastor offices outlined in the bible – there are more so deacons, helps ministers, etc. vs. pastors.

One on one mentoring is by far the most effective form of discipleship. And the pastor was designed for just that – one on one discipleship. Many times during conversations with saints of God, I’m prompted to ask them if they knew their pastor; when was the last time you had an intimate discussion with your pastor? It’s alarming to hear that many not only do not know their pastor, some have never even met the pastor. One lady described her experience that she once had the opportunity to shake the pastor’s hand while she was volunteering to clean the sanctuary! My God, one encounter with the pastor, and a fluke encounter at that!

So how many people can one person effectively know and disciple? How many people can one person effectively pastor? Great question! Can one person pastor 10, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, or 10,000 people?

The Jehovah Witnesses organization seems to have effectively addressed this subject; Jehovah Witnesses are not a bible based organization. It’s amazing how the devil knows there’s more power in unity and order than church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read the following excerpt taken from a book titled Jehovah Witnesses, Doctrines of Devils

Charles Taze Russell is the founder of the cult today known as Jehovah’s Witnesses. While, unfortunately his theology is not Bible based, some of his ideas could give us some food for thought....Have you ever seen a Jehovah’s Witness congregation to build a cathedral? Have you ever seen a Jehovah’s Witness

congregation exceed a local membership of 200 members? Most likely not. For when it does exceed this number, the congregation is subdivided and a new church is built in a new location.³

Now could you imagine in the Christian church, a pre-designed Godly church split! Church splits happen all the time in the Christian world, but none I dare say are designed by God.

So for the Christian church, whatever the pastor can effectively shepherd would be the ultimate size of the church. As long as two to three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, then Jesus said that He would be in the midst of them. So a church the size of two to three people is Ok. I do see a day when numerous smaller churches come together to more effectively disciple and evangelize their communities, cities, states, and the world.

³ Jehovah Witnesses, Doctrines of Devils, by Salem Kirban, pgs 3-4

MISSIONS

The Great Commission – we are all supposed to go into the world and make disciples of all nations, correct?

Matthew 28:18-19, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

I have heard over and over and over that we are fulfilling the great commission by going into all the world and preaching the gospel. Well, let’s take a closer look at this scripture. Who was Jesus talking to? Who did He give this command to? Who was He addressing?

Matthew 28:16-17, “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

When the great commission was given, Jesus was not addressing all the then known believers; He was not addressing all the then known disciples, but He was addressing the eleven apostles and giving them their direct assignment. Why did the original apostles all go forth throughout the nation and preach the gospel? Because they were commanded to do so! And the account of such in the other gospels lines up with this. Plus in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus was addressing the original apostles:

Acts 1:1-8, “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God... And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me.... And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The apostles were again commissioned to be witnesses with power for the Lord Jesus to the end of the earth. Can all believers receive power? Yes, the power is associated with the Holy Spirit and witnessing, not solely the commandment to go to the nations. Are all believers commissioned to go into the world? No, not the nations but go into their world and be a light.

That’s why I believe an apostle is one the Lord Jesus comes down to earth and gives a direct commission to, similar to the original eleven apostles and to Paul’s commission to

reach the Gentiles. God is a God of order. Jesus did not leave this earth without thinking of an exact order for evangelizing the world. Just like what is explicitly outlined in the Old Testament, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has an order to it, in everything from the foundation, to missions, etc. The pastor was designed to pastor, the evangelist was designed to win souls, the teacher was designed to teach, the prophet was designed to reveal secrets from heaven, and the apostle was designed to set order in the church. Every office should recognize the other. A pastor should be apostolic, but he's not an apostle, a prophet should have an apostolic mind set, but he/she is not an apostle.

Today, the church looks like one big free-for-all scramble across this world. Every denomination has its missions program, some, I might add, look very much inline with what's described herein. Most independent churches have their own separate missions programs, very few which work with an apostle. Yet even fewer pastors have been appointed by an apostle. And almost none work together!

Throughout the book of Acts, the apostles that traveled from place to place, doing the work of an evangelist, appointing pastors, and setting order in the church. No doubt why Paul told Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:5, "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Philip the evangelist, the only evangelist mentioned in the bible, did travel from Jerusalem to Samaria after the death of Stephen and converted many souls to the kingdom of God. The teacher Apollos traveled. Are other ministries barred from traveling? Absolutely not! But I do believe there should be some resemblance of order in what we do and where we travel.

The term missionary is used quite frequently in today's church. But in reality, there are no missionaries in the bible. None! If a person is called to a foreign land, then biblically he is a "sent one" or an apostle to that foreign land. And if an apostle, he is there to do the work of an evangelist, establish churches, and appoint pastors over those churches.

BIBLICAL FLOW OF MONEY

I believe how money flows in and out of the church is closely related to missions work. Over the years, I have heard much concerning different plans and purposes for how money should flow within the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, most of which I have not heard the corresponding biblical support. Where is “partnering” with a ministry mentioned in the bible? Where is the biblical support for such?

Obviously, the subject of money is very personal and giving in any form is not mandatory. I believe that ministries developed "partnering" out of the need for financial support. Just like current structure of the church, the Lord has allowed such for the advancement of the kingdom of God. In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, Paul is thanking God for the Philippians fellowship with him in his ministry.

As an apostle, Paul had fellowship with the church at Philippi. His letter to the Philippians was written to “all the saints in who are in Christ, with the bishops and deacons.” The term fellowship is translated communion, joint participation, community, not partnership. Fellowship or communion signifies that Paul had a relationship with those at Philippi. He knew them and they knew him. In Acts 20:37, the pastors in the church at Ephesus wept on Paul's neck because they knew they would not see him any more. They wept on his neck because they had a covenant relationship with him, not one merely being taught the word.

The fellowship relationship in Philippians is between an apostle and the church he plants. In Romans 15:20, Paul was careful not to build on another man's foundation. Paul did not ask the body of Christ to pray about supporting him, but he did have a covenant relationship with the churches he planted. The biblical concept of a covenant relationship is a powerful one, but it is one that should be in God's order.

In the body of Christ today, many apostles, pastors, evangelist, prophets, and teachers all use the concept of “partnering” with their ministry as a means of financial support. Granted, the church has not been in order, so relying on the church for support has not always been there. As with everything else, I believe God has allowed such to occur. I'm not against what has occurred in the body of Christ up until now (unless people are manipulative), but when the Lord spoke “turnaround” and “My church now is not what was designed from the beginning,” how money flows in the body of Christ was another “turnaround” area.

Early on in my Christian walk, I financially partnered with numerous ministries. In 1994, Pastor Osteen and Lakewood Church began their Seven Years of Harvest program. The Lord put it on Pastor Osteen's heart to substantially increase the church's mission programs and he challenged the congregation to stretch their faith to increase missions giving for the Seven Years of Harvest program to reach the nations. I recall thinking that I trust Pastor Osteen to decide how money for evangelizing the world should be spent and it simply felt good to concentrate all my missions giving into one central location. I had a covenant relationship with Pastor Osteen. We began funneling all our offerings for

missions into the local church for their distribution. I believe that God was preparing me to be more in line with His plan for the flow of money in and out of a church.

Shortly after the Lord downloaded this turnaround vision for His church in early 2002, two incidents occurred that involved a church I started attending and a ministry that I had previously financially supported. I felt like I needed to talk with someone in the body of Christ regarding these new found revelations the Lord had imparted. For the church I was attending, I thought surely I could talk with this pastor. I was a tithing member of his congregation; shouldn't a tithing member be able to talk with the pastor! For the ministry I had previously supported, I drove four hours in hopes of gaining an audience with him. Surely, I'd be able to spend a little time to acquire some feedback! Neither the pastor or the ministry head allowed me to approach them – I got no further than their administrative person.

The following week, I received letters from both of these ministries requesting financial support. I thought, “Dear God, they do not have the time to talk with me, but they are happy to take my money.” It was then that the idea that financial support should be tied to a covenant relationship was birthed and that God’s plan to evangelize the world not only starts with the local church, but should be financial supported through the local church.

Galatians 6:6, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”

Yes, those who teach the word should be supported financial as well as the other ministry offices. In Jewish culture, the Rabbi’s were not accustomed to receiving financial support. So Paul had to relieve their concern of sharing with those who taught them. This is not fellowship or communion, but simply sharing in all things because you were blessed by a teaching.

Three Types of Giving

1. Tithing

Leviticus 27:30, “And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord.”

Tithing is a biblical principal used to support the daily work of the local church, e.g. salaries, expenses, etc. Tithing is the first 10% or the firstfruits of the money earned.

2. Offerings

Exodus 35:4-5, 36:4-5, “And Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, “This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying: Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it

as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze; Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, and they spoke to Moses, saying, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded us to do."

Offerings are used to support missions, building projects, etc.

3. Alms Giving

Acts 3:2, "And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;"

Matthew 6:3, "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,"

Alms giving was benevolent money given to the poor. Alms giving was not to be broadcast or boasted about.

Flow of Money in the Old Testament

The Old Testament gives some insight into the proper flow of money for the New Testament. Tithes always flowed in the same direction, up.

Nehemiah 10:35-39, "And we made ordinances to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, to the house of the Lord; to bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities. And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and we will not neglect the house of our God."

The children of Israel tithed to the Levite priest, and the Levite priest brought up a tithe to the house of God. The priest did not tithe to themselves or their own local church. The same process is noted in

Numbers 18:26-28, "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your

inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe. And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress. Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the Lord from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the Lord's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest."

The priest were tithers upward to the Lord. I believe this same principal can be applied to the New Testament: saints of God should tithe to their local church and their pastor; but then the pastor and the local church should tithe upward to the apostolic team and/or council that appointed them into their position.

Flow of Money in the New Testament

If we look at how money flowed in the New Testament, it followed the same basic pattern as in the Old Testament:

Acts 11:28-30, "Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Money was collected by the saints, given to the apostles Barnabas and Saul for distribution to the pastors (elders) in Judea for relief to the brethren. Barnabas and Saul had spent a whole year with the church in Antioch – they had fellowship / communion with Barnabas and Saul.

Romans 15:25-28, "But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

Here, Paul, an apostle, collected money from the church in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Money was given from the local church, to an apostle that they had fellowship / communion with, for distribution to another church.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

Here again, Paul, an apostle, collected money from the church at Corinth, a church he had fellowship / communion with, for distribution to the saints at Jerusalem. Here, it was a command, something they must do, and the command was also given to the churches of Galatia. Money was given from the local church, to an apostle, for distribution to saints at Jerusalem (probably the same incident as referred to in Romans 15:26).

2 Corinthians 8:1-6, "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God. So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.

Same pattern; Paul, an apostle, commends the churches of Macedonia for their giving to Paul for distribution elsewhere. Paul goes on to say:

2 Corinthians 8:16 – 9:15, "And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind, avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us..... Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority..... Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work..... For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men..... Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Same pattern, Paul was commending the church at Achaia for their zeal, their readiness, and for their indescribable gift that was administered by Paul, an apostle, with another brother who was sent with Paul.

1 Corinthians 9:1-14, “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?..... Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?..... If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?..... Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

Philippians 4:15-19, “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Here we see Paul, an apostle, receiving financial support from those churches he planted and had fellowship / communion with. The New Testament does not give explicit instructions on the subject of tithing, except that Jesus said that we should do so. I believe tithing was so engrained in their behavior it was automatic. But of those scriptures concerning money, they all followed the pattern of funds being given to an apostle for distribution to a church in need or given to take care of the needs of an apostle.

Many denominations are structured similar to what’s mentioned here. Not that I agree with all of their concepts, but the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program is an example of how churches working together financially can evangelize the world:

Simply put, it begins with you. You give yourself first to God (2 Cor. 5:8). Next, out of gratitude and obedience to God for what He has done for you, you commit to give back to Him, through your church, a portion of what He provides. This is commonly called a tithe and represents ten percent of your income (Lev. 27:30, Mal. 3:10).

Your church decides the next step. Every year your church prayerfully decides how much of its undesignated gifts will be committed to reaching people in your state and around the world through Cooperative Program (CP) Missions. This amount is then forwarded to your state Baptist convention.

During the annual meeting of your state convention, messengers from your church and other churches across the state decide what percentage of CP Missions gifts contributed by local congregations stays in your state to support local missions and ministries. The percentage to be forwarded to the SBC for North American and international missions and ministries is also determined at this time.

At the SBC Annual Meeting, messengers from across the country decide how the gifts received from the states will be distributed among SBC entities. These gifts are used by Southern Baptist entities to send and support missionaries, train pastors, missionaries, and other ministry leaders; provide relief for retired ministers and widows; and address social, moral, and ethical concerns relating to our faith and families.

The bottom line – people around the world hear the gospel and receive Christ. ⁴

The local church was never designed, by itself, to evangelize the world. The great commission was not spoken to every believer, or pastors, but to eleven apostles. God's design for evangelizing the world was for the local church to financially send out apostolic teams to establish the church of the Lord Jesus Christ across this world, especially those local churches planted by the apostle.

Saints / Pastors

Saints of God are in covenant relationship with the local church and their pastor, e.g. God's plan that the tithe belongs to the local church. Offerings for mission should start at the local church as well.

Pastors / Apostles

Pastors (and saints) are in covenant relationship with an apostle that works with the local body.

Teacher / Body of Christ

The bible is vague on how the teacher fits into the body of Christ. There is one scripture that many, who teach the word but are not pastors, rely on - Galatians 6:6, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches."

Regarding the prophet and evangelist, the bible is even more silent in this area. On certain topics, Paul himself did not have a commandment from the Lord, but God counted him trustworthy (1 Corinthians 7:25). Other places, they simply followed what "seemed good" to them and the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:25 & 28). So what is outlined in this Vision for a Glorious Church book "seems good" to me and the Holy Spirit.

Prophets / Apostles

Prophets are linked with apostles, so it seems good that they should be able to be supported similar to the apostle.

Evangelist / Pastors

So little is mentioned in the bible concerning the evangelist. Today, 95% of those making salvation decisions, turn back to the world, I believe mainly because of the church is not in order. When a soul is won to the Lord, the pastor should immediately start discipling that person. Unfortunately, the pastor and evangelist are miles apart. I believe an evangelist should be in covenant with the pastor, one wins souls, and the other oversees

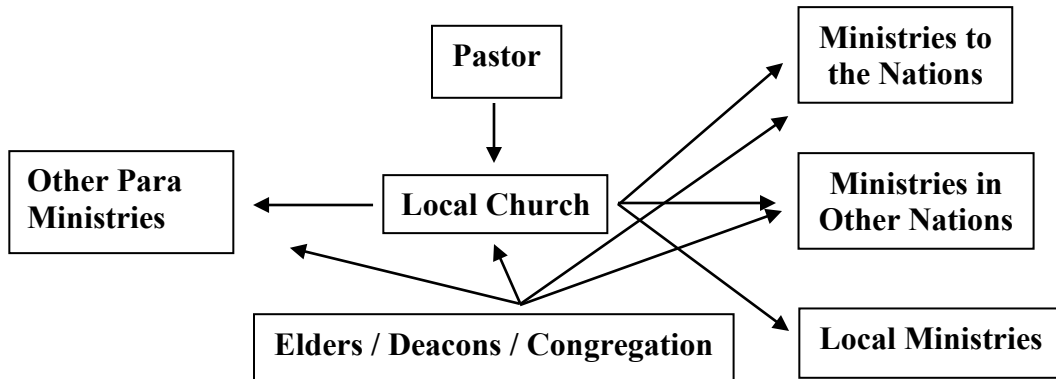
⁴ Southern Baptist Convention website www.sbc.net/cpmissions.net

them. Massive crusades are great, but most converts never find a church home. Too many times I've heard from people who call themselves evangelist and say that "follow-up is not my job and never do much about it."

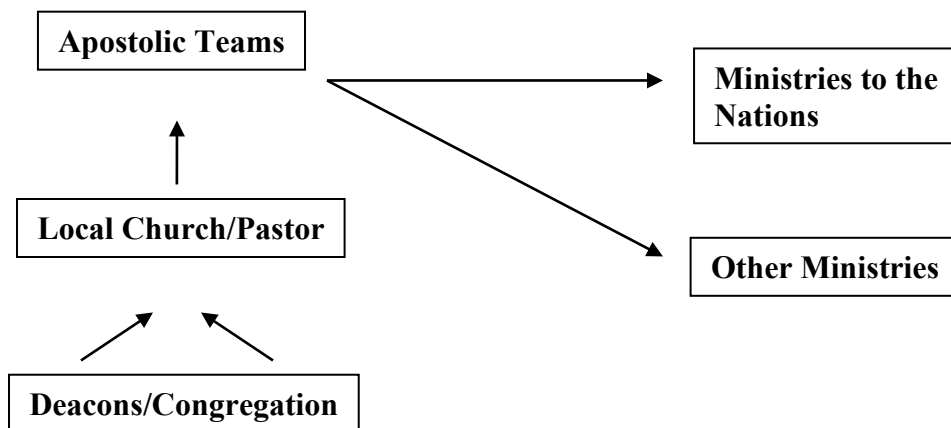
Apostles / Prophets / Teachers / Pastors / Teachers

All ministerial offices should be in relationship with one another or at least understand and respect another's office.

CURRENT FLOW OF MONEY



FUTURE FLOW OF MONEY



I can envision a day when:

1. Local community churches are in order, flowing in the power of God to reach their communities for Jesus.
2. Local community churches come together with apostles, prophets and teachers to form Revival Centers to reach their cities for Jesus.
3. Revival Centers come together to reach Regions for Jesus.
4. Regions come together to reach Countries for Jesus
5. Countries come together to reach this World for Jesus.

UNITY AND THE FUTURE CHURCH

You can feel the heartbeat for unity in the body of Christ in the following scriptures:

Ephesians 4:4, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all, and in you all."

Psalms 133:1, "How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity."

Why does the world have such a problem with Christianity? Because we are not one like the scripture states. There is power in unity. Unity means agreement, all together alike.

Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?"

In the United States alone, there are over 2,000 various religious organizations and / or denominations, most do not agree with each other and Jesus died for one body, one church. While flying back to Arlington from Kansas City a several years ago, I sat next to a Mormon. The young man made a comment that it did not matter what Mormon Church he attended on Sunday; either in Dallas, Zurich, Australia, or wherever, he could count on hearing the same scripture reading and message on any given Sunday! Not that I am advocating the Christian church do the same, but it was amazing that the whole Mormon church stayed on the same program, same message, each week. I thought, "The devil knows there is more power in unity than the church of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Matthew 6:9, "Our Father who art Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven..."

When the desire to establish order & unity came into my heart, it dawned on me that as the Lord's Prayer mentions, we are suppose to pray the will of the Father in heaven down to this earth! There are no sick people in heaven, and there is only one church in Heaven.

Hebrews 12:22-24, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

Though there are powerful works of God occurring across this world, I believe God wants to start a powerful work of unity in the body of Christ.

Jesus prayed,

John 17:20-21, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me and

I in You, that they also may be one in Us that the world may believe that You sent Me."

This is a prophetic prayer that Jesus prayed for all believers, even today, that we would be one. If Jesus prophetically prayed for all believers to be one, guess what, it will happen. And Paul emphasized such,

1 Corinthians 12:12 – 25, For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.... that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another."

Colossians 1:24, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church."

Philippians 1:27, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Numerous other scriptures point towards the same, unity in the body of Christ. As a Catholic, we would quote the Apostle's Creed during every Mass,

"We believe in one God the Father All-sovereign, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all the ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and comes again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end:

"And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Life-giver, that proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and Son is worshipped together and glorified together, who spoke through the prophets:

"In one holy catholic and apostolic church:

"We acknowledge one baptism unto remission of sins. We look for a resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come."

For 31 years, I quoted this creed or something similar during the Catholic mass. This creed was original put together around 325AD for the purpose of preparing a document to unite them in faith. Catholic here means “universal church” not the Roman Catholic Church (but you can see why the Roman Catholic Church got its name). I quoted it for years not having a clue what I was saying.

I believe if we, the Christian church, can get our act together, then there would be no stopping the advancement of the kingdom of God. Whole nations would quickly come to Christ. Then we would have that glorious church mentioned in Ephesians 5:27, then we would have the bride of Christ prepared for the great wedding day supper of the Lamb, then maybe our King and Lord could come back to receive His bride.

The Work Of The Ministry

The five ministry offices are suppose to train the saints so the saints can go out and do the work of the ministry, not five-fold ministers going out and doing the work of the ministry:

Ephesians 4:11-14, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”

Notice training of the saints is supposed to happen until we all come to:

- the unity of the faith - unity meaning unanimity, agreement
- the knowledge of the Son of God
- a perfect man
- the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

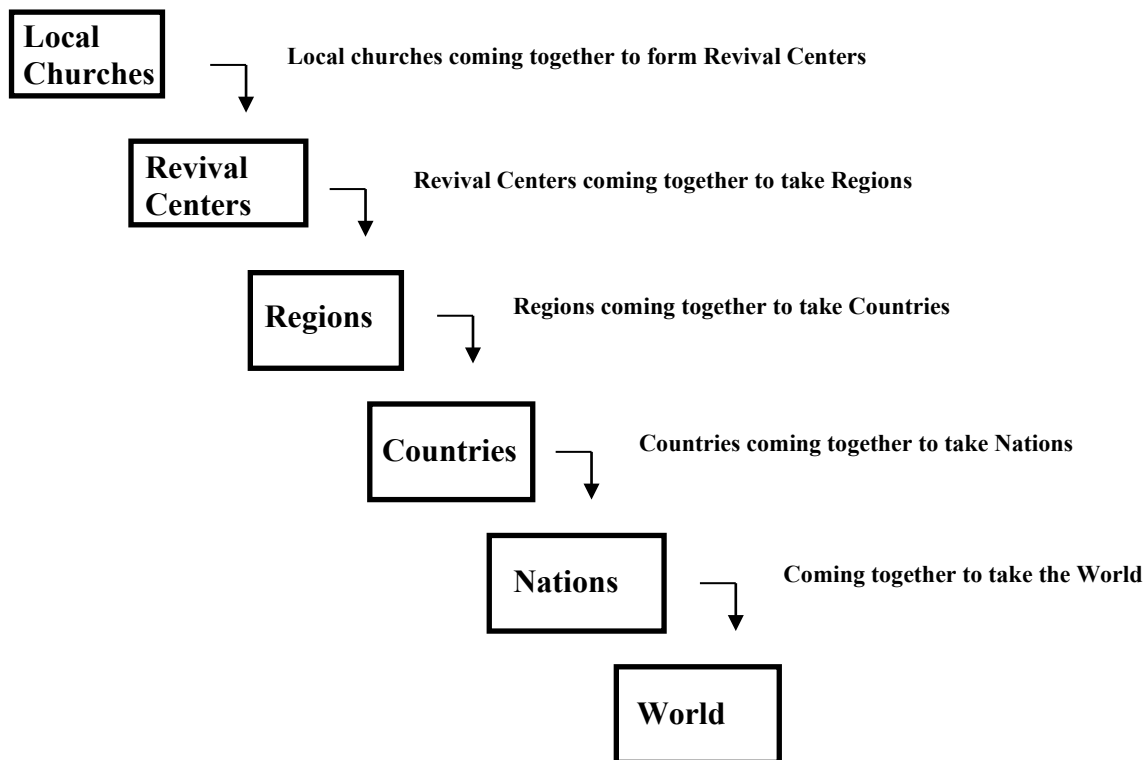
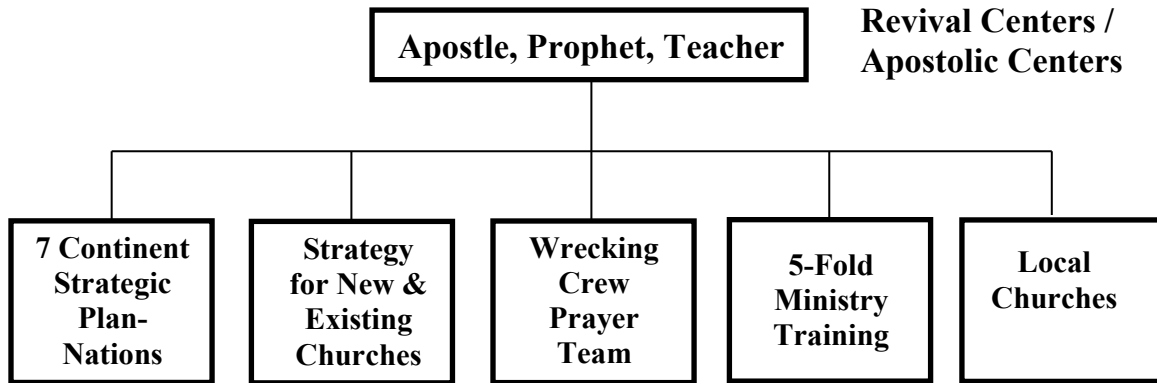
Why? **That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine!!** And that's exactly where we are today; numerous denominations and church organization, all with various forms of differing doctrines.

The five ministry offices are not suppose to keep the saints underneath our thumb, pinned to the pews so we can have someone to preach to. The ministries job is to get the saints trained up, equipped properly, so they can go out and do the work of the ministry.

I believe this new era of the church will be marked with order and unity; an era were the saints of God will be more recognized for what they are doing for the Lord than the pulpit ministries.

The following chart shows a basic organization chart for the future church:

The Future Church



CONTACT US

Please feel free to contact our ministry anytime if you have any; we are here to assist you any way we can!



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