

THE
TRUTH
ABOUT
THE
CHRISTIAN
CHURCH



MICHAEL JAMES EKPERIKPE

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

By Michael James Ekperikpe

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Copyright © 2026 by READ AND REAP BIBLE
ENTERPRISES.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®.

Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®.

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.
Used with permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the KING JAMES VERSION, public domain.

Scripture quotations marked (GNB) are from the Good News Bible © 1994, British & Foreign Bible Society. Used with permission.

Published by:

**READ AND REAP BIBLE ENTERPRISES (a.k.a.
READ AND REAP MISSION)**

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PUBLISHER

Address: 5 Aba Rd, Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
Nigeria 500102.

Email: readreapbscph@gmail.com.

Tel: +(234) 7053417736.

Website: readandreap.org.

Second Edition: August 2026.

**For official free PDF download and updates, free to
share non-commercially, visit**

www.thetruthaboutthechristianchurch.org

Michael Ekperikpe, 2026.

**For bulk purchases, ministry discounts, or
speaking engagements, contact**

READ AND REAP MISSION.

Email: readreapbscph@gmail.com.

DEDICATION

To Excel Michael Ekperikpe,

My spouse, my intercessor and my plumbline.
You believed in this burden when it was just a
whisper. You held my hands up when the
foundation looked small.
Grace, grace to us!

To Victoria and Destiny,

My children, my arrows.
May you never just attend a church, may you be
the Church.
A Royal Priesthood, the Israel of God...
Your father's prayers will outlive him.

And to the Orphans,

The ones Jesus called "these little ones".
The ones for whom the READ AND REAP
MISSION was born.

You taught me that **'The Church, A Family'**, and
'The Church, A Giver Group' are not chapters.
They are commandments.
This book is your inheritance. You are not
forgotten. You are the Church.
"For who has despised the day of small things."
(Zech. 4:10)
We have not. And we will not.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, to the Lord Jesus Christ,

Head of the Church, Bridegroom of the Engaged,
Builder of the Temple not made with hands.

You are the Truth in **THE TRUTH ABOUT THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.**

Without Your revelation, these pages would be
empty. Without Your grace, I would be too.

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in
vain that build it.” (Ps.127:1 (KJV))

To my wife, Excel Michael Epkerikpe,

You are the first to read every chapter with tears
and red ink.

You held the home, prayed the nights, and
believed when the plumbline looked crooked.

This book carries your fingerprints.

Grace, grace to us!

To Victory and Destiny,

My first disciples. You taught me that ‘The
Church, A Family’ is not theology; it is Tuesday
dinner, homework prayers, and bedtime stories.
May you live this book long after I am gone.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To Henry Bassey,

Thank you for writing the Foreword and for your scholarly eye. Your words, “This book does not just inform; it reforms,” will frame this work for generations. The Church needs more educationalists with fire.

To the READ AND REAP MISSION Family,

Board members, volunteers, prayer partners, monthly givers – you are ‘The Church, A Ministry of Ministries’ in action. For seven years you have turned chapters like ‘A Giver Group’ and ‘Her Workers’ into a reality.

This book is our corporate testimony.

To the Orphans and Vulnerable Children we serve,

You are not the reason for this book. You are the reason in this book. Every time I wrote ‘The Church, A Family’, I saw your faces. You taught me ecclesiology better than any seminary. You are the Church.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**To my parents and the saints at Nto Okon,
Ukanafun,**

You gave me my first Bible, my first song, my first glimpse of ‘The Church, A History’. I am because you were faithful.

To the editors, typesetters and printers,

Thank you for handling the Word with reverence.
May God reward your hidden labour. Amen!

And to you, the reader,

If you are one who at present just attends a church, but when you finish this book you become the Church, then every late night, every rejection, every sacrifice was worth it. You have one lifetime chance. Use it.

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

(Eph. 3:20-21)

Michael James Ekperikpe

Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

FOREWORD

I have known Michael Ekperikpe for years as a man who does not just preach the Word – he becomes it. When he started READ AND REAP BIBLE ENTERPRISES (a.k.a. READ AND REAP MISSION) seven years ago, I saw a man determined to put Bibles into the hands of orphans. But with this book, I see something deeper: a man determined to put identity in the hands of the Church.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

is not another ecclesiology textbook. It is a trumpet. Chapter after chapter, it strips away our cheap definitions and calls us back to the expensive reality: We ARE the Church. We are A Ministry of Ministries, A Giver Group, The Engaged of Christ with one lifetime to get ready.

If you read this book and remain the same, you did not read it. You only scanned it. The evaluation questions will confront you, the history will humble you, and the revelation of ‘The Church, An Unnamed Entity’ will wreck you in the best way.

FOREWORD

I commend this book to every believer who suspects the Church is more than Sunday gatherings. You are right. She is. And this book demonstrates it.

Henry Bassey

Educationist and writer

Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

This book is the first book in the series of the same name.

When most people hear ‘church’, they picture a building with a steeple, a Sunday program, or a denomination on a signboard. But the Bible never defines the Church in that way.

I wrote this book because after 30+ years of walking with Christ, and 7 years leading READ AND REAP MISSION, I saw a dangerous gap: We know our local assembly, but we do not know His universal Body.

We have reduced the Church to a place we attend instead of a people we become. We have made it an event instead of an identity. And in doing so, we have lost power, purpose, and our place in God’s agenda for the earth.

The truth is: The Church is not one thing. She is many things at once – a mystery too large for a single metaphor.

That is why Scripture calls her: ‘A People called out from the world’... ‘A Family bound by blood

ABOUT THIS BOOK

stronger than biology’... ‘A Spiritual Building and A Temple where God Himself dwells’... ‘A Kingdom with laws, culture, and a King’... ‘An Extension of Heaven to Earth – God’s colony planted in a hostile territory’... ‘The Body of Christ and The Engaged of Christ – His very flesh, his awaited Bride’.

Across 18 chapters, we will journey through history, theology, and practical reality to recover the Church’s true face. From ‘The Church, In History’ to ‘The Church, A People with One Lifetime Chance’, you will discover that she is not unnamed, unfruitful or unimportant. She is ‘The Israel of God’, ‘A Royal Priesthood’, ‘The Truly Circumcised People set apart for one glorious assignment’. Under every chapter reads a rider, brief and concise enough to hint at what to expect.

Who is this book for?

1. The discouraged believer who feels that the Church has failed.
2. The faithful worker who labours but cannot see the blueprint.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

3. The next generation, like the orphans we serve, who must inherit more than physical buildings.

How to use this book

At the end of every chapter, you will find evaluation questions and answers for personal reflection, family devotions, or group study. Do not rush past them. The Church is not a concept to admire; she is an identity to become.

Chapters like ‘The Church, Her Workers’ and ‘The Church, A Giver Group’ will especially challenge you. Because if we truly lived them, no orphan in our cities would lack school fees. No child would go to bed without physical food and without spiritual food – the Word.

Beloved, this book is my plumbline. READ AND REAP MISSION is not just a charity. It is one expression of The Church, A Ministry of Ministries.

My prayer is simple: that by the last page, you will no longer go to church. You will know that you ARE the Church and that you only get one lifetime to be her.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Church has been by principle unnamed for too long. It is time she knew her name.

Michael James Ekperikpe (Evangelist)

Team Lead, READ AND REAP MISSION

Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

ABOUT THE SERIES

THE BOOK SERIES: 'THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH'

As mentioned in the previous section, this book is the first book in the series **'The Truth About the Christian Church'**.

The series has been written to rescue God's lambs from deadly 'viruses' - wrong teachings that kill faith, joy and dominion.

Every book answers one big question, with the Word of Christ as the only oracle (1 Pet. 4:11).

The four books in the Series are:

Book 1: The Truth About the Christian Church

Who is the Church? Not a physical building, not an organization, but the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). This book removes ignorance about identity, purpose, and authority of believers.

Book 2: The Truth About Christian Worship

How does the King want us to worship now? Not by sight, but in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). This book updates us from Old Covenant ritual to New Covenant lifestyle.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Book 3: The Truth About Christian Tradition

Which traditions build faith, and which traditions make the Word of God of no effect (Mark 7:13)?

This book tests some of the “we have always done it this way” traditions against Scripture.

Book 4: The Truth About Christian Unity

Why can the Body not be divided? Christ prayed “that they may be one” (John 17:21). This book shows how truth, love, and the Spirit keep us one in Him.

Who Are These Books For?

For lambs, young believers, and every child of God who wants milk before meat (1 Pet. 2:2).

Written in simple English so the least can read, understand, and obey.

The Goal

That ignorance may die, truth may live, and every believer may worship God in spirit and truth, rule with Christ, and glorify the Father forever.

John 8:32 (KJV) *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Contents

The Church, A People	1
The Church, In History	6
The Church, A Family	14
The Church, A Nuclear Farm.....	20
The Church, A Spiritual Building.....	27
The Church, A Temple	34
The Church, A Kingdom.....	42
The Church, An Extension of Heaven to Earth	50
The Church, A Ministry of Ministries	56
The Church, An Unnamed Entity	65
The Church, The Body of Christ.....	73
The Church, The Engaged of Christ	79
The Church, The Bride of Christ	87
The Church, The Truly Circumcised People	94
The Church, A Royal Priesthood	100
The Church, Her Workers	108
The Church, A Giver Group	115
The Church, A People with One Lifetime Chance...	125

The Church, A People

Striking at the Root

Heb. 3:4-6 ⁴*For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.*

⁵*And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, ⁶but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*

The words, ‘church’ and ‘ecclesia’ are a transliteration of the Greek ‘ekklesia’ taken from the ‘Lexicon’ (LXX) to mean ‘an assembly of the people of Israel’. The term was not exclusively used by the Jews, therefore it was proper to be adopted for such a gathering which would include the Gentiles (Acts 19:32). As in the text above, we will see later that ‘church’ has never been used in Scripture to denote a physical structure in the form of a chapel or cathedral or meeting hall, nor has it been used to denote a sect or denomination.

In Scripture, the word ‘church’ is, on the one hand, used as a ‘local community of believers’, and on the other hand, as a reference to all

CHAPTER 1

believers, the world over (Acts 9:31, Acts 20:28, 1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 1:22, Gal. 6:16).

‘Ekklesia’ is a reference both for a body of believers in Christ assembled locally as a congregation, as well as a universal body, whether assembled or not. As such, one can be a member of a local assembly of believers, participating in the ritualistic experience of a local congregation, yet fail to be a member of the true universal Church because the life lived is not in alignment to the faith of Christ.

A cathedral without believers is a museum. The first 300 years of church history had no cathedral, because the temple of God is not made with human hands. The believers are the house, living stones fitly framed together.

God’s vision of making mankind in His image, which He turned mission in the Garden of Eden, was for fellowship with Him eternally. This eternal intent was hindered by sin.

The fellowship was restricted to soul-inherent beings only. Sheep, oxen, fowls, fishes etc. were

CHAPTER 1

not made to fellowship with God in the same way that humans are.

The English dictionary wrongly defines ‘church’ as ‘a place in which Christians worship’. But the Bible, which I believe is ‘the dictionary of God’s love’, shows us that ‘the Church’ is ‘a people who worship God in Christ everywhere with or without a physical structure’, since worship under this regime of grace is in spirit and truth (John 1:17; John 4:20-24).

The Church is a believing people who may or may not have built their own corporate worship place. This does not negate the fact that worship or meeting halls or shelters offer protection from the sun and rain and afford a spacious place for many worshippers, thus remaining beneficial to have. They are however not built to house God, as God is too big to live in cathedrals constructed with human hands (Acts 17:24-25).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What is the relationship between 'The Church' and the place(s) in which she gathers?
 - * The place is functional, not foundational. The Church existed before buildings (Acts 2:46), and will exist after them (Rev. 21:22). The place serves the people; the people do not serve the place.
2. Suggest a possible misplacement of priority when dealing with 'The Church' with regards to 'Church building'.
 - * When 'Church building projects' replace 'Church building people' (Eph. 4:12).
 - * When we measure growth by square metres not souls saved.
 - * When 'dedication of sanctuary' gets more energy than 'dedication of saints'.

CHAPTER 1

3. Can there be 'Church' on earth without a physical building? Why?
 - * The first 300 years of Church history had no cathedrals. Acts 2:46 describes "house to house", Rom. 16:5 describes "the church in their house". The persecuted Church meets today in forests, caves, and online. Heb. 3:6 says that we are His house.
4. Can there be 'Church' on earth without 'believing people'? Why?
 - * No. A cathedral without believers is a museum, not a Church. Matt. 18:20 required "two or three gathered in my name". Without faith in Christ, there is no ekklesia (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Prayer

Lord, forgive us for loving brick more than bride.
Make me a living stone, not a dead pew. Use me
to build Your people, not just Your property. In
King Jesus's Name, Amen.

The Church, In History

Connecting 'Genesis' to 'Golgotha'

Luke 3:23, 38 ²³ Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli ... ³⁸ the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

We belonged before we believed.

John 17:6 *I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

Our predecessor message has revealed that the Christian Church is a people, giving us a solid foundation upon which to build what follows. Where did the people begin? The Book of Genesis presents man as beginning pure from God in the Garden of Eden, starting with Adam, the first son of God in the flesh. Adam's disobedience threatened to sever man from his Maker and, of course, from the intended fellowship God foresaw. God then withdrew for a while from His fellowship with man.

CHAPTER 2

That He did in order to action His plan to deal with man's sin and disobedience. The plan was to restore fellowship through His Son in the spirit – this time, he would not just be a living person but a life giving spirit (1 Cor. 15:45).

The activity of the first Adam therefore negatively affected the last or second Adam, requiring him to experience a painful physical death in order to redeem mankind. The activity of the last Adam (Christ) has positively affected the first Adam, making it possible for him to resurrect, in due season, alongside all others confined under sin.

Between the fall of man in the first Adam and his rise in the last Adam (Christ), a whole lot of interventionist activities by God have taken place in order to keep God's name as Maker and Keeper of the whole wide world fresh in the mind of man. He called Noah (Gen. 6) and then Abram, later Abraham (Gen. 12), promising him what came to perfect fulfilment in Christ.

He called Moses as deliverer of His people to illustrate what He purposed to do in Christ, giving him the semblance of worship rituals in Law (Heb. 9:1-8 and Col. 2:16-17).

CHAPTER 2

He gave prophecies to His people, putting His words in the mouths of the prophets to proclaim to the people His intent in Christ. He also spoke many Messianic prophecies through the psalms of David, the sweet psalmist of Israel (Luke 24:44).

After John the Baptist's preparatory message, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (the barrier to the fellowship between man and God), the man, Jesus Christ, died on a tree to remove both the curse and the barrier. Jesus died on a tree to remove the curse on man because it was in relation to a tree that the curse came.

Jesus's death redeemed us, removing the barrier caused by disobedience, but it also reminds us that we WERE God's children even before the foundation of the world for fellowship with God. He died to remove the barrier in our minds due to disobedience caused by ignorance (Hos. 4:6, 2 Cor. 4:6).

Today, two thousand years after the crucifixion, the church is divided. There are many denominations and many different statements of belief.

CHAPTER 2

Some denominations have debated, and in some cases condoned and even practised what God has called an abomination. What some would consider to be “strange fire” (Lev. 10:1) is being offered in the form of man-made ‘holy days’, titles, and a ‘liturgical’ calendar which at the very least obscures the plan of redemption.

If the world does not know about the harvest and judgment, it is because the church has hidden them.

Lost sheep search online or stand outside the local church building looking in, wondering whether they have come to the right place. In some places the church has compromised so much with the world that even a “babe not yet weaned” can see that the practice does not match the Book that the church purports to follow.

We know from 1 Cor. 11:19 that heresies must come:

1 Cor. 11:19 *For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.*

We also know that to be “approved to God” we must study and rightly divide the word of truth:

CHAPTER 2

2 Tim. 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Somehow, the church has lost its way, not enduring sound doctrine. The New Testament is being interpreted whilst ignoring the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, which sets out the character, ways and righteousness of God. Reverence and godly fear have been lost. The yoke is broken, the bonds are burst.

Jer. 5:5 (KJV) *I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.*

But we know He will yet once more shake the earth, so let us be prepared, for our God is a consuming fire:

Heb. 12:25-29 ²⁵ *See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,* ²⁶ *whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.”* ²⁷ *Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are*

CHAPTER 2

being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.

This book series has one purpose: to bring the church back to the Word of God.

Isa. 55:7 ... Let us return unto the Lord our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. The history of man is that he came from God. To whom or where shall he go after here?
 - * Back to God. “The spirit returns to God who gave it.” (Eccl. 12:7)
 - * For the church – those in Christ – we go to “be with Christ, which is far better” (Phil. 1:23).
 - * For those outside Christ, “into everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46). History ends in two destinies: fellowship restored or fellowship lost forever.

CHAPTER 2

2. We learnt that God made us for fellowship. What does He expect us to exchange with Him?
 - * Fellowship. “Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3)
 - * We give Him worship, obedience, love (Mark 12:30).
 - * He gives us life, righteousness, sonship (John 10:10; 2 Cor. 5:21).
 - * It is ‘koinonia’ – sharing of all things.
3. How does the Old Testament serve to restore the rift in man’s fellowship with God caused by the first Adam?
 - * By types, shadows and promises pointing to Christ (Heb. 9:18; Col. 2:17).
 - * The Law showed sin (Rom. 3:20), sacrifices covered sin (Lev. 17:11), prophets promised the Sin-Bearer (Isa. 53). All were tutors to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).
4. Why is Christ the substance of what the Old Testament foreshadowed, as we read in Col. 2:16-17?
 - * Shadows have no reality without the object.
 - * The Passover lamb pointed to “Christ our Passover” (1 Cor. 5:7).

CHAPTER 2

- * The tabernacle pointed to “God with us” (John 1:14).
 - * Jesus is not part of history – He is history’s purpose (Luke 24:28).
5. Why was it imperative that the last Adam (Christ) should die on a tree?
- * Because the curse came through a tree (Gen. 2:17, 3:6).
 - * “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” (Gal. 3:13, Deut. 21:23)
 - * The Last Adam undid at a tree what the first Adam did at a tree. The barrier of disobedience was nailed with Him (Col. 2:14). He became the curse to break the curse.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the tree where my curse died.
I nail my ignorance there today. In Christ’s name,
Amen.

The Church, A Family

Doctrine becomes Belonging

Eph. 1:18 (NIV) *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.*

Permit me to say to you, dear reader, that none of the chapter headings should be read in isolation as they have been interwoven in such a way that the revelation of the biblical ‘Church’ will be as comprehensive as possible.

As we are all born into families in the body, even so are Christians born into the family of God headed by Jesus Christ. He is the only Son. All others are servants and slaves except anyone to whom the Son grants sonship status (Heb. 2:11-13). I plead with you, my believing brothers and sisters, always to hold this consciousness that you are a member of a new family with a new tradition, superior to the former, and under a new family Head, Jesus, the Christ.

Whenever you are faced with any challenge from the former family of the body, please, be conscious that you belong to a new family of the spirit that is superior to that of the flesh with its

CHAPTER 3

attendant abundant grace for you, sufficient for all time and need. Conduct your affairs therefore with faith in the strength of your new family Head and refuse the fear of the seeming harm of the avoidable old family traditions. Is it in burial of loved ones of the old family? Is it in marriages and other tradition-bound events of the old family? Please, remember the force of Christ's faith. God can desire to raise 'instruments of change' in the discharge of your faith.

You can honour your earthly family without bowing to its altars. You belong to a superior household.

***Eph. 2:19** Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*

Do not cease confessing, at any point in time, to show your new-found family membership, while remaining as evangelistic as possible. What you confess may not make immediate sense to your neighbourhood. But be aware that you are not limited to a human audience when you are speaking about the way of Christ. As you

consider God's word in 1 Cor. 4:9, understand that principalities are also the target audience as you declare your allegiance to Christ.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. If the Christian Church is a family, who is the family head?
 - * Jesus Christ is the "head of the body, the church" (Eph. 1:22, Col. 1:18).
 - * "He is not ashamed to call them brothers." (Heb. 2:11)
2. How can someone enter into that family as a member?
 - * New birth, not new behaviour (John 3:3-5).
 - * "To all who received Him... He gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12-13)
 - * Not by works, bloodline or rituals – by faith in the Son with whom 'sonship status' is granted (Heb. 2:11-13).

CHAPTER 3

3. Apart from purity of life, can doing things like giving money, speaking in tongues, working miracles, etc. make God accept us into His family?
 - * No. “Apart from purity of life” is not the door.
 - * “By grace... through faith... not of works” (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - * Giving, tongues, miracles are family benefits, not family entry requirements.
 - * Cornelius gave alms and prayed, yet still needed to hear the gospel to be saved (Acts 10:1-6, 44-48).
 - * Sonship comes before service.
4. With Christians in a place, what else does God need in such a place to enable Him to make Himself and His goodness known?
 - * Manifested sons. “The creation waits... for the revealing of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:19)
 - * God does not need more buildings – He needs believers who live like family: love (John 13:35), holiness (1 Pet. 1:15-16), power (Acts 1:18), and sacrifice (John 15:13).
 - * When the Church behaves like family, the neighbourhood sees God as Father (Matt. 5:16).

CHAPTER 3

5. If the Christian Church is a family, how can Christians who are members of physical families be seen as members of the Christian family, as “new creations” in line with 2 Cor. 5:17?

- * If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. You are born again into God’s family, but still relate to your earthly family as an ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20).
- * Like Esther in Persia or Daniel in Babylon – in it, not of it.
- * See John 17:15-16.
- * Rule: Obey God first (Acts 5:29). Honour parents (Eph. 6:2), but not at the cost of bowing to family idols (Ex. 20:3). You remain a biological son or daughter, but your spiritual allegiance changed. You are now ‘salt’ in that family (Matt. 5:13) – to preserve, not to participate in decay. When traditions violate Scripture – burials with libations, ancestral marriages – you refuse the fear and remember the force of Christ’s faith. You may be God’s ‘instrument of change’ in that house.

Prayer

Lord, I was born into a family of flesh, but today I choose your Family of Spirit. I receive sonship status by faith, not by works, money and tongues. In King Jesus's name, Amen.

The Church, A Nuclear Farm

From Identity to Responsibility

1 Cor. 3:9 *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.*

John 15:1-8 ¹ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

⁵ *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."*

CHAPTER 4

We will be Christ's witnesses when we add taste and give light. We will truly be His farmers.

Acts 1:8 *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.*

Matt. 5:13-16 ¹³*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

¹⁴*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

As already established, the Church is a believing community of people presented in Scripture as a farm or vineyard on earth. As such, it is narrowed down to believing you and I who are typified as trees or crops planted by the owner.

CHAPTER 4

The consequent question is, “what is the seed the owner intends to cultivate on this farm?” We trust God for the best species. According to Matt. 13:24-25, Jesus Christ says that the seed God planted on this farm is a good variety which should be watched over, lest the enemy comes to pollute it with bad seed while we are negligent. The good seed must come from above to be devoid of the impurity of the wisdom of the world, as anything from above is above all – in purity and in power (John 3:31). The good seed is, metaphorically, the Word of God, and the fertile farm is the believers’ hearts (Luke 8:11).

Through the good seed God has planted in the Christians (the nuclear farm), God can feed and secure the extended farm (the unbelievers in Christ) until the day of Christ’s manifestation. It is upon our shoulders, as deposits of the divine treasure which is the Gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:7), to add taste to our world as divine salt and also to enlighten the darkened hearts of unbelievers as divine lights in the way in which we live our lives here on earth (Matt. 5:13-16). God is not different from His word, since He is Spirit (John 4:24) and His word, Spirit (John 6:63). When the principles of His word, as taught by

CHAPTER 4

Jesus Christ, are at work in and around us, God is undoubtedly at work in and around us. Amen! What a peaceful and prosperous place we would have if we all lived by these principles! The prayer “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” would be manifestly answered (Matt. 6:10). Come on brethren, are we producing well enough as “good seeds” so that God may meet the hunger need of the extended farm (the unbelievers)?

No wonder our neighbourhood is unable to quit sin – sexual immorality, indecency, witchcraft, kidnapping, insurgency, envy, rivalry, drunkenness, rape, bullying, lust, etc. The reason is because people are not fed with the bread and fruit of Heaven which are resident in us, God’s nuclear farm.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. According to 2 Tim. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 3:9, the world is both God's big house and farmland. Who are those living in that house and what are the crops in His farm?
 - * House: "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour." (2 Tim. 2:20)
 - * Who lives there? Everyone – believers and unbelievers. But only "cleansed vessels" are useful to the Master (2 Tim. 2:21).
 - * Farm: "You are God's field." (1 Cor. 3:9)
Crops: Believers are the "good seed" (Matt. 13:38). The extended farm is the world (John 4:35), but the cultivated plot is the Church. Weeds are "the sons of the evil one", sown while men slept.
2. In 1 Cor. 3:9, God says that we are co-labourers with Him, and, in 1 Cor. 7:23, He kicks against our accepting enslavement of any kind. How may we be enslaved today?
 - * Sin: Sexual immorality, drunkenness, lust etc. (Rom. 6:16).
 - * Men-pleasing: Doing church for 'likes', not for the Owner (Gal. 1:10).

CHAPTER 4

- * Debt: Borrowing to fund ‘church projects’ that God did not command (Prov. 22:7).
 - * Tradition: “We have always done it this way”, even when it chokes the seed (Mark 7:13).
 - * Fear: Holding your salt or light to keep peace with the extended farm (Matt. 5:13-16).
 - * We are co-labourers, not co-slaves. Labour with Him, not for Pharaoh.
3. When God’s farm produces fruit here, how will God, Who is Spirit, take the fruits to His place in heaven?
- * God does not need mangoes in heaven, where there is “no more hunger” (Rev. 21:4).
 - * The fruit God harvests:
 - Worship: “Fruit of the lips that acknowledge His name” (Heb. 13:15).
 - Obedience: “Fruit in every good work” (Col. 1:10).
 - Souls: “Fruit for eternal life” (John 4:36) – people we disciple.
 - Character: “Fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23).
 - * How? By His Spirit. “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)
 - * We produce on earth; He records in heaven (Mal 3:16, Rev. 14:13). Our fruit becomes “treasure in heaven” (Matt. 6:20).

CHAPTER 4

4. God tells us in Acts 17:24-25 that He does not lack anything and so does not depend on our services. So how do we serve Him?

- * We do not serve Him because He is needy. We serve Him because we are grateful, but also because we love Him and it is a joy to serve. Our joy is complete in service because He has made us to serve Him.
 - Serve by belief: “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (John 6:29)
 - Serve by loving people: Feeding orphans is serving God. “As you did it to one of the least... you did it to Me.” (Matt. 25:40)
 - Serve by obedience: “To obey is better than sacrifice.” (1 Sam. 15:22)
 - Serve by witness: “You will be My witnesses.” (Acts 1:8)

When we add taste and give light (Matt. 5:13-16), we are farming for Him.

- * God does not need our service. The extended farm does. And He has chosen to feed them through us.

Prayer

Lord replant Your words in me. As the Owner, send me to the hungriest part of the extended farm. Amen.

The Church, A Spiritual Building

From Cathedral Mentality to Living Stones

Eph. 2:19-22 ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

God is not looking for a place to visit. He is looking for a place to live. Are you complete enough for occupancy?

2 Cor. 6:14-18 ¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

“I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

CHAPTER 5

¹⁷Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”

¹⁸“I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”

Those who build houses do so either for their private use or for commercial purposes. The reason God designates the Christian Church (you and I that have actively believed the Gospel of Christ) in both individual and corporate senses as a house, is to provide Himself shelter here in a physical realm. God is Spirit. To do business in a physical world, He works through visible agents aligned to His interest. That is why we have such Scriptures as 2 Cor. 6:14-18, quoted above.

Although God built us for this purpose originally, He does not force His way into us without our permission. He stands at the doors of our hearts (this building) and knocks with the preaching of Jesus Christ (Rev. 3:20). Those who introduced this Gospel are Christ’s original Apostles. Ours is to continue in their doctrine which is also the doctrine of Christ, as in Acts 2:42 and 2 John 9-11. When the debris of sin is purged from our

CHAPTER 5

hearts and the Holy Spirit (the spirit of righteousness) replaces through faith in the good news about the atoning work of Christ for us, then, God has a house to live in on earth to do business.

It is in this sense that the Bible calls us “workers together with God” in 1 Cor. 3:9. But, we must allow God to complete the building process so that He can abide within us. That is important because some of us (believers) are incomplete and not willing to allow God’s Spirit both to kill our sinful nature (Gal. 2:20; 5:16-17) and to renew our minds in order to know how good, pleasing and perfect the new will or nature of God in Christ is (Rom. 12:1-2). This is imperative because Scriptures preserved for our learning have illustrated this in the call of Abraham to, as a matter of principle, LEAVE his father’s house, place and people, before God would bless him (Gen. 12:1-2). The shadow or analogy of leaving has its substance today in how we are believers in Christ only after we have left the standards and customs of this world system to be transformed into the image of God through Christ. That is where the real enemy and the warfare is – the enemy of the cravings of our old

CHAPTER 5

sinful nature, and until we kill all as illustrated in Israel's war against Amalek (1 Sam. 15:1-3), we cannot be a building for God's in-dwelling.

Dear sister, your war is not against that mother-in-law. Bro., the war is not against that supposed witch (Eph. 6:12). Read Jam. 4:1-5 and discover the source of the problem. Upon some who profess the Christian Faith, God has lavished His resources with an expectation to qualify them as teachers of the life of Christ to others. But, as we speak, many are still infants in the things of Christ and therefore they are learners, but not fit to teach (Heb. 5:9-6:3).

Let us therefore not forget that believers are the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22). He owns us, and He lives in us by his Spirit. We are His, bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. In 1 Pet. 2:4-5 and Eph. 2:20-22, God says He has built His house or Temple with what?
 - * Living stones: people, not granite. “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house.” (1 Pet. 2:5)
 - * Foundation: Apostles and Prophets.
 - * Cornerstone: Christ (Eph. 2:20).
 - * Mortar: the Holy Spirit joins us – “being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).
 - * Cathedrals are shadows; believers are substance.
2. God does not dwell in houses made with hands (Acts 17:24-25). When people trust a place or ritual instead of Christ, their worship is misplaced, and Scripture warns that such systems can become idolatry, which is demonic (1 Cor. 10:19-20). True or False? Who receives such misplaced worship?
 - * True: If we think God lives in the building, our worship becomes idolatry which is demonic. God does not receive offerings because of the hall; He receives worship through living stones. If the hall is exalted above Christ, if

CHAPTER 5

money is given to buy favour not from faith, then demons hijack the transaction.

- * Who receives it? The spirit behind the motive. “You cannot serve God and mammon.” The building does not make the offering holy – the heart does (Rom. 12:1).

3. When Paul was distressed in Athens because of what he saw (Acts 17:16), what did he see that he called “shrines for idols”?

- * “His spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.” (Acts 17:16)
- * Shrines for idols: “sebasmata”, objects of worship. Altars “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17:23).
- * Today’s Athens: Cathedrals called “God’s house” while members live in sin. Altars with candles, images, “holy water” sold. Buildings dedicated, but believers defiled. Paul was distressed because religion without relationship is idolatry. He did not see churches, he saw shrines.
- * Application: If our “church building” has more reverence than our “church body”, we have rebuilt Athens.

Declaration

I am a complete building for God's occupancy. I am not a construction site that God cannot move into. Amen.

The Church, A Temple

From 'God's House' to 'God at Home'

2 Chr. 7:12 *Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice."*

Solomon's temple held the Ark with God's Word inside. You become God's dwelling place when Christ's Word lives in you. Hallelujah!

The Christian Church is called "the temple" because we now do what the Old Testament temple pictured. In the old temple, sacrifices were offered to God, 2 Chr. 7:12. Now, through Christ, we ourselves are the temple where God dwells, 1 Cor. 3:16.

When Jesus said "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up", He was not talking about Solomon's building. John 2:21 says that He was speaking about his body. The Old Testament temple was a shadow. In Christ, God now dwells in His people, His living temple. Besides the offering of sacrifices, what made

CHAPTER 6

that temple ‘heavenly unique’ was the presence of the box (ark) which served as the symbol of God’s power among His people because it contained the commandments of God (2 Chr. 6:41).

The aforementioned Scripture has shown that the power to hold the temple, whether in the shadow or preparatory document of the Old Testament (biblically speaking), or in the substantial or fulfilled document of the New Testament, is the Word of God. Any vessel or human being in whom the word of Christ is found is powerful; he can do “all things” or face all conditions by the power that is only resident in Christ (Phil. 4:13). Hallelujah!

Such a life is a life named after the covenant of God. Just as that ark was the ark (box) of the covenant (containing God’s word), the individual is ‘a person of the covenant’ because he allows the doctrine of Christ to direct his life.

When the word of God departs God’s throne in heaven, it is accompanied with myriads of angels in heaven deployed to guard it. That is done so that principalities through demons in the heavenly places or realms will not destroy its

CHAPTER 6

efficacy. Any heart, therefore, that opens its door to house the word of God has received power, security and all graces supplied by God. God's word will secure the place in which it is accepted as a principle of life. Indeed, who can harm those that follow that which is good (1 Pet. 3:12-13)?

God is always mindful of, and also secures whatever goes out from His throne to the earth, and the place (temple) such treasure from heaven is admitted will surely enjoy the same security and maintenance. In conclusion, if the word of Christ is found in any person as a guide to life, such a person is the temple of God. It is the presence of God in His word that makes it a temple because, through the life of the person, God is to be made known (John 14:8-11).

The sacrifices of prayers, offerings of hospitality, evangelism, etc. which we undertake daily are the fulfilments of the sacrifices which took place in the temple made with human hands in the Old Testament. If God does not live in church buildings, as some of us errantly believe, but rather lives in believing people and reveals Himself through individual believers, then let us stop prioritising spending on church buildings

CHAPTER 6

and instead prioritise the relief of poverty and the provision of assistance to human believers, who are the true temple.

This is not against beautiful meeting places. It is against empty living spaces. Let us build both, but people first (1 John 3:17; Acts 4:34-35). So, beloved brethren, let us consider giving more attention to the place in which God abides than to the material shelter in which we fellowship intermittently (1 John 3:17-19; 4:20-21). I pray that God blesses you with His grace.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. We just learnt that we are a temple God has built in Christ. What are the building materials?
 - * Living stones: people (1 Pet. 2:5).
 - * Foundation: Apostles and Prophets.
 - * Cornerstone: Christ (Eph. 2:20).
 - * Mortar: the Holy Spirit – “built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).
 - * Not marble, but men. Not gold, but grace.
2. What is God’s important treasure in this God’s building that always attracts God’s insurmountable security?
 - * The Word of God – the “ark” in you. When the word of God departs God’s throne it will not return void (Isa. 55:11). There may be opposition (Dan. 10:12-13), but it will prosper to achieve its purpose.
 - * “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” (Ps. 119:89)
 - * When that Word dwells in you (Col. 3:16), you carry heaven’s most protected asset. Result: “Who shall harm you?” (1 Pet. 3:13). Security follows the Word, not the walls.

CHAPTER 6

3. What evidence enables us to conclude that some of God's buildings (human beings), God cannot complete and inhabit because He has been resisted?
- * Resistance to the Word: "You always resist the Holy Spirit." (Acts 7:51)
 - * Uncrucified flesh: "Amalek alive" (1 Sam. 15:9) – sinful nature indulged (Gal. 5:24).
 - * Love of world: "Friendship with the world is enmity with God." (Jam. 4:4)
 - * Infancy when should be teachers: debris not purged (Heb. 5:12).
 - * No fruit: "Every branch that does not bear fruit He takes away." (John 15:2)
An incomplete temple has "Ichabod" written on it – "glory departed" (1. Sam. 4:21).
4. According to Jam. 4:1-4, do children of God fight their war of righteousness from outside them or from within them?
- * From within: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?" (Jam. 4:1)
Your war is with the Amalek within – cravings, pride, lust (Eph. 6:12). The real battlefield is "in your members" (Rom. 7:23). Kill it within, and you win without (Gal. 5:16-17).

CHAPTER 6

5. If Abraham had to separate from his earthly relatives to walk with God, what are we expected to separate from to be God's temple?
- * Father's house = Old nature: "I have been crucified with Christ." (Gal. 2:20)
 - * Place / Country = World system: "Do not be conformed to this world." (1 John 2:15)
 - * Kindred / People = Sinful cravings and customs: "put off... former conduct" (Gal. 5:24, Eph. 4:22).
 - * Separation is not geography. It is government. Who rules you – Christ or culture?
6. To please God, Saul had to kill all in Amalek with none to remain (1 Sam. 15:1-3). How many acts of our sinful nature are we expected to crucify likewise before qualifying to be God's temple, as in Gal. 2:20, 5:24 and 1 Cor. 9:27?
- * All. "Utterly destroy all... do not spare..." (1 Sam. 15:3). Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Not 99%. All.
 - * The list: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath,

CHAPTER 6

selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries...”

“I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.” (1 Cor. 9:27)

- * Why? Because partial obedience = full rebellion (1 Sam. 15:22-23). A temple with Amalek alive is a “shrine for idols” (Acts 17:16).

Prayer

Holy Father, I know Your temple is not made of marbles. She is made of men (believers). She is not made of gold but of grace and I am a substantial part. I receive grace to be just that. May I know that the separation You recommend is not geography but government and that Christ should rule me and not my culture. Amen.

The Church, A Kingdom

From 'Temple Worship' to 'Throne Room Authority'

Matt. 3:1-2 *¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

If the Christian Church is a kingdom, the citizens being the Christians on earth, it means that the kingdom (government) of God is in the world already. If the Christian Church has a King (head) over her, it also means that the Church is a Kingdom. Furthermore, if the Christian Church is a Kingdom, it equally means there is power since there can be no kingdom without power with which to run its affairs. But, indeed, the Church (God's people) is the Kingdom of God on earth.

The word for 'kingdom' is synonymous with 'rule', 'government', 'dominion', 'reign' etc. After the Genesis account of the disobedience of the head of God's Kingdom in the flesh (the first Adam), there is no reference in Scripture to the phrase, 'Kingdom of God' or 'Kingdom of heaven' until its reintroduction by John the Baptist. God withdrew His Kingdom from being destroyed by sin, pending the eternal cleansing which is being

CHAPTER 7

done by the Lamb of God, Jesus, His Christ (John 1:29). Although many predicted this regime under Christ, there had been no use of the phrase 'Kingdom of God / Heaven' (1 Pet. 1:10-12). God, in His original intent, was to base His Kingdom on a spiritual foundation as warranted by His nature. That He illustrated with the first Adam in the physical, to pave the way in His appointed time for the perfect Kingdom (rule, government) in the Spirit through Christ. In John 18:36, Jesus confirms this by saying that His Kingdom does not belong to this world. See also Col. 1:13.

You do not join this kingdom by visa. You join by vein, by the blood of the Testator, Christ.

Heb. 9:16-17 ¹⁶For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. ¹⁷For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

So where is the seat of power of Jesus's Kingdom? There is a response Jesus gave to the Pharisees about the Kingdom of God in Luke 17:20-21 in which He said His Kingdom is resident in His

CHAPTER 7

believers. That shows that it is the reign of God in peoples' hearts by His Word. It cannot be materialized except in its fruits.

In conclusion, it could be said that the head of, say, Nigeria, as other nations, is God indirectly; whereas the head of the Kingdom (government) of God – the Christian Church – is God directly through Christ, or Christ in God.

Scripture (Rom. 14:17) says that God's Kingdom is not made real in eating and drinking to refresh the body (an earthly welfare state) but that, far beyond that, it is about the righteousness, joy and peace that God's Spirit gives; it is for receiving inheritance that we are drafted to be members of God's Kingdom (Eph. 5:5). But no one receives an inheritance from a parent not willed to him. Our salvation and blessings stand because they are under God's oath in Christ. They cannot be overturned by Satan, sin or doubt. This is the reason that we are under 'the will of God in Christ', so that it becomes possible for us to access our inheritance from God unhindered (Rom. 12:2). God willed everything He had to Jesus, and, because Jesus is generous like the Father, He re-willed the same to us. Thank you, Jesus!

CHAPTER 7

But, we cannot also take possession if Jesus, the Testator or writer of the will is not confirmed to be dead (Heb. 9:15-18). The Kingdom's door, therefore, was not opened for anybody to inherit anything except until after Jesus died. God was pleased with Jesus's multi-purpose self-sacrifice on the tree and authorized His resurrection and re-enthronement as King of kings, Lord of lords, Master of masters, Commander-in-chief and head of His Kingdom (Church).

The prayer point, "Let Thy Kingdom come" had its answer when Jesus died and resurrected as head over God's Kingdom. This same event condemned His enemy, the Devil, awaiting the 'fire' prepared for him (Matt. 25:41). For now, he is defeated but still prowling, bound from stopping the Gospel.

In a kingdom such as Christ reigns over, there must be a constitution to regulate the business of those involved, which is present in the 'New Will' (covenant) of God in Christ, and, of course, there must be subjects who obey (we, who have believed in Christ). Christians are, therefore, those who are under the reign (Kingdom) of Christ on earth since they live not as people of the world driven by fleshly passions, but they live in the

spirit of their King, Jesus, the Christ (Gal. 5:25-26, John 17:11-15, Rom. 8:9).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Which words are synonymous with 'Kingdom'?
 - * Rule, government, dominion, reign, authority, sovereignty. In Greek, Basileia – “royal power; kingship, rule.” Not a realm first, but a reign. Where the King rules, there is a Kingdom.
2. What are the characteristics of Jesus's Kingdom (reign) now, according to John 18:36? What does the answer imply?
 - * Not of this world: Origin: heaven; Nature: spiritual; Weapons: not carnal (2. Cor. 10:4).
 - * Not by force: Servants do not fight to install it; they die to reveal it (John 18:36).
 - * Now: Present reality, not just future (Rev. 1:6: “has made us kings”).
 - * The implications: We do not advance the Kingdom by power play – politics, guns, coups. We advance it by service delivery – washing feet (John 13:14), laying down lives (1 John 3:16). If your 'kingdom work' needs a

CHAPTER 7

police escort, it is not of His Kingdom. The King reigns from the tree, not a palace.

3. In a Kingdom such as Jesus claims He has, there must be subjects and law to regulate the activities of those involved. Who are the subjects and where is the constitution?
 - * Subjects: “We who have believed in Christ”. “He has delivered us... and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son.” (Col. 1:13)
“A royal priesthood.” (1 Pet. 2:9)
 - * Constitution: The New Will / Covenant of God in Christ – The New Testament. “He is the Mediator of the new covenant.” (Heb. 9:15)
Specifically: The doctrine of Christ (2 John 9); the law of the Spirit (Rom. 8:2); the word of His grace (Acts 20:32). Not Moses. Not culture. Christ.
4. Which concept enjoys Jesus’s endorsement in His Kingdom, ‘power play’ or ‘service delivery’? See Matt. 20:20-28.
 - * Service delivery: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” (Matt. 20:25-28)

CHAPTER 7

- * Kingdom rule: The greatest is the slave to all (Mark 10:44). Power play is Gentile government. Service is God's government. If you campaign for 'title' but not for 'towels' (John 13:4-5), you are in the wrong kingdom.
5. To become a citizen in the Kingdom of God is to receive inheritance (Eph. 5:5). Who enlists the citizens?
- * The Holy Spirit. "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:3) "In Him you also trusted... were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance." (Eph. 1:13-14)
 - * Process: The Father wills it (Eph. 1:5), the Son died to activate His will (Heb. 9:16-17), the Spirit enlists and seals (Eph. 1:13), drafting us into the Kingdom (Col. 1:13).
 - * You do not apply for citizenship. You are born into it – drawn by the Father (John 6:44), redeemed by the Son, sealed by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13). When He calls, you come through repentance and faith (Luke 13:3, John 3:16), and He will not turn you away (John 6:37). Then you are taught by the Constitution, the Word.

Declaration

I believe that no one physically fights to install God's kingdom but one spiritually dies in service delivery to reveal it. So I declare before the heavens and principalities. Amen.

Prayer

Lord, as we stop praying, "Let Thy kingdom come" as though your kingdom is absent, lead us to pray with revelation, "Let Thy kingdom be manifested through us", because You (Our King) have been enthroned. Amen.

The Church, An Extension of Heaven to Earth

Zion made manifest

Rev. 21:1-4 *¹Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

Heaven is a place in which only righteousness, joy, peace and everything good reside. In fact, it is a byword for holiness and goodness; a place where there is no more sorrow, grief, crying, pain and death. All of the blessings mentioned in the above Scripture are present now and up for grasp in the spirit realm. Those are the things we see that make us surrender our lives now to God through Christ. We are enjoying them in our minds awaiting the time when the Devil, who has

CHAPTER 8

been condemned legally by God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ (and our appropriation by faith), will be cast into the fire along with his angels (Matt. 25:41) who prevent us now because we are still in the body (2 Thess. 2:7-12). It is not because God is not our Ruler that we die physical death or grieve and suffer pains, but because we are still living in the flesh.

Every time you choose “Matt. 5” over “Lev. 24”, a piece of heaven lands in your community. You are the extension. Heaven manifests God’s nature. The Church manifests righteousness, releases joy, enforces peace, absorbs grief, abolishes pain and defeats death – living by faith.

Rom. 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

We are ceaselessly prosperous in our inward persons even though we face persecution trying to live the life of those who are under God, Who is Spirit (Matt. 5:3-12). The moment we walk in the spirit, we own the blessings in the lead text (Rev. 21:1-4). But, as we look at them from a

CHAPTER 8

physical viewpoint, we lose them, hurt ourselves and displease God. So, God is right when He said that “the righteous shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4). However, we have had a standard of life brought here to earth by Jesus Christ from heaven that will both make us live like our Father in heaven, and perpetuate our environment with it (Lev. 24:19-20, Matt. 5:43-48).

Heaven is about life, and, if we live the way life is lived in heaven, we have extended heaven to earth, which was God’s original intent in creating the earth and making man in His likeness to inhabit it. We were made to be like God ab initio.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. According to this lesson, each time the word ‘heaven’ is mentioned, what immediately comes to our minds as God’s children?
 - * Righteousness, joy, peace, goodness, holiness. No sorrow, grief, crying, pain, death (Rev. 21:4). Heaven is God’s nature manifested. As God’s children, we do not think “clouds and harps”, we think “Father’s nature in us now” (Rom. 14:17).

CHAPTER 8

2. Where are the blessings of heaven now?
 - * In the spirit realm, present and up for grasp. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).
 - * Location: “In our minds” – in our inward persons (2 Cor. 4:16). We own them the moment we walk in the spirit (Gal. 5:25). They are not future; they are now, by faith (Heb. 11:1).

3. Why do we suffer the things we suffer now? Are they because God and His reign are not present among (in) us?
 - * No. We suffer because we are still in the flesh, not because God is absent (Rom. 8:18-23; 2 Cor. 4:16-18). We face persecution trying to live the life of those under God Who is Spirit (Matt. 5:10-12). The Devil is condemned (John 16:11) but not yet cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). He is restrained (2 Thess. 2:7), but still roams (1 Pet. 5:8). God reigns IN us (Luke 17:21), even when pain hits the outside.

CHAPTER 8

4. If we do not control much material resource, can we still say that our inward person is prosperous? How?
- * Yes. “Though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” (2 Cor. 4:16)
 - * “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3)
 - * How? By faith we own blessings now (Rev. 21:1). Paul had next to nothing (Acts 3:6) yet was “making many rich” (2 Cor. 6:10). Prosperity equals righteousness, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17). An orphan in READ and REAP with peace is richer than a governor with panic.
5. Where we cannot claim ‘perfection’ by works, we can be perfected by ‘faith’. True or False? How?
- * True. “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14)
“Not that I have already attained... but I press on... Let us therefore, as many as are mature, have this mind.” (Phil 3:12)

CHAPTER 8

- * How? “The righteous shall live by faith.”
(Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17)
We are perfect in position (Heb. 10:14)
because of Christ’s work, being perfected in
practice (Phil. 3:12) by walking in Spirit. Faith
sees Rev. 21:4 as NOW. Works waits for it as
LATER. Choose faith.

Declaration

I refuse the physical viewpoint. I walk by faith,
not sight. I own the blessings of Rev. 21:1-4
NOW. Heaven extends to my community through
me today and always. Amen.

The Church, A Ministry of Ministries

Functions not Titles

1 Pet. 4:10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

When the word ‘ministry’ is used to pertain to government, it means a department, a bureau, an agency or office. When used with Orthodox Churches it refers to the holy orders of their priesthood. With Jesus, it refers to teaching, preaching and evangelism.

The word also carries the connotation of administration even as a minister is seen as a member of a government. The Christian Church is a department or agency of the government (kingdom) of heaven. It is also a ministry comprising many other ministries, since, in the Church, there are many offices. For example there is the office of an Evangelist; the office of a Pastor; the office of a Teacher, etc. The ‘Church’ and ‘Ministry’ are at times used interchangeably in Scripture. When Peter proposes for the replacement of Judas Iscariot after the ascension of Jesus, prior to the initiation of the Christian era through the coming of the Holy

CHAPTER 9

Spirit, the KJV uses the word ‘ministry’ for ‘Church’ (Acts 1:17). The Good News bible (GNB) renders the word ‘ministry’ as ‘work’. The ministry or work of ‘Bro. A.’, may be different from the ministry of ‘Bro. B.’, even as the ministry (work) of ‘Sis. B.’, may be different from that of ‘Sis. C.’, as determined by the grace (talent) endowment (Rom. 12:6-8).

What, friend, is your ministry in the ministry of Jesus Christ? Does your ministry meet needs as the Owner and Head of the ministry would have met if He had lived in the body at the place in which you are living? I emphasize this because the ministry of Jesus is about meeting the needs of His family members, and not about keeping laws. It is not about superiority one to another. A friend reported to me the other day of how he has no ministry of his own. I beg to differ, because there is no one who has not been given a ministry ab initio who has believed in Jesus Christ according to the Scripture.

Judas Iscariot had obtained a part of the ministry (work-phase) to work as a member of the body of Christ towards the growth and development of the body.

Ministry belongs to the body of Christ, not to one man. Every believer has a function by the Spirit's calling.

1 Cor. 12:7 *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.*

But not everyone is called to the office of elder or pastor.

1 Tim. 3:1-2 *¹This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach.*

Leadership is by calling and heart, not by title. Jesus said,

Matt. 23:9 *Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*

Spiritual fathers are known by heart, not by a title for power or money. If a member cannot correct a leader in love, that is not biblical fatherhood.

1 Tim. 5:1 *Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers.*

CHAPTER 9

Another friend told me that he “runs a ministry and not a church”, because his group does not meet on Sunday mornings. But that definition does not fit Scripture. The Church is the people of God, not a Sunday meeting (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 12:27). And ministry happens whenever believers serve one another, not just on Sunday.

More importantly, no one owns the Church or ministry. Christ bought the Church with His blood (Acts 20:28). We are servants, not owners. 1 Cor. 7:23 says, “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”

God’s purpose is that all of us partner with Him in Christ for the salvation of mankind. That is the singular goal, and our eternal reward comes from working with Him, not building our own thing.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How does the Bible use the words ‘Ministry’ and ‘Church’?
 - * Interchangeably for function, not identity. ‘Ministry’ denotes the service / work of the ‘Church’, a people.

CHAPTER 9

- * ‘Ministry’ of which Judas Iscariot had a part (Acts 1:17 KJV); “ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4).
 - * Church does ministry. Ministry does not own Church. Rom. 12:6-8 lists ministries – prophecy, service, teaching – within the Body.
2. Used to refer to the gathering of Christians, can anyone own a ministry?
- * No. “You were bought for a price; do not become slaves of men.” (1 Cor. 7:23)
“Church of God which he purchased.” (Acts 20:28)
 - * You do not own what God bought. “My ministry” language is Judas language – he had “part” (Acts 1:17), not ownership. God has a ministry for all, “working together for the salvation of mankind” (2 Cor. 6:1), “workers together with Him”.
3. Something owned is either inherited or purchased or given. When in Scripture can we see an example of men inheriting or purchasing or being given Churches (Ministries) to own?
- * Inherited? No – “The earth is the Lord’s” (Ps. 24:1), including people.

CHAPTER 9

- * Purchased? Only God did (Acts 20:28), “with His own blood” (1. Pet. 1:18-19).
 - * Given? Christ gave gifts to men (Eph. 4:8), not men to men. Shepherds are given to the Church (Jer. 3:15), the Church is not given to shepherds. To claim ownership is slave trading which is forbidden (1 Tim. 1:10 (NIV)).
4. It is appropriate to post pictures (portraits) of Church leaders on billboards as owners of Christian gatherings (Churches). True or False? Why?
- * False. “Let no one boast in men” (1 Cor. 3:21). “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?” (1 Cor. 1:12-13)
 - * Billboards with “G.O.” (General Overseer) pictures declare ownership. The Owner is invisible (Col. 1:15). If your face is on the banner, whose ministry is it? “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)
 - * The only person we are to exalt in our hearts is Christ Himself, as revealed in Scripture. We do not need billboards of men, and we must beware of fake images of Jesus. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” (2 Cor. 4:5)

CHAPTER 9

5. It is only in the old King James translation and American Standard Version of the Bible that the word “Reverend” is found, in Ps. 111.9, in reference to the One sending redemption to His people (“holy and reverend is His name”). Why are men wearing the same title?
- * Because of tradition, not Scripture. “...holy and reverend is his name” (Ps. 111.9 (KJV)). Hebrew ‘yare’ means “to be feared, revered”.
 - * Applied to God alone. No apostle was called “Reverend Paul”. “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” (Acts 10:25-26)
“ ‘See that you do not do that’ I am your fellow servant.” (Rev. 19:10)
 - * To wear it is to claim what belongs to God. It is “ministry” not “majesty”. Diakonia, not Dominion.
6. Between titles and offices, which has the Scripture endorsed for Church workers?
- * Functions, not titles. “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.” (Eph. 4:11-12)
 - * Jesus forbade titles. “Do not be called ‘Rabbi’... ‘Father’... ‘Teacher’” (Matt. 23:8-10).
 - * Paul: “Paul, a servant” (Rom. 1:1), ‘apostle’, sent one, a function.

CHAPTER 9

- * Unscriptural titles: ‘Reverend’, ‘Archbishop’, ‘G.O.’, ‘Daddy G.O.’
 - * Functional titles: ‘Evangelist Philip’ (Acts 21:8). Say ‘Bro. A., a teacher’, not ‘Reverend Dr. A.’
7. Jesus warns that we call nobody ‘father’ or ‘daddy’ in spiritual matters (Matt. 23:9). What use of ‘father’ or ‘daddy’ is he forbidding?
- * Spiritual fatherhood as title / authority. “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.” (Matt. 23:9)
 - * Context: Pharisees loved titles (Matt. 23:6-7).
 - * Meaning: No man mediates your faith. There is one mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). There is no spiritual genealogy that replaces God (Jam. 1:18). “He brought us forth by the word of truth.”
 - * Earthly ‘Daddy’ is OK; Spiritual ‘Daddy’ is forbidden.
 - * Paul-Timothy: “son” = relationship of mentoring, not title of ownership (Phil. 2:22). Paul still called him “brother” (Col. 1:1; Phil. 1). If Paul refused “father” as a title, who are we to adopt it?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the knowledge that I can function as a pastor without being called Pastor; that You need ‘towels’, not ‘titles’. Amen.

The Church, An Unnamed Entity

The ‘Healer of Schisms’ and ‘Offender of Traditions’

Eph. 4:4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.*

**Denominating is dividing the indivisible.
The moment you name it to differ, you have
denied Eph. 4:4.**

The Church has no surname.

Only the Head.

In our preceding lessons, we have established that Scripture has not presented the Christian Church as a physical structure and as a sect or denomination. If it did, the instrument of that denominationalism would be nomenclature (naming it). That would have been the frontier factor because anything that is named is denominated from others. ‘1/4’ is a denomination illustrating that ‘one’ (the numerator) has been denominated or divided into ‘four’ parts.

Since name is given to something or someone to differ or divide or separate from others to show

CHAPTER 10

ownership, if the Church is given such identity, it would equally suggest that the Church is more than one in Scripture. Therefore, the Scripture presents the Church as ‘one indivisible entity’ under one head, Jesus Christ, thus making Him one head who has one body with many groups and individual members. The church is described not denominated (John 17:20-23). The church has no surname. Only the Head, Christ (Eph. 4:4, Col. 1:18, 24). The fact that there are many members of this one body makes no increase in the number of it. It remains: ‘ONE’ head (Jesus Christ) over ‘ONE’ body of believers. Therefore, the idea of naming it to differ one from another is a nullity; the need does not arise except to identify the different locations in which the Church gathers locally: ‘The Church in Ephesus’, ‘The Church in Corinth’, ‘The Church in Akwa Ibom State’, ‘The Church in Ukanafun’ etc.

Instead, in Scripture, what we see are terms used to describe our relationship with the one true God in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as our functions. For instance, ‘The Church (people) of God’ to indicate our relationship with the Father (1 Cor. 1:2), ‘The Churches of Christ’ to indicate our relationship with the Son (Rom. 16:16), and

CHAPTER 10

‘The Kingdom of the Spirit’ to indicate our relationship with the Holy Spirit (John 18:36; Eph. 2:22; Rom. 14:17). Note that the expression ‘Churches of Christ’ used in Rom. 16:16 is not a denomination name. It is a description, meaning ‘the local assemblies that belong to Christ’, in the same way that ‘Church of God’ means ‘the assembly that belongs to God’.

Why then do we have believers’ groups around us all naming themselves to differ one from another? It seems that the extant mistake made by many of taking physical structures as Churches, has begotten another mistake of naming those structures according to the volition of those sponsoring their erection.

Here is a retiree who is paid his or her entitlements who chooses to buy parcels of land and builds a gigantic hall (confused for Church). Because he is a Christian who could read the Bible and maybe, had been teaching some Bible classes in his local assembly, nothing stops him or her from being crowned as both the senior pastor and general superintendent or overseer automatically.

CHAPTER 10

Those gathering around him cannot distinguish between the Church and the hall he has built. But that is tragic because, in the words of our Master, Jesus, if the light that was given to our body becomes dark, He marvels at how darkened that body would turn. So, after my man / lady achieves completion of the physical structure confused for Church, ministry has started. But, tell me, if a person cannot separate 'inside the house' from 'outside' is such not blind? In the same vein, if one does not know the difference between 'the Church' and the physical building occupied by the Church, what should we say such a person is? One sure thing we are aware from Christ is that both the blind leaders and the blind followers they lead will fall into the same pit (Matt. 15:14). Oh knowledge!

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What is the scriptural name for the Christian Church?

- * None. The Church is described not denominated. Scripture gives relationships and functions, not titles:
 - ‘Church of God’ (1. Cor. 1:2), describing the relationship with the Father.
 - ‘Churches of Christ’ (Rom. 16:16), describing the relationship with the Son.
 - ‘Household of faith’ (Gal. 6:10).
 - ‘Body of Christ’ (1 Cor. 12:27).
 - ‘Bride’ (Rev. 21:9).

If God wanted a name, He would have given one. He gave a Head instead (Col. 1:18).

2. Between corporate and individual salvation, which does Scripture endorse?

- * Both, but individual first. “Work out your own salvation” (Phil. 2:12). God saves persons, then adds them to people (Acts 2:47). You are not saved because you joined a church. You are joined to the Church because you are saved. There is no group ticket to heaven. “The soul who sins shall die.” (Eze. 18:20)

CHAPTER 10

3. How many Churches are there in the Bible?
 - * ONE. "There is one body." (Eph. 4:4, 1 Cor. 12:12-13)
 - * Many local gatherings, 'churches' plural (Rev. 1:11), but one universal Church. Like one water in many cups. The cup is not the water. Ukanafun, Corinth, Ephesus. Locations, not denominations.
4. Who is qualified to enrol a believer into the Church?
 - * The Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13)
"The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:37)
 - * Not the 'senior pastor / general overseer' who built the hall. Not the retiree with the entitlements. No man enrolls you into Christ's Body.
 - * Preachers baptize in water. Christ baptizes into the Body (Matt. 3:11).
5. Can the believer enter the Church without a physical building? How?
 - * Yes by new birth (John 3:3-5).
 - * The thief on the tree entered Paradise (Luke 23:43) without ever seeing a cathedral. You do not go to church to become Church. You

CHAPTER 10

become Church and then gather, which could be “house to house” (Acts 2:46). The building is where the Church meets, not what the Church is.

6. Which is scripturally correct to say: “I am coming back from Church” or “I am coming back from a Church service”?
 - * “I am coming back from Church” implies the Church is a place you left. But you ARE the Church (1 Cor. 3:16). You cannot come back from yourself. You come back from service – the gathering of the Church.
 - * Say it right, believe it right.
7. What is an acceptable (scriptural) reason for a local assembly to have a name?
 - * Location only. “The church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2), “the church in your house” (Rom. 16:5), “the church of the Laodiceans” (Col. 4:16).
 - * Unacceptable: Doctrine, founder, experience: ‘Winners Chapel’, ‘Deeper Life’, ‘Mountain of Fire’. These denominate. Scripture designates: “The Church in Port Harcourt.” Period. Anything else divides the numerator.

Prayer

Father, we repent for denominating what You called ONE. Forgive us for naming what You never named. We renounce the spirit of dividing Your numerator. Today, we tear down the signs that bear our names, doctrines and experiences. From now, we are simply members of one church gathering in various locations with Christ as Head. If we can build a hall, let it serve the Body, not replace the Body. If we teach Bible classes, let us make disciples for You, not ours. We refuse to be blind builders. Open our eyes to see 'Eph. 4:4' as our constitution. Amen.

The Church, The Body of Christ

No inferior organs

Eph. 4:4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.*

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you.”

You cannot love the Head and hate the Body.
You cannot hurt the Body and please the Head.

1 Cor. 12:21 *And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”*

The head that we have on our physical body cannot be separated from the body. Life would end with such separation. Such is a testimony to the truth that spiritually, Christ is inseparable to us who have made Him both Lord and Saviour. Our joy is His joy, our success is His success and our seeming problem, His problem. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4) were the words of Jesus to Saul, the persecutor of Christians who later was persecuted, the injurer

CHAPTER 11

who later was injured and the blasphemer who later was blasphemed.

Jesus was not present in the physical world when Saul raged persecution to the Christians. But Jesus never asked, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute my people?” He personalized the persecution to be on Him.

Another big aspect of the head and body metaphor in the Church’s relationship with Christ is the consciousness that the head thinks for the body. When the leg as a member of the physical body is to undertake a function, the head must signal accordingly. Our will must therefore be crucified or be surrendered to that of Christ, our Head (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 7:15). So, Christ is right to direct that we both CALL Him ‘Lord’ on the one hand and also OBEY Him on the other hand (Luke 6:46).

Obedience to the head will also unite the different members of the body despite various functions. It will promote interdependence too. The leaders of various local believing communities should encourage the members to endeavour to allow what bothers one to bother the other. When the ultimate aim of one member

CHAPTER 11

is to desire the well-being of another, Jesus will not be difficult to see in the brotherhood.

Since Jesus is the replica of the love of God, the proof that He is being taught among a people is measured in the love shared. Love, simply put, is a sincere desire to bless others (John 13:35, 1 John 4:20-21). Help should go to whoever actually needs it most, not to whoever has the biggest title. That includes the pastor too – they do not get to cut the line.

And no one deserves special treatment just because they seem ‘more anointed’. Jesus said, “To whom much is given, much is expected...” (Luke 12:48). The more God gives you, the more you are meant to serve others, not be served yourself.

The leaders, as other members of the body, are not given a superior Holy Spirit with which to look down on the others as though they are inferior. Because all talents are GIFTS, there is no place for a meritorious spirit from recipients. Please read ‘1 Cor. 4:7’ on this.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What physical example, according to our brief lesson, do we see to conclude that Christ cannot be separated from His believers?
 - * The head and body. The head cannot be separated from the body. Life would end with such separation.
“Saul, Saul why do you persecute Me?” (Acts 9:4)
Jesus was not on earth. Saul touched the Body, but the Head felt it.
 - * Proof: Our joy is His joy, our problem is His problem. He sympathizes with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). Cut the Body, the Head bleeds.
2. With the Church as a body and the Christians as members, which part of the body can we say is inferior or superior?
 - * None. “Those members ... which seem to be weaker are necessary ... God composed the body, having given greater honour to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism...” (1 Cor. 12:23-25)
 - * Superior / inferior is carnal thinking. “The foot is not inferior to the eye. The orphan

CHAPTER 11

ministry is not inferior to the pulpit. All talents are GIFTS (1 Cor. 4:7). There is no place for a meritorious spirit.

3. If the presence of God's love is among a people and God is love (1 John 4:16), what problems are impossible among such people?
 - * Division. "If someone says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4:20)
"By this all will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)
 - * Impossible problems: Schism (1 Cor. 12:25), unanswered prayer "if two of you agree" (Matt. 18:19), Saul vs Stephen persecution (Acts 7:58 – 8:1).
 - * Where love rules, hell cannot. "Love never fails." (1 Cor. 13:8)
 - * If the Head is Love, and Love is present, what can defeat the Body? (See Rom. 8:37)
4. If a challenge that bothers one member bothers all of the other members, can such a challenge win and bring sorrow in the end?
 - * No. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honoured, all ... rejoice." (1 Cor. 12:26)

CHAPTER 11

- * Result: the challenge loses. “Peter was kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered... by the church.” The whole Body prayed, the whole prison opened (Acts 12:7). Shared burden equals halved burden. Shared prayer equals heaven’s invasion. Sorrow cannot win where the Body moves as ONE. “Fight for your brothers.” (Neh. 4:14)

Prayer

Father, help me to know that anointing on the ‘liver’ keeps the ‘mouth’ alive; that no member is inferior; that no gift is merited; that all are gifts, and that to whom much is given, much is expected (Luke 12:48). Amen.

The Church, The Engaged of Christ

The Head has a Helper

2 Cor. 11:2 *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

The Bridegroom paid a price and is coming to purify the bride. A warning to the adulterous.

Jam. 4:4 *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

The Bride price / Mohar has been paid - the blood of Christ (Ex. 22:16-17, 1 Cor. 6:20, 1 Pet.1:18-19).

The Ketubah has been written and signed.

Heb. 8:10 *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

Luke 22:20 *Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."*

CHAPTER 12

Mary was with child before she knew Joseph (Matt. 1:18). Similarly we are with Christ's Spirit before we see His face. No fornication. Just faith.

We are not just employees. We are espoused. Divorce was permitted in Moses (Deut. 24:1-4), but Christ's covenant cannot be dissolved by human actions (Rom. 8:38-39). Only we can break betrothal by adultery.

Heb. 10:26-29 ²⁶ *For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses's law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?*

So, stay salty, stay engaged.

Since Christ is not a man full of lies, we will boast that this engagement will result to our

CHAPTER 12

wedding at last as we continue to express our dependence on Him, come rain or shine. In Old Testament times, the law allowed divorce in some cases (Deut. 24:1-4). But some prophets disagreed, arguing that marriage reflects God's covenant with Israel – a relationship meant to be permanent and faithful (Mal. 2:14-16). In New Testament times, what is similar, which the relationship that existed between God and the physical Israel has illustrated, is the covenant relationship between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:22, 23). If, after Jesus's engagement of us who have believed in His atoning message, we thereafter desert Him by going back to immoral living, then we become like salt which cannot be salted once it has lost its saltiness (Matt. 5:13), and we are not good again for the wedding. It is worth mentioning here that, since marriage was created by God, it cannot be dissolved by human action, but by God Himself.

When Jesus came to the earth, He met an arrangement where, to marry, two families – the bride's and the bridegroom's – negotiate a betrothal between their children in a more serious and solemn manner than the courtship or dating of many traditions today. This is the

CHAPTER 12

sense in the lead text (2 Cor. 11:2). It was also allowed for younger children (who would today be termed ‘minors’) to be betrothed, something which is definitely not the norm in modern Western countries.

The marriage would sooner or later be finalized when the prospective bridegroom would come to take the bride from her parents to his home, having been considered to be mature enough for it. The betrothal never included a sexual relationship, which is why Joseph was not comfortable when he saw Mary with Jesus in her womb (Matt. 1:18-19).

Parents of the prospective bridegroom played a pivotal role in the determination of when their child would go to bring the bride back home – consider Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 24:1-8). This was the extant arrangement when Christ said that the time of His second advent will be determined by the Father to take us, His engaged, home with Him (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32).

In conclusion, we who call on Jesus as Lord and Saviour must be aware that our Lord will appear again no longer with flesh and blood, but flesh

and bone, and never to die again but ultimately to save those who are waiting for Him (Heb. 9:28). The fact that His body, that served both as a house and a vehicle for His sojourn here when He first came, was taken to heaven, is enough to convince us that He will come again with that same body.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. The mystery we see in 'Eph. 5' is that humans can have a closeness with God in such a way a husband and wife have. True or False?

Why?

- * True. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother... and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:31-32)
- * Why? Marriage was created as a prophecy of Christ-Church union. Gen. 2:24 → Eph. 5:31-32. The intimacy, oneness, covenant, faithfulness of marriage is the intimacy God desires with us. "I will betroth you to Me forever." (Hos. 2:19-20)

CHAPTER 12

If God used marriage to describe Israel (Mal. 2:14), how much more the Church? We are not employees. We are espoused.

2. As husbands and wives replenish the earth with human beings, that is how Christ and His Church replenish heaven with spirit beings. True or False? How?

- * True. John 1:12-13 “to them He gave the right to become children of God... born, not of blood... but of God.”
- * How:
 - Evangelism: “be fruitful and multiply”, Gen. 1:28 fulfilled spiritually. Every convert is a new spirit being born (John 3:6).
 - Discipleship: “teaching them to observe” (Matt. 28:19-20), raised to maturity (Eph. 4:13).
 - Death: “absent from the body... present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). Each saint is a citizen added to heaven (Phil. 3:20).
- * Husbands / wives make babies. Christ / Church make believers. “The Lord added to the Church daily.” (Acts 2:47)
- * Heaven is being replenished now.

CHAPTER 12

3. God has used the physical family as preparatory ground for the graduation of humans into society, for society's good. Even so, He has used the spiritual family (Church) for the graduation of Christians into heaven. True or False. How?

- * True: "household of God, which is the church... pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).
- * How:
 - Character school: "Learn of Me" (Matt. 11:29). The Church teaches "righteousness, peace, joy" (Rom. 14:17) – heaven's curriculum.
 - Service training: "If you have not been faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust true riches?" (Luke 16:11) How you handle money, people, offence in Church is like an examination for heaven's responsibility.
 - Suffering preparation: "If we endure, we shall also reign." (2 Tim. 2:12)
The Church is a boot camp for thrones (Rev. 3:21). Physical family prepares you for society, Spiritual family prepares you for eternity. "You have come to... the church of the firstborn registered in heaven." (Heb. 12:22-23)

Prayer

Father, We thank You that the Church is not a widow, but the Engaged Bride of Christ. Thank You that the Head, Jesus, has not left her alone. You gave the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to teach, lead, comfort and make us ready for the Bridegroom.

Seal this truth in us, Lord: We are engaged to One, kept by One, and led by One. Let every page of this book turn our eyes to Jesus the Head, and make us tender to the Spirit the Helper.

Keep us faithful until the wedding feast.
Maranatha.

In Jesus's name, Amen.

The Church, The Bride of Christ

From 'Flesh Israel' to 'Faith Israel'

- Dispersed yet Citizens (Jam. 1:1, Eph. 2:19)

Gal. 6:16 (KJV) *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

You do not join Israel by passport. You join by Passover. Christ is our Passover Lamb, slain for us.

1 Cor. 5:7 *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

Israel had thirteen tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh from Joseph (Gen. 48:5)).

Twelve – all except Levi - received landed portions (Josh. 13:33).

However doctrine is not built on literal counting. It is built on Christ. Christ chose twelve Apostles (Luke 6:13) to show that He is the true Head of Israel (Matt. 19:28), not to imitate Jacob's count.

CHAPTER 13

The Christian Church does not replace Israel. She is the true Israel (Rom. 9:6-8, Gal. 3:29).

Jesus did not start a new religion. He fulfils the old.

Matt. 5:17 *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.*

The phrase, 'Israel of God' used above in Gal. 6:16 by Apostle Paul is an assertion that the promises of God before the first coming of Christ have been inherited by the Christians who are the faithful remnants (Rom. 9:6). Jesus deliberately selected twelve Apostles as substantial leaders of God's true Israel to fulfil what was foreshadowed in the twelve sons of Jacob or tribes of physical Israel (Matt. 19:28).

This is also the reason that the Christian Church is addressed as the twelve tribes of the dispersion in Jam. 1:1.

The interesting thing about the Church designated as the 'Israel of God' is the fact that it comprises both biological Jews and Gentiles (Gal. 3:26-28).

CHAPTER 13

The Israel of old were themselves convinced that they were a people specially blessed of God, and we are expected not to think any less of ourselves under Christ. As they were promised a land built by men, we have been promised one made and built by God (Heb. 11:9-10). What also made 'Israel of the flesh' to be special was the Law (Torah) given at Sinai. But that Law came with a terminal glory in comparison to the eternal glory annexing the New Law (Covenant) given presently through Jesus Christ (see 2 Cor. 3:12). Through the Torah, the old Israel was expected to be a blessing to the other nations of the earth, a vocation which has been reassigned to us, the 'Israel of God', through the Gospel of Christ (Matt. 24:14; Rom. 10:18).

The 'shadow' Israel also had a trait we must expect in the form of sectarian tendencies between the north (Samaria) and south (Jerusalem), typified by 'Yahwism' and 'Baalism' fronted by Elijah and Jezebel respectively (see also Luke 9:51-55). The Church is similarly threatened by worldliness which has been defeated by our Head, Christ Jesus (John 16:33).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How many children had Israel or Jacob? Do not say twelve!
 - * Thirteen minimum – twelve sons plus Dinah. Fifteen including Ephraim and Manasseh.
 - * Note that ‘twelve’ is symbolic of government (Rev. 21:12-14), not biology. Physical Israel had 13 tribes, Joseph being Ephraim and Manasseh. Levi had no land (Josh. 13:33). Do not build doctrine on counting. Build on Christ. Jesus chose 12 apostles (Luke 6:13) to show that He is true Israel’s Head.

2. If one embarks on a pilgrimage to Israel now, or even becomes an Israeli national, does that make one part of the ‘Israel of God’?

No. “They are not all Israel who are of Israel... children of flesh... not children of God.” (Rom. 9:6-8) “Born... not of blood... but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

 - * Nationalizing is of the flesh, involving man’s law and a passport.
 - * The Israel of God is of faith, Spirit, promise (Gal. 3:26-29). Ruth was Moabite but became of Israel by faith. Pharisees were Jews by blood but Jesus said they were “of their father the devil” (John 8:44).

CHAPTER 13

- * Pilgrimage to Tel Aviv does not circumcise the heart as in Col. 2:11. You can live in Jerusalem and belong to Baal. You can live in Ukanafun and belong to God. “Our citizenship is in heaven.” (Phil. 3:20)
3. Between ‘tourism’ and ‘spirituality’, which one can we say pilgrimage to physical Israel identifies with, as Christians?
- * Tourism. “Neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem... God is Spirit.” (John 4:21-24)
“Here we have no continuing city.” (Heb. 13:14)
 - * Spirituality is “worship in Spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Going to see where Jesus walked does not equate to walking with Jesus. Two on the Emmaus road walked with Him, but they did not know Him.
 - * Danger: Tourism replaces Christ with geography. “You observe days... I am afraid for you.” Paul never sold “Holy Land tours”. He focused on “Holy Spirit tours” (Acts 19:2).
 - * Pilgrimage today is tourism plus Judaism. It is not spirituality, it is sentimentality. “You have come to Mount Zion... heavenly Jerusalem.” (Heb. 12:22)
We are already there by faith.

4. What was the 'Talmud' and how can our traditions of administering the Christian Gospel be equated with the Faith today without our knowing it?

- * Talmud: Jewish commentary on Torah plus oral traditions of elders. Note that teaching the traditions of men as doctrine make the word of God of no effect (Mark 7:3-13).
Talmud = Torah + commentary + fences + fences. Example: Torah: "Keep Sabbath".
Talmud: "Do not walk 2000 cubits. Do not carry a needle. Do not spit on the ground, it might be ploughed."
- * How the Gospel becomes Talmudic today:
 - Dress codes: "Women no trousers" – not Scripture, tradition. 1 Tim. 2:9 "modest", not "forbidden".
 - Title hierarchies: Talmud of clergy (Matt. 23:9).
 - Holy days: "First fruit, Easter, end of year sacrifice" – Gal. 4:10 "you observe days and months and seasons and years."
 - Water / Oil / Mantle laws: "Use only from altar" – Mark 7:13 "tradition".
 - Covering doctrine: "Cannot pray without man's headship" – 1 Cor. 11 twisted.

Test: If Jesus did not command it, the apostles did not practise it, but your "papa"

enforced it, it is Talmud. “In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. 15:9)

- * The methods of administering the Gospel are transitional “ready to vanish” (Heb. 8:13). The old covenant system – temple, priesthood, sacrifices – was a ‘shadow’ pointing to Christ. Heb. 8:13 says that it was “growing old and ready to vanish away”. When Christ came and the temple fell, that administration passed away. The Israel of God walks by Spirit, not Talmud. “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” (Gal. 5:18)

Confession

Lord, I confess that You separated Israel and made her special through the Torah to reveal Yourself; that You have made the Christian Church and Gospel more special, uniting all to reveal Yourself today. Thank you Lord that You have delivered us from the Torah, our schoolmaster, to graduation through this Gospel (Gal. 3:24; 4:1-7).

The Church, The Truly Circumcised People

From Function to Identity

Phil. 3:3 *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Uncircumcised hearts still have ‘foreskin’.

They boast about material possessions, compare ministries, prioritize earth.

Circumcised hearts ‘see and think heavenward’, and the will of God bothers them first.

Rom. 2:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

If your pride is still intact, your heart is not cut.

If your boast list is longer than your Christ list, you need heart surgery.

CHAPTER 14

Col. 2:11-12 ¹¹ *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

However, heart circumcision without obedience is fake.

The circumcision illustrated in the preparatory message of the Old Testament was a ‘shadow’ pointing to the spiritual circumcision not done with human hands, but by Christ Himself. In the Old Testament, circumcision was done on the body, by the body. Now, in the New Testament, it is done by the Spirit (Christ) in the heart.

The shadow circumcision of the Old Covenant was a mark of identity separating all others not circumcised from the Commonwealth of the old Israel. In the same vein, the circumcision by Christ of the Christians’ hearts due to faith in Christ, has qualified them to share in the inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God (Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:12-13).

CHAPTER 14

By the Abrahamic circumcision, the foreskin of the penis was cut off as an illustration of the cutting off of the sinful nature in people today, which inhibited the expression of the divine (spirit) nature of God effected by Christ through His word. The truly circumcised people are circumcised by Christ which enables them to see and think heavenward, not boasting about material possessions and achievements, and comparing themselves one with another as carnal people do (2 Cor. 10:12).

In other words, their circumcised hearts have been renewed to know better how important and imperative to their lives is the will of God in Christ. Such is what bothers them first and foremost and as their highest priority in life. They have it as a goal to live out and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Son of God to such height (2 Pet. 3:18). Otherwise they are not fully believing. It is not ordinary to detect this faulty status without God's revelation. Finally, a circumcision was a mark to a biological Israelite. So also is a life lived in the spirit a mark of identity on Christians – the new Israel (Gal. 6:16).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Physical circumcision was a mark identifying a biological Israelite. What similarly is the mark identifying a Christian?
 - * Life lived in the Spirit: “Peace and mercy be upon... the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16).
“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:25)
 - * Specifically: A circumcised heart that
“worships God in Spirit, rejoices in Christ Jesus, has no confidence in flesh” (Phil. 3:3).
 - * Visible proof:
 - Love (John 13:35).
 - Fruit (Matt. 7:16).
 - Obedience (1 John 2:3-6).Not tongue, tithe, or title, but lifestyle. The truly circumcised do not compare by flesh.
2. Where and where are both the physical and spiritual circumcisions done and by who?
 - * Physical:
 - Where? Body, foreskin (Gen. 17:11).
 - By who? Human hands, parents / priests (Gen. 17:23).
 - * Spiritual:
 - Where? Heart (Col. 2:11).

CHAPTER 14

“Circumcision is that of the heart and in the Spirit.” (Rom. 2:29)

- By who? Christ Himself.

“Circumcision made without hands... by the circumcision of Christ.” (Col. 2:11)

Through His word (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26).

No man can circumcise your heart. No bishop, no daddy G.O., Christ alone.

3. What is the pride in both the physical and spiritual circumcisions for those circumcised?

* Physical: Flesh, lineage, works.

“If anyone... has reason to boast... I more: circumcised on the eighth day... Hebrew...

Pharisee... blameless.” (Phil. 3:4-6)

Result: Self-righteousness (Luke 18:11-12).

* Spiritual: No pride in self, “no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

“God forbid that I should boast except in the cross” (Gal. 6:14).

* Pride in:

- Christ alone “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:31)

- Will of God in Christ (Rom. 12:2).

- Truly circumcised boast about Christ, not cars, cathedrals or certificates (2 Cor. 10:17).

4. Whereas the physical circumcision associated with the Israel of this world, where does the spiritual circumcision unite those involved?
- * In the Kingdom of Christ and God.
“Conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son” (Col. 1:13).
“Inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5).
 - * Physical united to: Israel of this world – land, temple, Jerusalem.
 - * Spiritual unites to: New Israel (Gal. 6:16), Commonwealth of heaven (Phil. 3:20), Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). We are not united in Ukanafun. We are united in Christ. He Himself is our peace... “one new man”.

Prayer

Father, help me to know that the Christian church has now no foreskin, no confidence in lineage and no boast in achievements, but only in Christ. One Head, one Body and one cut heart. Amen.

The Church, A Royal Priesthood

The Divine Coronation

1 Pet. 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.*

Levi is retired, but Judah reigns.

Jesus did not join Levi's order.

He abolished it, annulling the former commandment. You do not need Levi's blood again to become priest. You need Christ's blood.

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.*

Rom. 2:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

You do not need a human mediator, but one mediator – Christ.

1 Tim. 2:5 *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*

CHAPTER 15

The adjective ‘royal’, used in 1 Pet. 2:9 to modify the noun ‘priesthood’, has to do with or relates to the status of a king or queen or member of their family. Therefore, the noun ‘priesthood’ is the type that functions in the court of a king or queen.

Priests are persons who are authorized to administer certain sacraments having been ordained to the priesthood. In our lead text above, the Holy Spirit through Apostle Peter is addressing the Christian audience as God’s chosen race, the King’s priests as well as a holy nation.

Before now, God ordained priests for His service from the Aaronic tribe of Levi – a closed priesthood (see Heb. 7:11). If the Church is a nation as Peter posits in his inspired writing, then, there should be a king over it who should have priests or chaplains in his private chapel or regiment.

In God’s arrangement shown in His old plan of worship, the one high priest and other priests serving with him had to come from the tribe of Levi. So, before we ever talk of anybody serving under Him through the current High Priest

CHAPTER 15

(Jesus, Christ – Heb. 3:1), let us ask, “Is Jesus from the tribe of Judah qualified to be High Priest? Under which law or order is that permissible?” Actually, God changed His first will (Testament, Covenant) that had limited the priesthood to the tribe of Levi in order to permit Jesus from the tribe of Judah (David) to emerge an eternal High Priest as recorded in Heb. 7:12-14. It is now knowledgeable, therefore, to say that, according to the Scripture, the new Covenant has permitted Jesus, Christ to lead all other priests to offer sacrifices to God, God having changed the older order.

As the new order permitted Jesus as High Priest, not emerging from the tribe of Levi, even so, we are permitted from every tribe, language, nation and race both to serve our God and to reign on earth (see Rev. 5:9-20 (NIV)). No wonder, the veil of the ‘shadow temple’ fell on its own immediately after Jesus died on a tree (Matt. 27:50-51). It served to show that anyone who believes in Christ will go to God and offer acceptable sacrifices without necessarily consulting with anybody. It was not so from the beginning. Before Christ’s regime, anyone chosen by God can be a prophet even without

CHAPTER 15

believing in God. Perhaps, like Jeremiah, one can be selected as a prophet even before birth. On the contrary, now, nobody can speak to God without believing, first of all, to receive the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ) – consider Rom. 8:9, and Acts 5:32, 10:38. Furthermore, when God authorized the priests to offer sacrifices as stipulated in the Levitical order, He was not perfunctory or without an aim: He sought to show mercy to the poor and needy because all were not burnt offerings (Matt. 12:6-7).

In conclusion, God has made us, believers in Christ, a Kingdom and Priesthood to serve to meet the needs of fellow persons. We know God cannot be hungry, lack clothes and shelter unless humans that He made in His likeness lack them. Beloved, is your priesthood with Jesus radiating mercy in all your sacrifices these many years as a Christian? Can you beat your chest and say, “After all, I am not a waste in God’s world; if Jesus were here where I am, it would make no difference to the way in which His life would benefit my neighbourhood?”

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. When God stipulated varieties of sacrifices in the old order, what was His aim according to Matt. 12:6-7?
 - * Mercy: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” (Matt. 12:7, Hos. 6:6)
 - * Aim: Show mercy to the poor and needy. Not all were burnt offerings – peace offerings, sin offerings fed the priests and the poor (Lev. 7:15-16, Deut. 14:28-29). God used ritual to teach relationship.
 - * If your ‘sacrifice’ does not feed the hungry, it is Cain’s offering (Gen. 4:5; 1 John 3:12).
2. God can choose anybody today like Jeremiah of old even though he does not believe in the Gospel of Christ as His priest and prophet. True or False? Why?
 - * False. “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” (Rom. 8:9)
“The Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (Acts 10:38)
“God anointed Jesus... with the Holy Spirit.”
 - * In the Old Testament, Prophet = office. Balaam spoke for God (Num. 24:2), but was lost (2 Pet. 2:15).

CHAPTER 15

- * In the New Testament, Priest = identity. No one speaks for God without the Spirit of God. “No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:3)
Jeremiah was born a prophet (Jer. 1:5). We are born again priests (1 Pet. 2:5). No Spirit, no priesthood.
3. If the rich of this world give gifts to fellow rich ones, their gifts do not show mercy because mercy is shown to the needy. True or False? Why?
- * True. “If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that? Even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that?” (See Luke 6:32-35)
 - * Mercy = unmerited compassion to the needy. See the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-37).
 - * Giving to the rich is investment, reciprocity, politics.
 - * Giving to the poor is ministry, mercy, Christ (Matt. 25:40). If it returns with interest, it was not mercy, it was business.

CHAPTER 15

4. According to Prov. 19:17 and Matt. 25:31-40, if we ignore the poor because they will not make a return giving and instead we give to the rich, it is not God that we seek to reward us but men. True or False? Why?
- * True. “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back...” (Prov. 19:17).
“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least... you did it to Me.” (Matt. 25:31-40)
“When you give a feast, invite the poor... you will be repaid at the resurrection.” (Luke 14:13-14)
 - * Why? God identifies with the poor (Prov. 14:31). The rich can repay (Luke 6:34). If you give to the rich, your reward is their applause (Matt. 6:2). If you give to the poor, your reward is His “well done” (Matt 25:21).
Choose.
5. According to Rev. 5:9-10, all Christians are priests. True or False? Why?
- * True. “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.” (Rev. 5:9-10 (NIV)). “A royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9), “a holy nation, to offer up spiritual sacrifices” (1 Pet. 2:5).

CHAPTER 15

- * Why? Veil torn (Matt. 27:51) = access for all. Spirit given to all (Acts 2:17-18). No 'layman', only priests.
- * If you believe in Christ, you are ordained. "Sacrifice of praise... to do good and to share" (Heb. 13:15-16).
Not some. All. "Made us kings and priests" (Rev. 1:6).

Prayer

Dear Father, help me to know that I am a minister in the King's court and reigning on earth; that such does not happen by tribe but by blood, and that Your office speaks mercy for us. Amen.

The Church, Her Workers

The Deployment Order

John 6:28-29 ²⁸ Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

There is no civilian in Christ’s army.

No titles, but towels, and no clergy versus laity. All are workers and / or troops.

To accept God’s call or enlistment is to go finding out what to do, not what to get.

What God has given to me that the other believer does not have is what I need for my assignment.

1 Cor. 5:7 *For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

If you do not ‘do’ (John 6:29 above), your ‘Eph. 4:11’ is noise.

Eph. 4:11 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.*

CHAPTER 16

The Church workers are also the Church members. Primarily and scripturally, the call of God is a call to work. To accept God's call is not to go finding out what to get but what to do. Therefore, everyone who answers God's call in Christ is accepting God's salvation and service. Like an army, every believer in Christ is a troop or soldier. It is believing and becoming a member of a workforce. So, what is the actual difference between one worker and the other? It is in the nature of the assignment. Note that the one consensus assignment in Scripture that we all share, is that we, all members, should believe in the One that God has sent to us – Jesus Christ.

It is Jesus, our Head, that shares responsibilities, and He does so according to the measure of anointing or grace with which we have been bestowed. Howbeit, all assignments are geared toward the edification of the entire body or workforce (1 Cor. 14:26).

No worker does anything by his power. They are variously gifted as God deems fit according to 1 Cor. 4:7. God, by releasing grace to us with which to do any work in the body of believers in Christ, never made anyone superior to the others who are not given the same measure of

CHAPTER 16

grace. But everyone is expected to search to uncover his or her God given ability at any point in time, since it is according to various assignments. God's way of sharing gifts or enablement is 'shadowed' in Moses's regime in Num. 7:6-9, in the sharing of carts and oxen for the purposes of carrying out the service of the Levites. In this example, the substance we see is that there are supplies that can be accessed by, say, 'Sis. A.' because of her assignment at any given time, which cannot equally be accessed by 'Sis. B.' in the same workforce, as it would be a waste - and not required - in the hand of the latter. God Himself does not expect us to offer prayer asking for such because He would see this as asking to gratify fleshly passions (Jam. 4:1-4).

The one Church is not given a name in Scripture. Similarly, Church workers are not given titles in Scripture. Church workers are only tagged in line with the offices they occupy at any point in time: 'Samson' can serve in the office of a Deacon, and so he can be addressed 'Deacon Samson' as long as he is in that office. 'Joy' can serve as a Deaconess (not in the office of elder or pastor, but in the biblical role of service to the church,

as Phoebe did in Rom. 16:1). But the most appropriate way to avoid confusion around titles is ‘Samson (Deacon)’; ‘Michael Ekperikpe (Evangelist)’; ‘Joy (Deaconess)’ and so on. If Samson moves in the next two years to work as an ‘Elder’, he is addressed as ‘Samson (Elder)’.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. All workers are members. Does that include the Pastors, the Superintendents(?), General overseer(?), the Reverends(?), the Evangelist, the Prophets etc.?
 - * Yes, if they are in Christ. They “shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28), being members first, shepherds second.
 - * But: ‘Superintendent’, ‘General Overseer’, ‘Reverend’ are unscriptural titles (Matt. 23:8-10). ‘Evangelist’, ‘Prophet’ are scriptural functions (Eph. 4:11).
 - * Test: Do they serve or rule? They should not be “lords over the flock”, but examples to them (1 Pet. 5:3). If title makes them superior, they are not workers, they are lords.
 - * All workers are members. Not all titled men are workers (Matt. 7:22-23).

CHAPTER 16

2. To go to God is to go finding out what to do, not what to get. Discuss.
 - * See John 6:28-29. “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus: “This is the work... that you believe...”.
 - * Meaning: Faith is work. Going to God = enlistment, not entitlement, as warned against in Jam. 4:1-4: “You ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
 - * Example: In Num. 7:6-9, the Gershonites were given carts because the work required it. The Kohathites carried on shoulders, therefore no carts. Asking for carts when your work is for shoulders is fleshy passion. God gives assignment first, then equipment. Seek His face for task, not His hand for things (Matt. 6:33).
3. It is services delivery that makes salvation credible. Why?
 - * “Faith without works is dead... I will show you my faith by my works.” (Jam. 2:17-18)
“Let us not love in word... but in deed.” (1 John 3:17-18)
 - * Why? Salvation = enlistment. A soldier who never fights is a suspected spy.

CHAPTER 16

“Let your light so shine... that they may see your good works and glorify your Father...” .
(Matt. 5:16)

- * Credibility: The world believes our message when they see our ministry. “By this all will know... if you have love.” (John 13:35).
Preaching without serving is noise (1 Cor. 13:1). Kohathites carrying the Ark on carts would die (Num. 4:15). Wrong service discredits salvation.

4. God has called all of us to be servants. What therefore differs us one from another, according to Num. 7:6-9?

- * Nature of assignment and measure of grace, not superiority: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace... let us use them.”
- * Num. 7:6-9: Gershonites – two carts – work needed it. Merarites – four carts – heavier work. Kohathites – no carts, holy things on shoulders.
- * Principle: God supplies according to assignment. ‘Sis. A.’ may access the microphone because she is an Evangelist, proclaiming the Gospel and teaching women. ‘Sis. B.’ gets the food pantry because she is a Deacon of mercy.

CHAPTER 16

To give 'Sis. B.' a microphone is a waste.

“What do you have that you did not receive?”

(1 Cor. 4:7)

- * The difference is in function, not in value.

Prayer

Holy Father, remind me of the truth that I am not a volunteer, but drafted; I am not titled but tasked. Amen.

The Church, A Giver Group

Smyrna vs Laodicea

Eph. 5:1-2 ¹ Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

The Church in Laodicea had money.

The Church in Smyrna had mercy.

God banks what passes THROUGH you; not what piles up with you. Smyrna's poverty was heaven's prosperity for them. Acts 17:25 does not cancel Matt. 25:40 – it explains it.

Acts 17:25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

Matt. 25:40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

God does not need your bread. Your neighbour does, and your neighbour is created in His image (Gen. 1:27).

Gen. 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

CHAPTER 17

The Church has a role model in God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. God's desire is that we are like Him in heaven. According to Matt. 5:48, we are God's dream children (those of us who have believed in Him through Jesus Christ). Although there are many characters in Scripture who obeyed God in their ages, the perfect model God has recommended that we imitate is Himself and His Son, Jesus Christ (see Heb. 12:2).

Divine providence has given us the terrestrial world and all of the resources therein for our corporeal well-being (Acts 17:24-25), and Jesus as a sacrifice for the salvation of our soul after this life (John 3.16-17).

Such giving is not compelled by law but by love and given to meet need, not to keep law. The kind of Giver our Father in heaven is leaves much for us, His children, to learn here on earth, as we live daily to reveal Him, an invisible Person.

Fellowship with God, like fellowship with others, involves 'giving and receiving'. Under the old covenant, giving to God was direct, through sacrifices and offerings at the temple. Today, we give to God materially by giving to His people and

CHAPTER 17

His work (Matt. 25:40). In return, God supplies our material needs through His providence and gives us spiritual blessings directly in Christ (Eph. 1:3). The Bible says that God cannot be served by human hands in Acts 17:25, and we are reminded that serving God (giving to Him) can only be done indirectly (Matt. 25:31-46, 1 John 3:17-19, 4:20-21). Jesus and / or the Father can be hungry and could be fed by us, naked and could be clothed by us, strangers and could be hosted by us, when we give those services to anybody God made in His image who lacks them, out of love for Him.

When God stipulated sacrifices in the Law of Moses, all were not burnt offerings. They were also intended to be agents of the revelation of God's mercy to mankind (Matt. 12:1-7). To be able to be a giver group, we must be prosperous, making a surplus from our work, without engaging in profiteering. If we engage in profiteering in order to give, we are using God's resources to destroy God's supreme property – mankind. No one is successful in the sight of God if his business impacts negatively on fellow beings. This is how we know that King Solomon was not truly prosperous because, to be rich as

CHAPTER 17

he was, he heavily taxed his countrymen (profiteering) and conscripted them into forced labour. We can be sure of this when we read in 1 Ki. 12:1-20 what transpired after his death, at the beginning of the reign of his son, Rehoboam. The dividing of the kingdom was judgment from God, because Solomon did not keep His covenant (1 Ki. 11:11).

As already stated, looking up to Jesus as our giver model, one discovers that we are rich, not because of what is in our custody as owners, but what has been passed by God through us to others in need. The Church in Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-9) knew that God does not accept or reject offerings based on quantity and quality but on intent. It is so because even unbelievers can give the same service without a reward from God. When the world system's yardstick was used to value them, they were a suffering and a poor people. But Jesus's value of them in heaven was otherwise: In God's treasure house above, Jesus saw their riches and said that they were rich. This is not unconnected with what we have established already, that even though we may have little worldly prosperity, in the lives of those God has helped through us, what wealth we

CHAPTER 17

have used to help others, whether spiritual or physical, is still counted for us for our rewards. Even if not physically seen with us because we have given it away, it is still counted for us in heaven's storehouse.

This is contrary to what we see among the group of believers in Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-17). These were a people who saw themselves as prosperous and lacking nothing, whereas Jesus saw them as ignorant folks who never realized that they were wretched, miserable, naked, blind and poor. There is a lesson herein that believers in Christ never likely look for helpers around as they are aware that they are more blessed when they give than when they receive (Acts 20:35). Instead, they look for those to help (the helpless) with what they have – either with the word spiritually or with alms physically. They also go to God in prayer as victors and not beggarly, which expresses fear, not faith. In which category are you? If the Lord is speaking to you now, do not harden your heart. He stands at the door and knocks.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. It is more blessed for God to give THROUGH you than TO you. True or False? Why?
 - * True. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)
“You will be enriched in every way to be generous.” (2 Cor. 9:11)
 - * Why? Receiving ends with you. Giving through you reveals God. “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least... you did it to Me.”
 - * God’s model: He Gave His Son (John 3:16). Christ gave Himself (Eph. 5:2).
 - * We are pipes, not ponds. If God gives TO you and stops, you are Laodicea. If God gives THROUGH you, you are Smyrna.
 - * Blessed = conduit.

2. In this world we will not be counted as the richest because we use any opportunity we have to do good. See Rev. 2:8-9 and Luke 3:11. True or False?
 - * True. “I know your... poverty – but you are rich.” (Rev. 2:9)
“He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none.” (Luke 3:11)

CHAPTER 17

- * Why? The world measures by custody “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease...” (Luke 12:19-21). Heaven measures by distribution, “rich in good works... storing up treasure.” (1 Tim. 6:18-19)
 - * If you do good at every opportunity, your bank account stays low. The world says ‘poor’, but Jesus says ‘rich’. Choose His valuation.
3. a) What is the difference between ‘making profit’ and ‘profiteering’?
- Profit: Honourable gain from business investment – “her merchandise is good” (Prov. 31:18). “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” (2 Thess. 3:10)
Meets need, pays fair wages (Jam. 5:4).
Goal: Stewardship with generosity.
- * Profiteering: Exploitative gain that destroys God’s supreme property – mankind.
Solomon example (1 Ki. 12:4): “Your father made our yoke heavy.” Forced labour, heavy tax is profiteering.
“You have heaped up treasure... by fraud.” (Jam. 5:1-6)
 - * Test: Does my business make people or break people? Profit builds, profiteering kills.
“He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker.” (Prov. 14:31)

b) Who is a racketeer?

- * One who makes money by dishonest business, exploitation, or creating a monopoly on necessities. Racketeering is using God's resources to destroy God's image. Church racketeers are Laodiceans (Rev. 3:17).
- * Biblical:
 - Money changers - "house of merchandise" (John 2:14-16).
 - Those who profaned the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-18).
 - Ananias and Sapphira: "kept back part" (Acts 5:1-3).
- * Modern:
 - Inflating prices in famine.
 - Charging usury to the poor (Ex. 22:25).
 - Selling "anointing oil" for breakthrough (Neh. 13:15-18).
- * God's verdict:
 - "I will never forget any of their works." (Amos 8:7)
 - "The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore." (Amos 8:2)
- * Repentance vs Judgment: For those who repent, there is mercy. For those who persist in using God's name or resources to exploit

CHAPTER 17

His people, there is judgment (Rev. 3:16, Amos 8:10).

- * Christ invites repentance: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock... If anyone opens, I will come in.” (Rev. 3:20)

4. What does Jesus teach us when, for forty days hungry, he would not use His power to produce food for Himself but did so when people who listened to His preaching were hungry for a few days (Matt. 14:13-21)?

- * Lesson 1: Miracles are for ministry, not self. He would not turn stones into bread for Himself (Matt. 4:3-4), but multiplied bread for others (Matt. 14:19).
- * Why? Love does not serve self (Phil. 2:4-7).
- * If He feeds Himself, Satan wins (Matt. 4:3), if He feeds others, the Father is glorified (Matt. 15:36).
- * Lesson 2: Divine power meets others’ needs, not our greed. A hungry crowd is an opportunity to reveal the Father (John 6:11). A hungry Christ is an opportunity to trust the Father (Matt. 4:4).
- * Lesson 3: True prosperity = what passes through you. Five loaves + two fish became 12 baskets (Matt. 14:20). He kept nothing. Gave all. Still full.

CHAPTER 17

- * Smyrna principle: Empty hands, full heaven.
“...In a great trial of affliction ... their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.” (2 Cor. 8:2)
- * Test: Do you use anointing to pay your rent or to feed His sheep (John 21:17)?

Prayer

Dear Father, teach me to know that You desire that we become rich but not through oppressing the poor – profiteering; that doing so will surely return us to poverty like the Church in Laodicea.

Lord, we pray for every reader. When we are lukewarm make us hot. When we are blind, give us sight. Amen.

The Church, A People with One Lifetime Chance

The Altar Call of the Book

Heb. 9:27 (KJV) *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

Christ is returning → Trumpet sounds → The Living transformed → The Righteous with Jesus → The Wicked destroyed → New heaven and earth

1 Cor. 15:51-52 ⁵¹ *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

2 Pet. 3:10-13 ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.* ¹¹ *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,* ¹² *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent*

heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

1 Thess. 4:16-17 ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord.

One event. No gap. When Noah entered, God shut the door.

Gen. 7:16 So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in.

When Christ shall reappear, the Father shall shut the door.

Matt. 25:10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

Today is the day to act.

2 Cor. 6:2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

The Call Is Urgent, Today Is The Day of Salvation

As long as a person is alive here on earth, he or she has a chance to be saved. It is imperative that we understand this, and place is not given to confusion or slumber by the suggestion that there is a post death chance for repentance and salvation of the soul. Now is the accepted time:

2 Cor. 6:2 *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

None of us is promised tomorrow.

Heb. 3:15 *Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.*

Salvation is always through faith in Jesus, whether you are Jewish or Gentile. Belief in Jesus is the **only** way (“... no man comes to the Father except through Me” – John 14:6).

The message that will save everybody, whether physical or spiritual Israel, is received by faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

“Without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6) was the message Jesus gave to Paul for every Gentile and Jew everywhere, and in Rom. 11:22-23, Paul made that very clear.

There is nothing in the teachings of Christ that presents us with a second chance of repentance after Jesus's second coming and taking His elect to be with Him forever. In Luke 17, Jesus Himself painted a picture of how it will be, based on the time of Noah.

Jesus will appear with the sounding of a trumpet which all must hear and come back to life, whether wicked or righteous. Those alive until then will be transformed by Jesus into the spiritual state, separating the righteous from the wicked to be with Jesus as long as is necessary for everything associated with Satan (the world system) to be destroyed. Finally will come the restoration of the new heaven and new earth (see 2 Pet. 3:13).

Our Judge is Perfect

We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 10; Rom. 14:10). Every work will be brought into judgment (Eccl. 12:14). The Lord judges with perfect fairness: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25), delighting in righteousness, but also in mercy:

CHAPTER 18

Jer. 9:24 “... *I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord.*

None of us is righteous; we have all fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:10, 23). All of us deserve condemnation. But God in His mercy has sent His Son not to condemn the world but to save the world, so that through belief in His Son we may be delivered from condemnation (John 3:17).

God Is Not Willing That Any Should Perish

We are commanded to take the full light of the Gospel to every person, God being unwilling that any should perish but that all should come to repentance:

2 Pet. 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

How Shall We Escape If We Reject So Great A Salvation?

Again, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart but take heed of what is said:

Heb. 2:1-4 *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest*

at any time we should let them slip. ²For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; ³how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; ⁴God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

As it is written (Heb. 9:27 (KJV)), “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Jesus committed His life to Scripture and admitted therein as true. Looking at Noah’s time, narrate the order of His second coming.

* Order:

- Normal life: eating, drinking, marrying, buying (Luke 17:26-28).
- Sudden appearance: “Son of Man revealed” (Luke 17:30).
- Trumpet (1 Thess. 4:16): all hear (Matt. 24:31).

CHAPTER 18

- Resurrection of the dead: “dead in Christ rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16).
 - Transformation of the living: “changed” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
 - Catching up of the righteous: “to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17).
 - Judgment on the wicked: (2 Thess. 1:7-9), “destroyed them all” (Luke 17:29).
 - New heaven and earth (2 Pet. 3:13).
 - * As Noah’s flood, so Christ’s fire (2 Pet. 3:6-7).
2. In apocalyptic books like Revelation and Daniel, numbers are ideas. What does the number “one thousand” mean, reading Rev. 20:1-7?
- * Ideas, not calendar: Apocalyptic numbers are symbols. 1000 = completeness, fullness of time, God’s perfect reign. “A thousand years as one day” (Ps. 90:4) and “one day as a thousand years” (2 Pet. 3:8).
 - * Proof that 1000 is symbolic: If “1000 years” meant a literal 1000 years, Satan would be totally inactive for that time. But Rev. 20:7-8 says he is released after the 1000 years and deceives the nations again. That does not fit a literal 1000 years.
 - * What it means: “1000 years” means a long, complete period that God has set. It is the

CHAPTER 18

time between Christ's first and second coming – the Church Age. Right now, Christ reigns from heaven (Eph. 1:20-22), and believers reign with Him by trusting Him, (Rev. 1:6, Rom. 5:17). Satan is bound from stopping the gospel from reaching all nations. At the end, he is released for a short time, then Christ returns.

- * First resurrection = born again (John 5:24-25; Eph. 2:1, 5-6).
- * “Thousand” = between first and second coming. We are in it.
- * “I saw Satan fall” (Luke 10:18).
- * There is no future millenium for Jews. They are saved now or never, “if they do not continue in unbelief” (Rom. 11:23).

3. According to 1 Tim. 1:3-5, what is the charge of the faith of Jesus Christ which is the aim of the divine training in faith, which cannot be complicated by genealogies?

- * Love from a pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5).
- * Not: “endless genealogies... disputes” (1 Tim. 1:4).
- * Charge: Teach the Gospel that saves NOW (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

CHAPTER 18

- * Genealogies: “Jews get a second chance under the Antichrist”, “tribes of Israel are evangelized in tribulation”, “Daniel’s 70th week for Jews.”
 - * Avoid these teachings. Why?
 - Blindness in part has indeed come to Israel (Rom. 11:25) but the gospel is what saves, and must be preached to all nations. Do not complicate simple faith (Heb. 11:6, Eph: 2:8-9).
 - Jesus’s victory is not veiled (2 Cor. 3:14).
 - No genealogy saves: “do not think to say ‘Abraham our father’” (Matt. 3:9).
 - * Aim of training: Love (1 Tim. 1:5) - not timelines.
4. Our prayers must not seek to harm anybody who is alive now in the flesh. We have this lifetime chance guided by the Holy Spirit, pending the dispensation of fire to come. True or False? Why?
- * True. “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. The Son of Man did not come to destroy but to save.” (Luke 9:54-56)
 - * “Love your enemies, bless them... pray for those who spitefully use you.” (Matt. 5:44)
 - * “Bless and do not curse.” (Rom. 12:14)

CHAPTER 18

- * Why: One lifetime chance (Heb. 9:27). As long as a person breathes, they can repent. The Lord is “not willing that any should perish.” Praying harm is closing a door that God left open.
- * Fire dispensation comes hereafter (2 Thess. 1:7-8), not by our prayer now.
- * The Holy Spirit guides us to intercede (Rom. 8:26-27), not curse (Jam. 3:9-10).
- * Saul persecuted the Church. The Church prayed. Saul became Paul (Acts 9:1-19). If the Church had prayed fire on Saul, we would have no Romans, no Galatians, no you.

Prayer

Father, thank You for letting me know that the Christian Church has no second ark, no second chance and no second Israel but Christ, and that today is the day to have Him (2 Cor. 6:2, Heb. 3:13).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Michael James Ekperikpe is a teacher, pastor and missionary strategist, passionate about restoring the Church to her biblical identity. He holds a B.A. (Religious Education) from the School of Religious Studies, Port Harcourt, an affiliate of St. Thomas-a-Becket University, Canterbury, United Kingdom.

He is the Founder and Team Lead of READ AND REAP BIBLE ENTERPRISES (a.k.a. READ AND REAP MISSION), a discipleship and mercy ministry inaugurated on 23rd April 2019. The mission provides Bibles, books, school fees and spiritual care to orphans and vulnerable children across Nigeria.

His life message is simple: The Church is not a place we go; she is a people we become.

ABOUT THE BOOK

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH is not another denominational manual. It is a plumbline (Amos 7:7-8). For too long, the Body of Christ has been measured by tradition, titles, nomenclature, tourism and tribe. This book will offend traditions on the one hand and reveal Christ on the other (Mark 7:13, 2 Cor. 3:18).

This book is for believers who are tired of religion without relationship; who desire their leaders to be willing to tear up their titles and to take up towels (John 13:15). It is for those entrepreneurs who desire to make a profit without profiteering. It is for those saints who are confused by “tribulation salvation” and “Holy Land” doctrines. It is for anyone who wants to be a “Smyrna” in a “Laodicean age” (Rev. 2:9).

My heart’s desire is that they see the Christian Church as Christ sees Her.

