

Local Church

EDIT IN PROGRESS: The Purpose and Practices of the Local Church - originally authored by Joel McLain and edited by Stephen Reynolds Jr.

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Outline

Local Church: The Purpose & Practices of the Local Church

- Preface
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Preface

This study of the work of God is for the purpose of impressing upon the leaders of his people in every local body, that God's work is a progressive work.

Although God himself has known from the beginning, He has chosen to reveal his work to man From Faith to faith. (As we see in Isaiah 28:10:)

Isaiah 28:10—For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

It is strange indeed how we tend to put the temporal into a permanent perspective. Consider the many groups and individuals who, having received one portion of God's great revelation for the ages, proceed to expand it so out of proportion as to consider it "the whole of God's Revelation", we have ceased to grow and thus have become stagnant and spiritually diseased. Consider Job's comment to his all-knowing friends in Job 12:2).

Job 12:2—No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.

The only way we may avoid either becoming lukewarm or being contaminated with spiritual anemia is to continue to progress and to flow in the mainstream of the moving of the Holy Ghost.

All scripture portions and references are taken from the authorized King James Version of the Bible. I will endeavor to show, through the scripture, that God's work in the Local Assembly is a progressive work, and that the Holy Ghost is restoring the New Testament pattern to evangelize the world and to nurture the Body of believers. I trust that I will be able to identify, using the Holy Scriptures, what the New Testament pattern is and how it may be manifested in the Body of Believers.

Signed Rev. Joel McLain

Chapter 1: Introduction to Local Church

God's Church and God's Churches

God's Church

We must understand the difference between "The Church" and "churches." "The Church" is mystical, invisible, universal and general. It is also singular, for God has only one "Church." It is the same "Church in the past, present, and future.

God's Churches

The "churches" (local church) are real, concrete, visible, local, and specific. It is the universal Church as it is taking on local or temporal form. The word church, in the Greek, is ekklesia, which means to "summon forth" or "to call out" the people. The Hebrew word qahal means "assembly" or "congregation." (Ps. 22:22) In our study, the word "Ekklesia" we will be considered in the context of: a local body of Believers gathered together for worship of God and fellowship. (Eph. 4:16)

God's Order for this Age is the Local Church

Today, many do not respect the local church as God's permanent order for this church age. The structure of the local church may vary with size or locality, but it is still God's order for this age. The local church is divinely patterned for effective evangelizing of the world and bringing his people to maturity.

Islands are Rebellious

We must relate to a local body and not become an island to ourselves. To separate ourselves from the local body is unscriptural. We are all parts of the same body. Not one of us is to be independent of the other. It is God's plan and purpose that each member of his universal body be joined to a local body of Believers. A man, or woman, who refuses to join themselves to a local body of Believers often feels they are wasting their effort. This type of spirit is a rebellious and independent spirit and is contrary to Scripture.

Within the Old Testament tabernacle, there was a designated place of worship. The Believer was not to remain at home to worship. He was to gather with the local body in a designated place of worship. There is no Scriptural basis for remaining at home to worship while the local body is gathering even if you do enjoy the "Electronic Evangelist" more than the local elders.

Becoming an Island Alienates You from the Umbrella of Providence

Church order and leadership were clearly seen in the Old Testament. Aaron and his sons were a type of the N.T. fivefold ministry. (Eph 4:13) The watchmen on the walls of the cities of Israel are a type of the leaders of the N.T. church who are watching for our souls. It is the responsibility of the elders to guard against those with erroneous teachings who would kill and destroy the body. (Heb. 13:17) The shepherds upon the hillside of Judah and Israel were a type of God's chosen leadership for his church today. They are not only entrusted with the care and guidance of the flock but of feeding the flock of God with nourishing spiritual food. (Acts 20:28)

God's Pattern for the Local Church

God Has Set His Pattern in Scripture

In his Word, God offers a pattern for the formation of local churches. First, he directed Believers to assemble together in given locations. (Heb. 10:25) Next he ordains where to establish a local church, often where not to. (Acts 16:6-10) God puts into place the leadership ministries he would have in each local assembly. (Acts 14:23) Though most in the church recognizes that God designates leaders, they do not give much thought about the fact that God also brings in embers. (I Cor. 12:18) We should carefully consider God's placement in the best church for them, especially in this day of running to and fro by many church members. (Job 1:7) If God sets us in a particular church as members or leaders, we must remain there until God moves us and not before. Never should we move because we have been offended.

God's Principles for Church Government

There are some basic principles of church government, which we must observe if we want to fully follow God's pattern.

Sovereignty of the Local Body

Nowhere in Scripture does God teach a denominational type of church government. Each local church is to be a sovereign body, even though they are to enjoy fellowship with other local assemblies.

Life in the Local Body

The church is first to be a spiritual "organism" and then to be an "organization". Good church government will not produce spirituality. In the church of the living God, there must be life before structure.

Order in the Local Body

After there is life, good structure in the form of church government will help to maintain life. As a family requires parents, and as a flock requires a shepherd, so the household of faith requires spiritual leaders. We need the fivefold ministry so that we may come to maturity within the body. (Eph. 4:11-13) Leaders cannot give what they do not possess. They must meet the scriptural qualifications seen in I Timothy 3. A common error today is the belief that we do not need men to lead us, that "we have the Holy Spirit to lead us, don't we?" The Spirit leads and governs the church through human vessels. (Heb. 13:17) To bypass everyone and seek leading only from God is usually the sign of a rebellious and independent spirit. These people often use a verse of Scripture out of context, such as, I Jn. 2:27 to justify refusing submission to God-anointed and God-called teachers. If we choose to reject the teaching that God has ordained, a strong oversight in the ministry within the Body of Christ, God will permit us to find isolated Scriptures to satisfy our rebellion and independence. God appoints leaders and directs them to set the house in order. (II Thess. 2:10-12)

Chapter 2: The New Testament Pattern

Since we are living in the last days we must completely open to the moving of the Holy Ghost, who is endeavoring to restore the New Testament pattern to the Local Church. The ministry of the "Word" was restored when the Word of God was once again given its rightful place among the people of God after having come out of the Dark Ages or the Devils millennium. During this time the Word was withheld from the body of Christ and held only in the hands of an elite, select group of so-called theologians.

In these last days the Spirit is striving to restore the ministry of the "works" of Jesus by empowering the Believer to do the same works that He did.

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do he shall do also: and greater works than these shall he; because I go unto my father. (John 14:12)

God is challenging the representatives of His Church to break away from tradition and to get into the flow of the Spirit if we ever expect to progress toward God's ideal for the Local Church. Those who refuse to move with the Holy Ghost are the ones who bring division to the Body of Christ. Jesus taught us that, just as you can't put new wine into old wine skins, the fullness of the Holy Ghost cannot enter old contaminated lives (Matthew 9:16-17). Even the Church has crawled into the ditch of "this is the way we have always done it." It is time to break from these traditions under the leadership of the Holy Ghost.

It is often those who want to flow with the Spirit who are forced to out of their nests - out of their accustomed place of worship and body of worshipers. When this happens you may mistakenly feel it is man who has forced you out. In reality, it is God leading you to higher heights and deeper depths in Him. Even though it is God's hand leading you, a time of shock and disorientation will inevitably follow this upheaval.

It is important that we recognize our life and ministry after a spiritual shake-up. The old rubble must be removed if we are to ever to rebuild according to the pattern the Lord has shown us. We must also remember that, as in Nehemiah's day, God is able to take some of the old charred stones from the rubble, clean them up and use them in the rebuilding process. It would be a mistake to write off each and every one who seemed to be resisting the purpose of God's pattern since they may be the very ones that God will restore and use in His rebuilding process.

We must strive in every respect to see that the New Testament pattern is restored to the Local Church. This can only occur with a combination of the intensive study of all Scriptures and the anointing of the Holy Ghost. We should never settle for second best. Copies are never as good as the originals they attempt to mimic. Rehoboam discovered the inadequacy of copies when he built shields of "brass" to replace the shields of "Gold" which his father, Solomon, had made.

We must always reach for the "IDEAL" which God has revealed by his spirit and in His Word. Sadly, we are living in a day when people are ready to believe and accept anything that has any semblance whatsoever to God. Scripture exhorts us to go on unto perfection and we must strive for the ideal in our life and work for the Lord.

We must that which has been revealed thus far and work with the Spirit to build upon it. To do this we must be flexible without compromising. It is possible to blend and maintain an uncompromising Spirit at the same time. Many have become so pliable that they played into satan's hand and have shipwrecked their faith as well as that of those who follow. Others become so ridged in their old ways that they have become stagnant in their experience and work for the Lord. I am in no advocating leaving the old paths of holiness for the new so-called social gospel. In reality, the social gospel is no gospel at all. Remember, I stressed the importance of flexibility while remaining uncompromising.

Sadly, many have lost sight of God's plan and purpose for the Local Church. All too often a great move of God's Spirit is followed by the organization of a new denomination or, at least, a body of churches formed under one central headquarters. These organizations are formed in an effort to maintain doctrinal truth and purity within the church. However, as we shall see further in our study, the organization has done just the opposite of what it was intended to do.

As we study God's pattern for the Local Church, we must properly interpret Scriptures or, as Paul said, "rightly dividing the Word of Truth," (2Timothy 2:15b). At this time, I would like to mention a few major principles for interpreting the Scriptures:

Scriptures must be interpreted as follows:

- Literally
- Morally
- Prophetically

First, I will discuss the "literal" or "historical" method of interpreting the Scriptures. It is very helpful to have a working knowledge of the history, geography, culture, and language of the Bible. Often, the "literal" is the key to the "spiritual". In our day too many people have such an inner conviction that the Holy Ghost will teach them that they ignore the necessity of an in-depth study on their own with teachers who are under the anointing of the Holy Ghost. As dry and unspiritual as a meticulous study of the "natural" aspects of the Bible may seem at times, we must always remember that as we dig into the "natural" we will find the Spiritual.

Secondly, as we strive to interpret Scripture, we must consider the "principle" or "moral" teaching found in every text under study. We can only do this by thinking about that which may be applied to any and every age or period of time. This type of study will consist more of application than interpretation. In order to discover the moral teaching of many Scriptures, it is necessary to know the meaning of names and places first. Then, as you see the Old Testament story unfold before you, you will begin to see the many principles which apply to our day.

The last principle of interpretation that I will consider is the "prophetic" or "ultimate" means of interpreting Scriptures. When we study the Bible in this manner, we must remember that the overall plan of God points to the Church.

The prophetic interpretation of Scripture always requires an ample amount of proof texts for each point or doctrine we wish to emphasize.

Jesus himself taught us that he veils truth from those whose ears are dull and whose hearts are closed (Matthew 13:10-17). To really understand the Word of God, it must be in our hearts and not just in our heads. It is necessary for us to have a proper Spiritual experience to properly interpret the Word of God. Because God wants his children to serve and obey him of their own free will, he has left enough loopholes in Scripture for those who desire to continue in their own willful ways, to do so. As ironic as it seems, he will permit them, by taking a Scripture out of context or by reading into it what they desire to see, to find Scripture to convince themselves of the eras they wish to embrace (2Thessalonians 2:10-11).

It is absolutely necessary that those who genuinely desire to walk in all of God's truth remain spiritually sensitive lest they also be deceived. It is especially confusing when we see ones who reject certain revealed truth moving in the ministries in gifts of the spirit, or seemingly doing so. It is important to note that is as important as the gifts of the spirit are they are indicative of spiritual maturity. Spiritually maturity is evidenced by a life abounding in the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and a life persisting in obedience to all the revealed will of God.

Some key questions to ask ourselves as we study the Scriptures are:

- How does this relate to the Jew and the people of that day in their natural circumstances?
- What application do these Scriptures have for the Church in end time events?
- How may these apply to the individual Christian?

The Obvious sense of a passage of Scripture is not to be ignored. Do not try to read some deep spiritual truth into a Scripture portion by excluding the obvious. Don't forget, that which was natural came first and then that which is spiritual. Adam â€" Christ.

footnotes

As an example, closely study the allegory found in Galatians 4:21-31

For example, the holiness doctrine is often considered legalism by those who don't desire to live under its teachings. Those who believe this have gathered enough fragments of Scripture to convince themselves that holiness is not necessary to see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14) or that the holiness God is speaking of only pertains to the inward experience. They completely ignore such Scriptures as Romans 12:1, 2 and 2Corinthians 7:1.

"The key is always near the door, a difficult passage may be explained by another passage which is very clear. Even the Old Testament is understood by the New Testament. Every Doctrinal truth has its headquarters passage. At the same time, all Scripture pertaining to that doctrine must fit into the doctrine itself. Do not come to a dogmatic conclusion about any given doctrinal truth until all Scriptures pertaining to that doctrine can fit into your conclusions. "

Do not think that God has chosen to conceal his divine truth. He definitely desires to reveal His spiritual realities to us. He does this progressively, piece by piece, as we have already seen in Isaiah 28:9-13. He begins this revelation by the "natural" or "shadows" which are seen in the Old Testament, then leads us on to the "spiritual truths" or "realities", which are seen in the New Testament. Revelation leads progressively to the cross, to the "ONE NEW MAN". He is endeavoring to bring us into the fullness of the stature of Christ. pertains to the inward experience. They completely ignore such Scriptures as Romans 12:1, 2 and 2Corinthians 7:1.

The truths that the "shadow" or "natural" portray are permanent but the natural objects themselves are not. We must see the meaning behind many of the natural terms used in the Old Testament to rightly discern the spiritual truths portrayed (i.e. Jew, Israel, covenant, circumcision, Zion, etc.). These terms are used to point to the progressive work of God. Always keep in the foreground of your mind's eye that God does not retrogress. God restores without retrogressing. He is using Old Testament words with a new center of focus. That center is the cross of Christ. We need the eyes of our hearts enlightened (Ephesians 1:18).

As we look at the natural, we may consider the nation of Israel. She must blend in with the Church. Her restoration today could well be a type of God's work in restoring the New Testament pattern to the Church in these last days. God is pointing us to the spiritual while we observe the natural dealings of God with humanity. Those who emphasize the natural dealings or works of God, have very little capacity for the spiritual truths that those natural things are striving to convey.

In this Chapter we've gone from the "shadow" to the "substance", from the "natural", to the "spiritual", and this is no time to retrogress to the natural or the shadow. Let us go on unto perfection, to completion in Him. The Church is, and will continue to be, throughout this age, God's means of revealing His will and purpose for humanity.

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Principles of Church Government

Care is taken to insure proper balance in all of God's dealings with men. The same is true of principle pertaining to church government. There are two extremes used by churches to maintain proper balance in church government, which we will consider. There may be other forms of church government that we could consider, but we will limit our study to the two extremes typified in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3.

These two extremes are illustrated by the NICOLAITANE and LAODICEAN spirit (Revelation 2:6, 15; 3:14). NICOLAITANE is derived from two Greek words meaning, "to conquer the people". LAODICEAN is taken from two Greek words meaning "the justice of the people". These were not the only two churches seen to utilize the two major extremes in church government. These two forms of government have been prevalent throughout the Church Age, and are still seen today in the vast majority of churches.

Let us look briefly at the Laodicean spirit. It symbolizes the form of government that adheres to the principle of the "Justice-Rule-Democracy" of the people. Many of our churches today operate under this flag. ALL is transacted in the voice of the people. This speaks to us of a Democratic or Congregational type of church government. All officers and matters of business are decided upon by a vote of the body of believers.

As appealing as the LAODICEAN form of government is to the natural man, and as great as it is in civil government, it is not seen anywhere in Scripture as God's order of business for the Church Age. This type of government is always run on the OPINIONS of the people.

Unfortunately, the voice of the majority is all too often a carnal voice. Under this system churches often choose, to their own destruction or at least to their own destruction or at least to their own detriment, pastor's who are not God's choice for that local assembly at that time. Often, under this Democratic, or might we say Laodicean, spirit, the pastor's hands are tied as he tries to follow the leading of the Holy Ghost when it comes to the leadership of the local assembly. As we can readily see without any further explanation, this Spirit must be soundly opposed and resisted as not being God's will for the local assembly.

Let us now look at the other end of the spectrum, the NICOLAITANE Spirit. This makes reference to a dictatorial type of church government or the Papal type of church government. It speaks to us of the clergy becoming a ruling class. This spirit demands that people come to God through their leaders. These leaders may be called "Elders" or "Shepherds" or any number of other titles.

The dictatorial type of church government ignores the Scriptural teaching of the "priesthood of the believer," as seen in I Peter 2:9. Peter clearly teaches that each believer has the privileges and responsibility to come before God themselves as members of, "a royal priesthood". Paul also teaches this in Hebrews 4:16:

""Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.""

The individual members of the body should be taught and encouraged to seek God personally for their individual needs. However, while members should be instructed to seek the Lord themselves, they also need to be encouraged to share their burdens with and pray for each other as instructed in James 5:16. They also need to recognize that there is a need, at times, for calling upon the elders for prayer and the laying on of hands. An over-emphasis on the doctrine of laying on of hands, solely by the Elders, could have created this "Nicolaitane spirit" and error within the church. Is it possible this is why God inspired Paul to write "Lay hands suddenly on no man," in I Timothy 5:22?

Let us look at some of the consequences, which will naturally arise when the Nicolaitane spirit prevails in a local body of believers. The first malfunctioning of the assembly, will be that the leadership of the church will not only control the manifestation of the gifts in the assembly, but they themselves will often be the only ones functioning in these gifts. This monopoly on the gifts of the Spirit suppresses all other believers from operating via the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The suppression of the operation of the gifts will not always be outward or direct but will often happen through indirect means or simply through the projection of the leadership's domineering spirit. By monopolizing the gifts of the Spirit, the leadership borders on the verge of

assuming a role that is to be strictly reserved for the Holy Ghost. The Scriptural pattern, as seen in I Corinthians 12:7, is for each member to move and function as the Holy Ghost would direct, " But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to ever man to profit withal." The Nicolaitane Spirit ignores this pattern as it disregards the "priesthood of the believer".

The root cause of many men resorting to this form of leadership is twofold. It takes both "Self-Denial" and the "Crucifixion" of the "Flesh" on the part of a leader to permit the Spirit to use who He will to minister as He would. It requires faith to trust the Holy Ghost to govern the affairs of the church. It is much easier to the "CARNAL" natural man to do things in a natural way, especially if the individual is endowed with natural gifts and charisma. The sad result is that this seems to be very successful.

One weakness of the modern pastorate is that he fails to produce a strong lay ministry. However, this error is being corrected in many circles today and is proving very fruitful. Praise God! He is still in the work of restoring the New Testament pattern. We can only produce "Much Fruit", as we follow the scriptural pattern.

To develop spiritual people we must permit the exercise of spiritual ministry and spiritual gifts. This isn't going to come to pass just by hearing good, meaty, nourishing sermons. There must be a moving of the spirit in the individual heart and life, which motivates the believer into service in the Holy Ghost.

There seems to be some confusion today concerning the difference between TEACHING people and LEADING people in to an actual ministry of exercising of their gifts and callings. LEADING must occur in public and in private counsel. LEADING must include encouragement to help the believer cooperate with the Holy Ghost, as He would use them. The spiritual effectiveness of a church can only be measured by its ability to function effectively as a body. We need a thorough restoration of the body ministry today, which will produce an increase of the body through the salvation of souls.

One last error which prevails as a result of the Nicolaitane spirit today is the funneling off of promising young ministries to the Bible Schools. This directly results from the failure to nurture a body ministry within the local church. Those with promise arise in our assemblies during times of spiritual renewal and show yieldedness to the moving of the Holy Ghost. Due to the lack of capable leaders within the local body who will take them under their wing and train them for the work of the ministry, we ship them off.

Many problems arise for local assemblies, which encourage promising young men to attend Bible School rather than remain in their local churches to receive training. First, we are taking the lifeblood and vitality out of the local assembly. This leaves the assembly much like a home where the children have grown and all the teens have finally left leaving the home without the excitement and life which once radiated in it.

Second, this practice places the promising young enthusiast into a false atmosphere. I am not using the word "false" in the sense that it is error but rather that it is not a "Real Life Experience". In the Bible School atmosphere an abundance of young, lively, energetic, anointed believers are thrown in together. Students do not experience the real tests, trials, and responsibilities of every day life.

When many students come out of the Bible School atmosphere to take leadership in the local assembly, their lack of any practical experience in the everyday life of the Christian results in disappointment at the absence of the high gear, hyper-spiritual atmosphere which they are accustomed to in the Bible School. I am speaking primarily of those who have had little or no local church affiliation previous to the Bible School experience.

Third, the Bible School now is overloaded with what we might call "The Cream of the Crop," as far as zeal and enthusiasm is concerned. As a result, the church is robbed of its vitality. Fourth, since the local church is God's order for this age, the Bible School acts as a parasite. The Bible School not only has no scriptural means for bodily members since each Christian is directed to be a part of a local church but also has no Scriptural means for financial support. If the local church is God's order for this Church Age, our tithes and offering are to be brought into the local church. The faculty of the Bible School should be attached to a local church as well.

If Bible School teachers were active members in their local assemblies it is possible that the local church would have enough teachers to carry on the ministry she was intended to carry on--to train her own promising young recruits under the existing Elders. This is clearly God's "IDEAL" for the present Church Age.

Having spelled out some of the errors of the dictatorial or Nicolaitane form of church government, let us briefly compare this erroneous spirit with the spirit of theocracy. The dictator is no-submissive to other leadership ministries. The spirit of theocracy not only submits to these other ministries but also even seeks their counsel in the decision making of God's program. The dictator sees challenges of his decisions as a threat instead of a check, which may bring balance within the assembly.

We have looked at the Democratic and the Dictatorial types of church government and the problems associated with these is that they are not God's order. The secondary problem is that both of them are run on the opinions of men, whether it is by one man or a number of men. God does not have opinions, God KNOWS. We must not replace God's order with something of our own making.

God's order is a theocracy, where God is able to govern his people the way he chooses. It is not the Pastor being run by the Deacons and the Elders, nor is it the Pastor lording it over the Deacons and Elders, but rather where God rules through a multiple of ministries, a plurality of Elders through which God governs the local assembly. Jesus is the only perfect dictator. The Nicolaitane spirit violates God's order for multiple ministries.

We must understand that the Dictator might simply lack understanding of what God's ideal is. It may not be that his motives are wrong. Our purpose here is to reveal what God's ideal is. We must always be aware that just because something works is no sign we must accept and embrace it. It must be Scriptural. Isn't the Word of God our supreme and final authority?

Quality must always be the standard and not quantity. Success--as an Elder or as a local body--must be measured over a long period of time by its fruitfulness. What about churches which should come from our work? This is truly a Scriptural means of evangelism. Are we mothering any new works? Healthy growth, which always takes time, is a good measuring stick for success.

There are definite problems, which arise when leadership predominates the body ministry. An assembly may survive, even for a prolonged period, with these problems evident internally, however she will be a weak assembly. The domineering spirit steals initiative and joy from the body and replaces it with fear, frustration, antagonism and resentment. A ministry of this type attracts weak, overly dependent believers and creates division and a lack of harmony.

Good church government must begin in the heart. For God can only govern through a man if he is able to govern the man himself. For the church to function effectively each member, including the leaders must be completely governed by the Lord. Each member must be submissive to the Lord and His order of church government. This is the reason why the qualifications for Elders are so rigid.

The importance of submitting our entire lives to the will of the Lord is emphasized in Proverbs 25:28, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." Christ must govern His kingdom. He has His own chosen means of doing this. We must individually recognize and yield to His government:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder:---of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever,"(Isaiah 9:6-7) "

There are certain principles of church government which must be observed if we are to have a healthy church. There are principles to be observed in the formation of a governing body. We must somehow find ways as a leader to share our vision, doctrine, and faith with "key men". We must inculcate this into them if at all possible, and, as we do, permit God to draw the team together he so desires. He will put in those who will help give the whole "balance". Every building needs a solid foundation. It is imperative that leaders move slowly but steadily toward the goal of building a team which will bring honor to God and His building.

As we are attempting to build a solid foundation, we need to be on the lookout for common mistakes which occur in these early stages which create problems for years to come. First, the old saying that, "haste makes waste," holds true in the ministry. Do not over-structure too soon. It is better to do the work yourself until you have qualified men to place in position.

Second, don't create jobs that require leaders until you have qualified leaders to fill the jobs. It is better to under-program than to over-program and put unqualified men in leadership, thus lowering the quality of the work. For that is exactly what will happen if the qualifications for leaders are not met.

Third, too many get so involved in the program that they fail to become real spiritual feeders. They fail to create a true atmosphere of worship and intercessory prayer. Worship binds the body together like no other force. Begin now to feed, pray and worship and see what God will do in your assembly.

Fourth, all too often leaders are afraid to encourage fellowship among the flock. Their fear of this may be justified. The fellowship of members can create problems because of gossip. Leaders may also fear that new leaders may arise and cause division in the flock. Despite the potential problems, nothing will encourage body ministry, prayer and worship like the saints coming together for mutual fellowship on other than scheduled church times.

Fifth, one predominate mistake among leaders in these early stages is that they busy themselves with "waiting on tables". The result is that leaders are overworked. This error conditions the body to the spirit of "letting the leaders do it". This makes it difficult for the people to move effectively and responsibly into "body ministry". They will always wait for the Elders to do it.

Proper growth requires quality leadership, so we must work for quality and not quantity. Never institute a "program", we'll call it that for a lack of a better word, until you have a definite need of it for the nurture and admonition of the flock. Only begin a new program if you have qualified leaders to carry it on.

Many are still asking, "How can I develop or produce a body ministry within my flock?" A leader's ultimate success or failure seems to rest on his ability or lack of ability to produce a body ministry in his assembly. If you are not able to do this, there are only a few alternatives left for you. None of them sounds attractive to me. All of the alternatives I am going to discuss are contrary to God's pattern for His church so fast and pray, and work and worship until you develop God's pattern.

The alternatives are to either drop out of the ministry, to retrogress to the Laodicean or Democratic type of church government, or to become a spiritual dictator. The first is a sad alternative when you the Word burning in your hear. The second is contrary to the teaching of the Bible--another sad alternative. Some have seemed to be successful at the dictatorial type of church government as long as they have lived, but what happens when the "dictator" dies? The work generally crumbles and the sheep scatter-some lost forever. Personally, I'll settle for God's pattern as difficult as it is at times to develop. It is worth all the discipline and effort involved, for it yields tremendous rewards.

We need the ability to draw people out and not suppress them. In this process we need a balance between a strong hand of restraint and guidance, while leaving room for freedom of expression. To do this effectively, the Pastor must be totally involved with the flock in prayer, fellowship, and worship. This should include times of extracurricular activities when possible. It is imperative for the pastor create a relaxed atmosphere if the flock is to feel comfortable and at ease around him. It is only as people are at ease that the Holy Ghost will be able to effectively flow through them to minister to others.

I firmly believe that this attitude can be developed without sacrificing the "Pastor's authority". It is sad the way some Pastors degrade their position in an effort to build friendship in the flock. These friendships can be built without demeaning the Pastoral position.

As we are building the body ministry we must be careful to build a "balanced" body ministry. We need both the sensational (Evangelistic) type of ministries as well as the stability of the teacher. Whichever type of ministry we are called to, we would be wise to build some around us in a ministry that would help bring balance and augment our ministry. Complimentary ministries fill in that gaps, which our ministry may leave in nurturing the body. Serious problems arise if all we have is one type of ministry.

There are many that will not pay attention at all unless there is a sensational preacher on board. They need real excitement in the air continuously. However, a continuous diet of this will definitely stunt a believer's growth. Growth of any lasting effect comes from a solid intake of the Word. It is not that we don't need the spectacular--we do--but a steady diet of this is not conducive to spiritual growth.

People nurtured in the "revival atmosphere" will only go so far in their spiritual growth and then they will level off. In order to keep them, the Revivalist will have to think up all sorts of "gimmicks" to keep things moving. The greatest danger to this kind of ministry by itself is that its adherents seem, more often than not, to live inconsistent lifestyles. This occurs because much, if not all, of their motivation is external rather than internal. This type of ministry could easily create frustration in the leadership, for without a doubt they will be overworked since there will be a lack of qualified men to share the workload.

At the same time there are some problems, which may arise, if all we have is a "teaching ministry". The greatest of these problems could well be the lack of true vitality. As Paul so aptly points out in II Corinthians 3:6, "The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life." People need to be motivated from within but they also need an amount of external motivation.

The "sensational preacher" must continue to be sensational and at the same time build and develop a teaching ministry around him. As he does this, he must build the credibility and authority of the other leaders among the flock. The same theory is true if your ministry is basically a "teaching ministry". You must strive to build a spectacular ministry around you and at the same time build the credibility and authority of other leaders among the flock. Whoever you put into leadership, you must be able to direct your congregation's "respect" and "submission" toward them.

What about building what we might call an "Organization" or "Administration"? "MEN" are the tools God always uses--they were what Jesus used to build His church. As with machinery, so with organization; there must be power to make it function effectively. The purpose of organization is to channel life into the body. If we keep this in mind we will be less apt to over-structure. Always be careful to keep the organization as simple as possible. It is better to under-structure than to over-structure. The goal is to sturcture as needed with qualified leaders.

Church organization can easily be flexible enough to adjust to changing needs and conditions. However, the organization will only accomplish God's work to the degree that God is permitted to work in and through the whole body. Each organ must be alive and functioning. Organization is a means to an end but the primary emphasis must be placed on the final results.

Should we close down a branch of the organization if it is not producing life? There are various possibilities to be examined before finally deciding to close a ministry down unless we get direct counsel from the Holy Ghost to do so. Without the direct intervention of the Spirit, it is necessary to consider the aim of our organization. Don't look upon this as a failure. It could be that the Lord is leading to greener pastures and more fruitful ground. It is also possible that said program has simply come to the end of its life for the need of the organization.

In the closing remarks of this chapter, let us consider some principles involved in the delegating responsibility and authority. The unhealthy delegation of authority can cause problems, which the body may never outgrow. I would advise that you proceed with care or you could carry a deformity with you for all of your spiritual life as a body of believers.

The success or failure of any branch of the work reflects on the immediate leaders and then on the Elders and Pastor of the assembly. This awesome thought makes delegating responsibility and authority one of the key areas of church government. There are several precautions that can be taken in the undertaking of this task, which I will now discuss. First, we must always avoid making snap decisions. Let God lay the plans slowly and steadily concerning what and who he would have you delegate the responsibility of a particular outreach to. Remember that the world wasn't created in one day.

Second, make sure that one and only one person does not decide important decisions. We must always consider the counsel of the Elders.

Third, each individual assigned to a task must be given a clear and useful job description. They must feel their job is important and useful, and that it is channeling life to those involved. They must also feel that it is adding to the fulfillment of the whole body.

Fourth, always radiate the attitude that we are laborers together. Never let other receive from you the attitude that, "I'm the chief". This is true whether we be pastor or an under-shepherd overseeing an arm of the body of believers. We never outgrow being a servant.

Fifth, always assign tasks to fit the individual's "faith", "vision", and "ability". Nothing is more frustrating than doing that for which you have no vision or ability. Over-loading a willing worker could easily be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Sixth, time spent in communication with workers is time well spent. The lack of communication has destroyed more homes and churches than any of us realize. Others must not be shrugged off. They must sense your sincere interest in what they need, are doing, and even how they feel.

Seventh, be sure any individual you choose to put in a job or give responsibility has the proper training to perform the task successfully before you leave them alone. Possibly one of the most frequent reasons for the failure of various branches of the organization is the lack of sufficient training.

Eighth, when assigning a task of responsibility to an individual, inform him of the scope of his responsibility. Let him know how far he can go in decision making before it is necessary for him to consult the Elders. Make sure that they not only know when they should call the Elders, but that they may call upon them at any time without being thought of as incompetent.

Ninth, make sure that you can and do trust the one you are delegating authority to. If you don't trust them problems will arise in your relationship with them at a later date. It may not be their fault; it may be that your lack of confidence could create suspicion. Make sure he is ethical, loyal and stable in life and doctrine.

Tenth, the wisest counsel is to seek out those who are one with you in spirit and vision. This is even more important than their ability to do a job. We cannot build a strong body if some organs are diseased or out of joint (functioning independently). Cancer is nothing more than organs of the body that are moving independently, in rebellion, to the well being of the whole body. We need to find balance.

A person may have a good heart but may not have "spiritual enablement" or "power to perform". This could be very damaging both to the individual and to the branch they are leading. If you have any question concerning the life or attitude of one you are considering for leadership, you should be open with him. Discuss your questions with him hoping to find a solution, even considering the possibility that you are in error concerning the question. You know it is possible you are wrong.

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Plurality of Church Government

The Scriptures speak of only two groups of ruling bodies within the local church—Elders and Deacons. All of those ruling in the house of God MUST meet the qualifications found in I Timothy 3. We see the results in many churches today of deviating from the qualifications. As the standards for leadership have been lowered, we have seen a corresponding lowering of the quality of the work being performed in the body of Christ.

The early church is still our example in this respect, as well as in all others. There was no rush to install either Deacons or Elders in the early church. Both offices required that qualified men be carefully sought out to fill these positions. To turn from the standards of leadership presented in I Timothy 3, even though they may seem very rigid, is to frustrate the "plans" and "principles" of God.

A plurality of leadership is seen throughout the New Testament. Nowhere is one man in complete charge of the work of God. Jesus himself began with twelve Apostles who, excluding Judas Iscariot, carried on the work in its infancy, following the ascension of Christ. We find, in Acts 15:2, that there were other Elders added to the apostolic group as the church in Jerusalem grew. As the need arose, Deacons were added

to this body of believers.

Many of the Elders, some of whom were at one time Deacons, were mentioned by name. It seems evident that these Deacons had progressed to the place of Elders, such as Philip the Evangelist as seen in Acts 6:5; 21:8. Agabus the Prophet and James the Pastor of Jerusalem church of Acts 15 were also given by name as having become elders in Jerusalem along with the Apostles.

The church of Jerusalem is not our only example. The church at Antioch of Syria is another vivid example. We see here, also, a pattern of mothering other churches, as well as plurality of ministry. Barnabas went from Jerusalem to Antioch to strengthen the church that had begun there. After staying there a while he went to Tarsus to get Paul to come and work with him. There was certainly a plurality of Elders. A year or so later, Prophets went up from Jerusalem to help in the ministry at Antioch. So it seems that, for a time, anyway their leadership came from a mother church.

As time progressed there were Prophets and Teachers in Antioch. It seems quite evident that some within the church had developed to the degree of being ordained as Elders. I'm sure that they were qualified before Barnabas, Saul and possibly even, Agabus would set them into a place of leadership. We even see the church at Antioch sending Elders from themselves to minister to others. Is not this the Scriptural pattern—"freely ye have received, freely give"? We are commanded to go into the entire world and make disciples, not just sit at home and grow fat spiritually.

The church of Ephesus is another good example of the plurality of Elders. As discussed in Acts 18:18,19, the plurality of Elders was even seen in the pioneering stages of this church. God doesn't mean for one man to be responsible for a work by himself. His pattern, even in the early stages of a work is for two or more ministries to work together. We see, in Acts 20:17, that more Elders were evidently added to the church.

This seems to have been the pattern, wherever churches were started. Paul and Barnabas set in a plurality of Elders in all the churches that they established (Acts 14:23). Whenever assistance was sent to the churches, it was delivered by the Elders of one church into the hands of the Elders of receiving church. The Elders are always to play a predominant roll in the leadership of the churches.

I feel to emphasize again that you will never find the word Elder in its singular form when in reference to leadership over the church. Yet we must affirm that one Elder is generally considered as "chief", "senior" or "head" Elder within the local assembly. There are several men who were considered "head" Elders in the New Testament church. For example, Peter (Acts 5:3), James, the Lord's brother, (Acts 15:13) and definitely Paul who established churches and remained to mature them. We also have the letters to the churches in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, which were to be given to the "angels", "messengers", or the chief Elder of those individual churches.

Even though the scripture is emphatic in teaching a plurality of Elders, it does not teach an equality of Elders. Each ministry must be given freedom to function within its own sphere, and each will more likely be at different levels of maturity and capabilities in their given ministries. There is to be no power struggle. Each Elder has his own ministry, which he is responsible for.

One astounding purpose for the plurality of Elders is found in the sphere of church discipline. Discipline carried out by one man loses its effect and authority. It often does not accomplish its intended purpose—restoration. Instead, it often stimulates rebellion and the loss of the one being disciplined. A plurality of leadership encourages submission from the flock. The decisions of a group of spiritual men will be adhered to much more readily than that of one man. A plurality of Elders is protection for Elders and flock alike bringing with it the greatest benefit to both sheep and shepherd.

The plurality of Elders and church discipline is also to be considered in the context of the need for the discipline of Elders as well. Under God's pattern of leadership, no man is standing independent of the whole. The plurality of the Elders leaves opportunity for an Elder to be disciplined as well as and as effectively as any member of the body. This is equally true whether he be Pastor, Teacher, Evangelist, Prophet, or Apostle. We need to "submit to one another," for the good of the whole body (I Peter 5:5).

Another positive effect of plurality of Elders, is the fact that it brings proper "balance" to the body in all matters. Since each of the Elders will not only be at a different level of maturity but will also have a different type of ministry, the Elders will be able to augment one another in the feeding ministry and in the ministry of the Word. This is also true of discipline. In disciplinary matters, a plurality of Elders brings checks in various ways as to either speeding or slowing the process as need may be.

In the remainder of this chapter, I would like us to briefly analyze Acts 15. This chapter has been used and abused to support every conceivable type of church government. It has been used to support denominational authority of local churches since this chapter can be used to show that the church at Jerusalem had authority over other churches. Acts 15 has also been used to support the contention that the senior pastor is the final voice of authority within the local church since James, the chief elder, had the final voice. However, none of these contentions are supported if we carefully examine the situation as it is literally recorded in Holy Writings.

Brethren from the Jerusalem church who had brought erroneous teaching to Antioch and were causing division had infiltrated the church in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas, mature brethren, did what was right and proper by going to the root and source of the problem when they confronted the Elders of the church in Jerusalem, the home church of the troublesome brethren. They presented the problem, which these brethren had brought and sowed, into the Antioch church. The whole church at Jerusalem eventually became involved, or at least informed,

about what was transpiring. It is very evident from the scripture that they were in agreement with the decisions of their Elders. What a healthy situation as we see the Elders all together in getting the mind of the Spirit—even though it was the chief Elder what that mind was. Then, praise God, the whole church body stood behind the decision of their Elders. Please study Acts 15 carefully in relation to this thought.

The church in Jerusalem was sought out—not because it was the top ecclesiastical authority, but because it was the source of the problem. James, the senior Pastor at Jerusalem, voiced the final decision of the whole and not just that of himself. It was definitely a "thus saith the Lord", and was confirmed by all present. There were no powers of persuasion, or gifts of salesmanship, influencing the minds of others. Rather, there was a definite word of the Holy Ghost to direct the affairs of the local church, which is always in order.

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The Ministry of an Apostle

In the next few chapters of this book we will be looking at the separate ministries of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. We will be looking at them in the order given in Ephesians 4:11 not because this is necessarily their order of importance, but simply because this is the order in which the key verse mentions them.

The first task to complete in considering the ministry of an apostle is to decide upon a definition of an apostle. An apostle is one sent forth as a messenger, with a commission, under the authority of one doing the sending. This defers from the definition of a disciple since a disciple is a follower who follows with the intent of learning and putting what is learned into practice. All true Christians are disciples (including those who apostles).

In relation to the Christian faith, an apostle is one called out from among the disciples and sent forth as seen in Luke 6:13 "and when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles". With these thoughts behind us, we will now look at New Testament Scriptures pertaining to the ministry of an apostle. In doing so we will observe the different examples of apostles.

The first example of an apostle is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Truly, he is our example in all matters pertaining to the Christian faith and ministry. In Hebrews 3:1 he is spoken of as: "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." These titles speak to us of his relationship to God and his ministry to man. He was definitely one sent forth with a Divine Commission. Thank God that he was not only "sent forth", but that he was obedient to the end to carry out the fathers will. This is clearly illustrated in Christ's own words in John 17:3-8.

The next example of the ministry of the apostle is the calling and work of the original twelve as listed in Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19, Luke 6:13-16. The original twelve apostles as well as all succeeding apostles were chosen from those who were already disciples.

As with any of the fivefold ministry, all apostles are personally chosen by the Lord Jesus Himself. It is not within the authority or choice of men to appoint apostles nor to appoint any of the others of the fivefold ministry. The most that man can do is confirm those that God has chosen.

One important factor I would like us to notice in this all important decision of Jesus in choosing the twelve is that he spent the previous night in prayer (Luke 6:12). This within itself tells us that the Lord takes great care in His choice of leaders for his work.. IT should also speak to us of the necessity of, saturating major decisions with much prayer to God before coming to a final conclusion. This is also true in the practice of laying hands upon those to be set apart for the service of God in any special ministry.

The original twelve apostles (possibly with the exclusion of Judas Iscariot) were to have a place of permanence throughout the ages—along with the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:14). This in itself should cause us to move prayerfully as we work for God, for how much of what we are doing is of eternal value

The third category of apostle mentioned in the New Testament is the false apostle. Satan is not going to waste time, talent, and labor copying anything that is not genuine. Thus, when I see one of counterfeits around I know that there must also be the authentic, "Real" ministry being copied. This is also true of prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. God has the genuine and Satan has the counterfeit or false. Don't be disillusioned by the false but be encourage that the real is genuine enough for Satan to be willing to expand the effort to copy it.

There was on apostle who seems to have had a special call to establish the church among the Gentiles. This, of course, is none other than Paul, who was previously known as Saul of Tarsus (Romans 11:13, Acts 9:15). He speaks of Himself over twenty times as an apostle. He was the first man recorded to make any systematic effort to evangelize the Gentiles. Some have reason to believe that he is the Divine replacement of Judas Iscariot rather than the Matthias of Acts 1:26.

The ministry of an apostle is to be a continuing ministry throughout the Church Age. God gave this ministry, along with the other four, as a gift to the church to bring her to perfection. It is impossible to imagine that the ministry of an apostle could be discontinued before the church is brought to perfection, at the end of this Church Age. We still need every gift that God has given to the church. When the church has come to perfection, it will be presented to Christ without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5:27). He is coming for a perfect bride. I, for one, feel the need for every provision he has made to bring me to perfection. Because certain fragments of the church have failed to recognize and utilize all the gifts and ministries that Christ provided her, they are in the poor condition they are in today.

There are various references in the New Testament to apostles, other than Paul or the twelve as discussed previously. There were apostles with Paul in Iconium as well as in other places of ministry (Acts 14:4; Romans 16:7; Galatians 1:19; I Thessalonians 1:1, 2:6). We find the word "Apostle" possibly applies to about twenty-five persons in the New Testament since it is also sometimes translated "Messenger". Titus seems to have fit into this category since he was one who was establishing churches and setting things in order within the local churches (Titus 1:5).

Next, we will examine the ministry of the New Testament apostle. In any study of this nature, there are some questions that we must ask ourselves. First, who sent the apostles mentioned in the New Testament? Second, where were they sent? Third, what was the commission of these men?

In answering these questions we will begin with the original twelve. They were called, trained and sent by Christ Himself. They were sent to the worldwide church. This mission continues, even to the end of the Church Age, via their ministry of laying down the foundational truths for the entire Church Age. Paul wrote, in Ephesians 2:20: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

The ministry of the original twelve apostles seems to go even beyond the Church Age and into eternity (Revelation 21:14). Their writings were inspired and preserved as "Gospel". They were truly a young church and a means of nurturing her to maturity. They set forth the early structure of the church, outlined the qualifications for the ministering body and took the initiative to see that proper leadership was set in place. They baptized converts, preached the gospel, taught doctrine, etc.

The ministry of apostle is an ongoing ministry for the church of all ages. The ministry of an apostle today is similar to that of the twelve. A modern day apostle must be chosen, trained, and sent by Christ just as the original twelve were. There are to ground the church in the truth that has already been laid down so that the church will not be blown about with every wind of doctrine. The twelve laid down the "Foundational Truths" which the apostles of today are to minister.

The vision of today's apostles goes beyond one local assembly since they are sent to the church at large. Their ministry will expand as pastors recognize the call of God upon their lives and call upon them for assistance. A man will never have to push his way to the front, "(his) ministry will make room for itself" (Proverbs 18:16). The ministry of the modern day apostle will be one of seeking to preserve unity and cooperation within and among local assemblies. We see this spirit vividly in the ministry of Paul, in his striving to write to those who are divisive, as in the church of Corinth.

Apostles are also to be concerned with the ministries of individuals. They will endeavor to nurture promising young men into their ministries, sometimes by taking them under their wing for a season of training. They will also, at times, as the Spirit leads, function via the gifts of the Spirit in confirming God's call upon specific members of the local assemblies.

The present day apostle may also be active in establishing new churches and setting the new churches in order, returning to them on occasion to nurture and strengthen them in their faith. We have not only the example of Paul and Barnabas but also of many modern missionaries who function along this line. It is possible these brethren are considered apostles in the eyes of the Lord.

It would not be correct to include all missionaries in this category since many serve as clerks, doctors, mechanics, pilots, etc. in the mission field. However, some are true apostles as well as prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The ministry and works that follow a man will be proof of his calling. This is not true only for apostles. It is equally true for those who are called to other ministries (I Corinthians 9:2).

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Chapter 10: The Ministry of the Prophet

The ministry of the prophet is mentioned more frequently in Scripture than any of the other five-fold ministries. It is mentioned more than five hundred times throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament the Priests and Levites who are types of the Elders and Deacons of the New Testament carried out the bulk of the ministry.

Despite the number of times that the ministry of the prophet is mentioned, it is important to realize that, although this ministry is needed today, it is not the only one needed. The ministry of the prophet is but one of the five-fold ministries. As we continue on in our study, I trust that we will find healthy New Testament balance in this ministry as well as in all of the others.

There are several Old and New Testament words, which will help us to understand more fully the ministry of the prophet. The Hebrew word REAH is translated in the Kings James Version as "seer" in I Samuel 9:9. It suggests that the Prophet actually "sees" what God wants him to relay to his people. God will reveal Himself to prophets in visions or dreams:

""Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream," (Numbers 12:6)."

The Prophet is caught up in the Spirit in a visionary state where he sees great spiritual revelations. This refers not only to dreams and visions but also to the interpretation of dreams or visions (Daniel 2:23; 4:19-27; 8:15-27).

The Hebrew word NABHI or NABILY is translated "Prophet" in Amos 3:7. It makes reference to one to whom God's message was secretly revealed. The prophecy then springs or flows forth from the prophet to the people. Prophets receive the message from God more by HEARING than by SEEING. The message is received in secret but is spoken by them openly. This is the most common word used in reference to the Old Testament prophets. The word "NABHI" includes rather than excludes the seer since all of God's prophets receive a message from God, which is to be relayed to the people.

There are a few New Testament words, which relate to the office and ministry of the prophet. The word "PROPHETS" as seen in Acts 11:27 and 13:1 refers to one who speaks forth or relays the "Divine Message" or "Mind of God" to man. The work of a prophet is presented primarily as a "FORTH TELLING". However, included in the ministry of the prophet may be the work of "FORE TELLING". The latter is what most imagines to be the primary task of the prophet even though it is the former function, which the New Testament prophets performed most frequently.

Another New Testament word relating to the ministry of the prophet is the word "MOVED" as found in II Peter 1:21:

""For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but Holy men of god spake as they were MOVED by the Holy Ghost.""

This Scripture is referring to the fact that the prophets were borne or carried along in much the same way as the wind bears a sailboat across the waters. The prophets were under God's strong, controlling influence as they functioned in their office or ministry. This is not meant to imply that they were not capable of resisting God's will since "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," (I Corinthians 14:32).

Even though I Corinthians 14:32 is specifically dealing with the abuse of the gifts and callings of God it also illustrates that it is very possible to resist the moving of the Spirit of God as He would bare us along. When God directs us in this manner, it is not against our will but, rather, in harmony with our willingness to yield to His Spirit. The prophet is never in a position where he is at liberty to say, "I couldn't help myself," though he is definitely under a certain amount of pressure because of what God has shown him. He is to be knowingly and willingly borne along by the Spirit.

There are three words seen in Revelation 1:1 which I would like us to observe:

""The Revelation" of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to "Shew" unto His servant things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and "Signified" it by his angel unto his servant John".

We will look at these three terms in the order in which they appear--not in their order of importance, if there is any such order.

The word "Revelation" means to reveal or make known by unveiling or taking the cover off. It makes reference to the impartation of spiritual knowledge, which could not be arrived at in any other fashion-that which would be otherwise unknown. A natural example of this spiritual phenomenon is that all of a sudden a light comes on which has been completely the work of God.

The word "SHEW" is also found in Revelation 1:1. It suggests the EXHIBITION or SHOWING BY WAY OF PROVING the message. The final word they I will be discussing is "SIGNIFIED" which means to indicate or give a sign. Both "signified" and "show" refer to providing a clear picture of the message to be relayed to the people. It may include dreams, visions, or even prophecy with demonstration (almost as a pantomime with words added to give a double message).

We will end our word study of the ministry of the prophet with the word "INSPIRATION" as found in II Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by INSPIRATION of God." The word literally means, "God Breathed". It makes reference to the recorded word, which was divinely

revealed and preserved for all ages. God not only took care to reveal it and have it spoken correctly but also to preserve it throughout all ages for the benefit of the church. He was and is truly concerned for you and I as well as for those who were alive in the days in which the Word was received and spoken.

A prophet is one who receives a divine message from God, relating to God's will and purpose and who, in turn, delivers that message to men. It may not necessarily be confirmed to the people of God. Many of the Old Testament prophets had a message for the ungodly as well as for the people of God. He is God's mouthpiece to the people, or God's point of contact with the people. Prophets not only serve as the mouthpiece of God (II Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1; and Acts 3:21) but also, because of their spiritual vision, can be thought of as the "eyes" of the church. The job of the prophet is to lead the people into the light of what God has revealed to His messenger.

As the New Testament pattern is restored, we will see a greater restoration of the office of the prophet within the church. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter, there is a need for this if the restoration work is to be complete.

The message of the prophet is threefold. It is PREDICTIVE, DIRECTIVE, and CORRECTIVE. The ministry of the prophet is predictive since it speaks of events that are in the future for the purpose of preparing those to whom the message is given for that which is ahead. A prophet's message should help those to whom it is given to determine God's will as they plan.

The message of the prophet is also directive. Do not confuse this aspect of the ministry of the prophet with the ministry of the teacher. It is part of the prophet's ministry to give specific direction to specific people, under specific circumstances. Examples of this can be seen in I Samuel 22:5, I Kings 22:14-23; and Acts 21:10. God is faithful to direct His people properly if we will be open to the voice of God. This facet of the prophet's ministry may very well be God's means of confirming what he has already been dealing with us on concerning His will for our life and ministry.

The prophetic ministry may also be corrective. It speaks out against sin, rebellion, backsliding or doctrinal error as need be. Almost always the corrective, or rebuking message of the prophet will be accompanied by a promise of mercy upon repentance. God does not rejoice in the death of the wicked, but gives corrective messages that they may repent and be restored. God's heart is not set on destruction but on restoration.

A true man of God, when rebuking will himself be more hurt than the individual that is rebuked. If he can whip the sheep without feeling pain himself, he is definitely in the wrong spirit. It is never enjoyable to rebuke others. Remember the prophet is borne along with great pressure from God to give his message. His sole reason for doing so is the direction of God as well as the knowledge that it very possibly will bring restoration to the recipient. On the other hand, we cannot rule out those isolated instances where God is withdrawing his mercy from those who he has dealt with time and again. In this situation, His corrective message may well be without mercy as seen in Acts 5:1-10 and Numbers 16:31-33.

The prophetic ministry is a continuing ministry throughout the dispensation of the church. In the New Testament there are specific prophets mentioned. Acts 13:1 mentions the ministry of some prophets though we cannot conclude that all of them were prophets since some of them most certainly were teachers-unless, of course, they were functioning in both ministries, which is entirely possible. Some prophets were mentioned as traveling from Jerusalem to Antioch. One prophet, Agabus, certainly functioned in a prophetic office. He is referred to in this sense in both Acts 11:27,28 and Acts 21:10. Judas and Silas were also mentioned as prophets in Acts 15:3. There were certainly several individual prophets present in the New Testament church. Since there were so many documented prophets in the New Testament, it is impossible for anyone to teach that the ministry of the prophet is not for this present-day dispensation.

The office of the prophet is mentioned in I Corinthians 12:28-29; 14:29-33,37; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Revelation 18:20. If we place all of these references within the context of Ephesians 4:11-15, we can see just how long this ministry, along with the other four of the five-fold ministry will be necessary for the church:

""Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)"

Might I ask the question: "as you look around at the bulk of the churches, or even individual Christians in light of the previous Scripture, could you say that we have reached the place where there is no more need of all five of these ministries, gifts of God, to the church?"

The ministry of the prophet today, just as the ministry of the apostle, differs in form with the Old and New Testament prophets only in the fact that the latter two laid down the foundational truths and the former are to continue ministering this truth. They, "(are to build) upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets" (Ephesians 2:20). Even though it would be wrong to dogmatically say that God gives no further revelations to modern-day prophets, all present day prophetic utterances must be judged or tried by the Word of God. "To the Law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," (Isaiah 8:20).

The prophetic ministry was given primarily to the church, not to the world, although there are occasions where the ministry may reach outside the church to the unsaved and the heathen. The fact that the prophetic ministry is given to the church is taught in our key verse, Ephesians 4:11-15. The two aspects of this ministry which I would like to look at are the pioneering and perfecting of the church.

The pioneering aspect of the prophetic ministry can be seen in the fact that prophets frequently traveled with other ministries in order to augment them. Prophets gave life and vitality to new churches while also providing a strong foundational ministry in the Word.

Any new church needs solid men in leadership, even in it's early stages. This seems to have been supplied, at least in part, by the prophetic ministry until leaders were qualified and capable of being installed from within the local assemblies. They functioned not only in the teaching of the Word but also in the gifts of the Spirit and the laying on of hands to call and confirm believers into their given ministries within the local bodies. There are a few verses of Scripture where we see the pioneering ministry active. These include Acts 13:1; 15:32; and very possible I Timothy 1:8; II Timothy 1:6.

In order to discuss the prophet's ministry of perfecting the saints we must return to Ephesians 4:11-16. The theme of the surrounding text is growth and maturity as well as the idea of the body functioning together in harmony. The primary objective of the five-fold ministry is the "perfecting of the saints". This does not exclude the necessity of winning souls but it seems almost secondary to their primary calling. The ministry of a prophet should charge the church with new excitement as the church hears a "Thus saith the Lord".

The key to the effectiveness and prosperity of the church is wrapped up in the ministry of the prophet. The prophet doesn't only need to function effectively in the assembly but must also be readily accepted and received by the assembly as a whole. Gd requires response to "His True Prophets". Refusing to hear and obey His prophets will bring the hand of God's judgement upon His people as seen in II Chronicles 36:16:

""But they moved the messengers of God and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.""

Nehemiah 9:26-27,30 and Jeremiah 7:25-28 record similar examples.

Isn't it a shame that Christians today don't have the respect the Bible teaches that they should have for the man of God (I Samuel 16:4-5). Maybe the fault is equally shared by the people and prophet. It could be that the qualifications are so lowered today that the quality of the ministry is not what it should be.

THE PROPHETESS

Now we come, as we must, to a very controversial aspect of the ministry of the prophet--is it valid for a woman to move and function in the OFFICE OF A PROPHET or PROPHETESS? There are various examples of the ministry of the prophetess in both the Old and New Testaments. Both Testaments also include an example of a false prophetess. The mention of both real and false prophetesses are far less numerous then the mentions of their male counterparts. We will take the time to examine all Scriptures dealing with this aspect of the prophetic ministry to get a complete picture of what God is trying to teach us.

The first Scripture we will look at is Exodus 15:20. In this verse Miriam is spoken of as a prophetess. Here we see her leading the women in worship. However, in Numbers 12:1-10 we see Miriam, along with her brother Aaron, usurping authority over their brother Moses--God's chosen leader of the people. This action was in direct disobedience to I Timothy 2:12. As a result Miriam was smitten with leprosy.

The next prophetess we will discuss is Huldah (II Kings 22:14-20), the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the "wardrobe". As such, she was very active in maintaining the robes that her husband had the responsibility of. According to Jewish tradition, this means that she taught the women, which is in full agreement with the rest of Holy Scripture. It appears that she functioned in the "GIFTS OF PROPHECY" rather than in the "OFFICE" of a prophet.

Judges 4-5 present a picture of the time when Deborah ruled Israel. This is the only instance in the Bible where a woman functioned, even somewhat, in the OFFICE of a prophet. The Scripture indicates that Deborah was the wife of Lapidoth, the keeper of the Tabernacle lamps. It is very possible that, like Huldah, she assisted her husband in fulfilling his responsibilities. It is important also to note that Deborah was "thrust" into the OFFICE of a prophet by "MAN" (Judges 4:8,9). It could be that previous to this time she had functioned, not in the OFFICE but in the GIFT of prophecy. Her stepping into this OFFICE was definitely to the disgrace of male leadership.

Does this one incident justify disobeying the direct command of Scripture as seen in I Timothy 2:12 and I Corinthians 14:34? I personally do not believe so. Is it possible that this is an exception for some reason which I do not fully understand, much like God telling Hosea to marry a harlot (Hosea 1:2)? We all know that a man of God should not marry a woman of that character. Should we change the Word of God just because God condoned something in one instance?

There is one other Old Testament Prophetess mentioned in Isaiah 8:3,4. This is the only reference in the Old Testament to the wife of Isaiah. Is it possible that she was considered such only because she was married to a great man of God--for the two shall be one flesh? It could be a type of riding on her husband's coat tail. It could also be that she functioned in the Gift of Prophecy.

In the New Testament, and old saint named Anna was called a prophetess in Luke 2:36-38. All that this Scripture tells us about her ministry is that she was moving in the gift of prophecy. The same is true of the only other New Testament reference to a woman functioning in the prophetic ministry. Acts 21:9 speaks of the daughters of Philip the evangelist, "The same had four daughters, virgins, which did prophecy." In no way should either of these New Testament references infer the OFFICE of the Prophet.

Female false prophetesses are mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. In Nehemiah 6:14, Nehemiah mentions the prophetess Noadiah. In this chapter she is seen plotting with the enemies of Nehemiah against him. There is certainly nothing in this or previous references to commend her in her office. She was definitely set against the man of God and the work of God. Ezekiel also speaks against the prophetesses who prophesied of their own volition and not under the direction of the Lord (Ezekiel 13:17-23). The false prophetess Jezebel is mentioned in Revelation 2:2. Whether this is figurative or not is immaterial. God denounces her in the severest of terms.

We must conclude from the foregoing thoughts that the prophetess did not move to the same degree as their male counterparts in the OFFICE of prophet. Whenever the leadership capacity of the prophetic ministry is mentioned in Scriptures, the emphasis is always placed on the male prophet rather than on the female prophetess.

A woman does have a sphere of ministry within the church. However, women are never portrayed in the Bible in leadership positions within the church-especially not in a position of leadership over the men of the church. Whatever ministry the Lord has blessed women with, and for lack of time and space we will not delve into a discussion of it at this time, she is ALWAYS to be subject to male leadership, whether in the home or in the church (Ephesians 5:22-23; I Corinthians 11:3; 14:34; I Timothy 2:11-12; and I Peter 3:1-6).

FALSE PROPHETS

More than ever, we need to beware of false prophets. They abound on every hand. The term false prophet is used to refer to those prophets that are perverted, evil, warped. The real problem is that they themselves are deceived into thinking they have the truth. The Bible states that DECEPTION is one of the major signs that the last days are upon us (Matthew 7:15-23; 24:11,24,25; Mark 13:22; I John 4:1-3). This is very evident around us today. Revelation 16:13-14 seems to indicate that there will be accelerated activity of evil spirits in these last days. I, for one, believe with all of my heart that we are living in these last days.

When considering the erroneous teachings of these false prophets, we must remember that, in order for any deception to be generally accepted, it must contain an ample amount of truth mixed with the false. If the prophecy of a false prophet is mixed with the truth it will be readily accepted by many innocent, yet gullible, followers of the Lamb. All too many, in our day, see no harm in a little mixture either with the world or with false doctrine. Remember, rat poison is 99% pure wheat yet it is very deadly. "GOD HATES MIXTURE". It was the mixed multitude in Israel's early days that raised havoc with the Israelites' dedication to Jehova. The Bible exhorts us that the followers of these false prophets will be punished with the same judgement which shall befall the false prophet himself (Jeremiah 14:16; Ezekiel 14:10-11; Revelation 19:20-21).

Whenever prophecy is given one of three spirits will be involved. The three spirits are the human spirit, the satanic spirit, and the Holy Spirit. We will look at all three separately. Since all three of the spirits we will be looking at work through men, it is difficult to discern just where one leaves off and the other begins. This shows us the extreme necessity of the gift of discerning of spirits functioning within the local body. The first, and possibly most prominent, spirit is the HUMAN spirit. Scripture warns us of the dangers of this spirit's involvement in prophetic utterances. When the spirit of self becomes too involved in a prophet's utterance, "They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord... Yea they are the prophets of the deceit of their own hearts:" (Jeremiah 23:16,26)

"Deuteronomy 18:20-22 speaks of prophets who speak or prophesy presumptuously:"

""But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously; thou shall not be afraid of him.""

This is the quickest route to heresy and delusion. "Presumptuous" means insolence or pride. Pride is nothing less than SELF-CONCEIT. It is natural to fall into SELF-DECEIT though self-conceit.

Deceiving ones self is a sure way to fall or, better yet, to plunge headlong into heresy and delusion. A clear and simple definition of heresy is one who chooses without the checks of others. He becomes a law unto himself, making all decisions, including doctrinal decisions, without the assistance or checks of other faithful brethren. These are the people who prophesy falsely and end up in all sorts of heresy and delusion.

The sin of heres can easily be traced back to its root cause--pride or "speaking presumptuously" out of their own hearts. This emphasizes the need for a plurality of elders within the local church, as has been emphasized throughout this book. The plurality of elders helps protect shepherds and sheep alike from heresy.

The next spirit that is present in some "prophetic utterances" is the satanic spirit. Satan's counterfeit finds access through the human soul as seen in Jude 19, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual (soulish), having not the Spirit (Holy Spirit)." As we consider how this satanic spirit works through the souls of men, we must be careful to distinguish between two types of men.

The first type of men are those who are saved, but who, to a degree, are involved in delusion. They are soulish, mystical individuals who are generally deceived through erroneous doctrine or false prophecy and see no need for consistent godly behavior. They are often moved solely by their own emotions. You will recognize them by their inability to face the storms of life since they are similar to infants in the natural since they live only for natural comfort. They are quite easy for the mature, Spirit-filled Christian to recognize, thus, not easily deceived by these individuals. However, the babe in Christ will frequently be drawn by their "prophecies".

The second type of men are the ones spoken of in Jude 19. This "prophet" does not have the Spirit of God and is none of His. These individuals are not saved and are controlled and used by evil spirits. Satan is working through such men to bring strong delusion. Paul spoke of this in II Thessalonians 2:3-12. Whether you see this spirit of antichrist as a "system" or as "one man" at the head of it, the fact still remains true that today the spirit of Satan is working through men.

Scripture shows us that all sinners are in bondage to Satan and are led about at his will. He has some that he has made as his ministers, even as the Lord chose some to be his ministers. II Corinthians 11:13-15 certainly enlightens this point:

""For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.""

This is referring to the willful rejection of the truth by those who prefer to not only believe lies, but also to do their own thing so that they may fulfill their own lusts. Strange as it may seem, the Scripture tells us that if we refuse the truth, then God will not only let us go our own way, but He will send us a **STRONG DELUSION** that we might believe a lie and be damned (II Thessalonians 2:11-12).

The third spirit involved in prophecy is the Holy Spirit. Naturally this is what is to be sought for by all true believers of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are numerous verses of Scripture that provide examples of men speaking at the direction of the Spirit of God. All of these Scriptures reveal that men are to speak in the church under the anointing of the Holy Ghost. To these Scriptures, we could add multiple references where men did actually speak under this anointing in both the Old and New Testaments.

TESTS OF A PROPHET

There are several tests that one can use in order to determine if a prophet is of God or not. God allows the false prophet to prophesy so that He may prove His people's love for Him and their love for the truth (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

God sees to it that truth is presented to us, but He also allows error to be presented so that we might have the opportunity of choice. Naturally, He would have us choose the truth, but the choice is ours. Isn't that what He did with Adam and Eve? They had God's truth, His command, and Satan came along with his mixture of truth and error and, sad to say, they chose the mixture rather than the truth that God had given them.

Today, we have those who prophecy and their prophecies come to pass, yet their message is a mixture which contains enough truth to make their error seem acceptable and even reasonable. It contains just enough truth to make an individual immune to the "WHOLE TRUTH". It is important to ask yourself if you are being taken in by mixture. I am not asking you to develop a critical spirit, or even a suspicious spirit but the Scriptures exhort us to "try the spirits". We will discuss some tests that a prophet must pass if he is to be God's prophet for His people. I might add, if a prophet fails on any one of these tests, do not heed the voice of that prophet.

It is imperative that the first test of prophet be the test of truth (Isaiah 8:20). If a prophecy isn't in accord with the Word of God, THE TRUTH, reject both the prophet and his message from the very beginning. Falsehood and error will always come as a mixture of TRUTH and ERROR. The unbeliever will be open to anything that is presented to them but the believer must beware of MIXTURE, the greatest threat to us, as Christians. Many will come as an angel of light, using the church as a cloak for their evil Doctrines of Devils---offering just enough truth in their prophecy to be inviting. Watch out!!! The test of truth is offered in I John 4:1-3:

""Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.""

There are those who deny the incarnation and deity of Christ as John warned. This test is in the present tense, "That Jesus IS come in the flesh." Even today He dwells in His body, the church. If a false prophet denies the literal incarnation and deity of Christ or the fact that He dwells in flesh, "His Church," turn a deaf ear to his words.

Another type of false prophet are those who prophesy in the name of other gods. These are false, cultic prophets, which includes Mariolatry (Prophesying in the name of Mary).

In the day of Jezebel and Jehoshaphat the false prophets outnumbered those who were from God by 400-900 to 1. What makes us think that the ratio will be any better in these, that last days when evil spirits are set loose by Satan to deceive the elect if it is at all possible.

In Old Testament times, as seen in I Kings 22:18-22, the false prophet was used so that God's true prophet could be seen and proven. Likewise, the godly were warned in I Corinthians 11:19 that: "...there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Even today, God may be using the false prophet to wrap up His program for the last days. Watch carefully for strange and false doctrines. If a man holds these, he should be rejected, even if his prophecies do come to pass. God still permits "truth" and "error" to be presented for a two-fold purpose: that our love for Him and His truth be proven, and that the true identity of "Truth" and "Error" may be brought out into the open.

The second test of a prophet is whether or not their prophecy comes to pass since, "when a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken." (Deuteronomy 18:22). Other examples of this are seen in Jeremiah 29:30,31 and 28:1-17.

Whether or not a prophecy comes to pass, is not the first or most important test. The test of truth must be applied to all of the major fundamental doctrines of the faith held by a prophet--not just to those pertaining to the incarnation and deity of Jesus. The first test must be completed before proceeding to the second test. If a prophet fails the first test, that is all the warning we need from the Lord to shun that prophet. Unfortunately, many Christians do not heed this teaching. If a man has charisma and signs and wonders, that's all many folks need to follow him.

Returning to the example found in Deuteronomy 18:22, in this particular situation a prophet was prophesying in the name of the Lord--not under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, but out of his own mind. This shows that it is possible to give a "prophetic word" that is not of God and yet not be considered a false prophet. In this case an individual was moving in the realm of his own spirit even though he thought he was moving in the Spirit of God.

God tells us not to be afraid of prophets whose prophecies do not come to pass because they have prophesied of their own volition. These prophets will lose respect and influence within the ministry as their prophecies are judged to be not credible.

When trying to see if the prophecies of a particular prophet have come to pass in order to determine if the Holy Spirit rules a prophet, it is important to remember that the time element is not always consistent. A discrepancy could simply be a result of the fact that the time for a particular prophesy to come to pass has not arrived yet as in the case of I Kings 13:2 which came to pass 351 years later. Another possibility when a prophecy fails to come to pass is that the fulfillment was contingent upon the obedience of the one receiving the prophecy. In this case, the lack of obedience will cause the word not to be fulfilled.

The third test of a prophecy is what may be termed "greed" or "covetousness". This individual is a hireling---one who is a prophet for profit. There are many scriptures warning against this type of ministry. This test is beneficial for any ministry, which professes to be of God. God's true men are not for hire.

The next test is the test of fruit or character. Matthew 7:15-22 carefully describes the use and necessity for this test. In the case of false prophets, there is a mixture in their character. They call Jesus Lord, they prophecy, they cast out devils and do great works in his name. Inwardly, however, they are wolves, corrupt trees bringing forth evil fruit. A ministry will bring forth either the fruit of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) or the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

In earthly terms, we can ask ourselves if the ministry of a prophet is followed by peace, harmony, and edification or by confusion, strife, and carnal-mindedness. This is a good test for any man or ministry that professes to be of God. the true fruit of a ministry is proven ultimately by what it produces in those who sit under that ministry over a prolonged period of time. A man's ministry should be seriously questioned if he continually attracts "strange company". I'm not saying that some peculiar people will not come in under his ministry. However, if a few strange ones do come in, a true ministry will either bring a changed in them or they will not remain under that ministry.

We must not minimize the importance of the "fruit" test concerning the character of the prophet himself. His personal life, conduct, and behavior are to be above reproach. He should be held to the strict qualifications of all elders as seen in I Timothy 3:1-7. Isaiah provides us with a picture of a corrupted ministry, the kind that is to be shunned, "they err in vision, they stumble in judgement." (Isaiah 28:7). Another example is found in Jeremiah 23:9-11. The real test of ministry from God is not signs and wonders, but they pure fruit of a holy, spiritual life being lived by the man of God.

The fifth and final test is the test of "love" as seen in I John 4:1-21. A true prophet under the direction of the Holy Ghost will be motivated by LOVE. This is often the area where a false prophet will be detected. He, all too often, is only concerned with stinging, whipping, rebuking, and beating the sheep. A true prophet of God will still give the stinging, rebuking message with the mercy of God. A constant diet of harsh, rebuking messages should bring a man's ministry under suspicion.

When I am speaking of love, I am not referring to that "mushy stuff" which is so prevalent today. Many wolves in sheep's clothing come in with a false display of love called benevolence. Satan even has counterfeit for love. Benevolence is good and needed, but some use this to propagate their false teachings. Put all prophets to all of the tests that we have studied and you will find which spirit they are operating with.

Peter speaks of false prophets as being "among" the people and false teachers "among" you (II Peter 2:1). In Acts 20:29-30, it tells of the wolves who come in from without and of men rising up from within. Those rising up from within the body of Christ are the ones to be most feared, for their ministry is by far the most damaging. Their tactics are more subtle and deceptive. Their delusion will be more readily accepted because of the influence they already hold within the ranks of the assembly.

The very foundation of all false prophecy is DELUSION. This may come on a sourish, human, level or be influenced directly by Satanic activity, or a mixture of both. Therefore it is imperative that young ministries be developed under the umbrella of a plurality of ministries. Those starting out in the ministry must be nurtured under proven, older ministries which will be able to give a young ministry the balance and checks needed to ensure proper growth. Under a plurality of elders there will be those well established in present truth to guide a developing prophet or one who is functioning in the gift of prophecy. There also should be an elder who has the gift of the discerning of spirits to help create further checks to develop a young ministry safely into maturity.

Samuel is an example of one who grew in his own ministry under the guidance of an older ministry, that of Eli. Even though Eli had several failures and many of them were very serious indeed, he was in a position to guide Samuel's development. Under Eli's ministry, Samuel was established as a prophet and his ministry was recognized and accepted from Dan to Beersheba (I Samuel 3:20).

It is important at this point to consider how many individuals and who the people are that recognize your ministry as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. Your ministry will make room for itself. Let God establish your ministry. When He does, senior ministries will recognize what God is doing in your life, as will the people of God.

Samuel did not promote, defend, or establish his own ministry. In no way did he try to get the people to recognize his calling. God established and confirmed his ministry and caused others to know that he was established a prophet as Samuel obeyed God and functioned in his individual calling. With the calling firmly established by God, the people simply followed Samuel's leadership without any pressure or fan fare.

Throughout scripture, we have multiple examples of younger ministries training under more mature elders. The New Testament is aglow with examples of multiple (or plurality of) ministries--not of one man taking leadership. Such references include but are not limited to: Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:4; I Corinthians 14:29-32.

A plurality of leadership eliminates, or at least greatly hinders, both the possibility of error as well as the "I" syndrome arising. Hopefully the plurality of elders will insure that no one is in a position to build his own self-importance.

The plurality of leadership will also help confirm younger ministries before the people as they see other, more mature, elders promoting the ministry of fledgling prophets and confirming their authority before the people. Therefore, new ministry will have a greater effect among those to whom they minister.

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The Ministry of the Evangelist

The term "evangelist" designates one who announces the Good News. He is a herald of Good News. There are three direct references to evangelists in the New Testament. We will examine all of them in an attempt to understand the scope of evangelist's office and ministry.

The first reference is found in Ephesians 4:11:

"And He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;"

This verse impresses upon us that the office of the evangelist is one of the continuing ministries in the church throughout the Church Age.

In this context we see that the ministry of the evangelist, just as that of the other fivefold ministries, was to be a ministry to the church. The purpose of all of these ministries was to bring the church to maturity by perfecting and edifying the body of Christ. Contrary to popular opinion, the ministry of the evangelist is more to the body than to the heathen. The body of Christ is edified and brought to perfection as new converts are brought in. Therefore the winning of converts is a part of the evangelistic ministry as well as that of all the member of the body of Christ.

The second scripture which mentions the evangelistic ministry is found in II Timothy 4:5:

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Whatever office Timothy held, he was also an evangelist. Thus we see the possibility of the fivefold ministries being merged within one man. This is not necessarily the rule but, rather, is the exception.

Each of the fivefold ministries is to be based in a local assembly. They are not only to work within the setting, but are to be free to work out from the local assembly with whom they are affiliated. Just as each local church needs all nine of the gifts of the Spirit, they also need all five of the eldership ministries mentioned. Since this book is being written more for the benefit of the local church than for the church at large. The point I am trying to make is that the evangelist, just as the other of the fivefold ministries, needs to have a "home" church, for the mutual benefit of the church and the evangelist.

It is appropriate to consider the ministry of the evangelist as an extension of the apostle's ministry. It may be necessary for an evangelist to stay in a "virgin" area until local leadership is nurtured and set in order. This is very possibly what Timothy was doing at the time Paul wrote to him in I and II Timothy.

The evangelist may not exclusively serve the purpose of pioneering a new work. He may also guard a new flock until it can take care of itself. Timothy may have been protecting the church from false doctrine and division until she was established in the truth and unity of the Spirit (I Timothy 1:3-7; 3:1-13; II Timothy 2:1-2).

At the time Timothy was in Ephesus, the church had been pioneered some few years previously by Paul. Paul had visited the church after his initial pioneering efforts and remained there for at least two years during one these return visits. Certainly, this all shows that Timothy, and evangelist, was no pioneering the church but was setting it in order so that the church would eventually be able to care for itself.

The third scripture concerning the work of the evangelist is found in Acts 21:8:

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him."

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The Ministry of the Pastor

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SHEEP

Both _____ and _____ teach that most flocks receive the Pastors that they deserve. An example of this is seen in 2 Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; God is _____ to give the local church what it _____ even if it will bring _____ to their souls. It is important to seek God's man for the need of the local church, not the one who _____ the _____ nature of the _____ church body. The first thing we can do to help make the Pastor's ministry _____ and _____, is to accept the fact that he is God's leader. Since it is God who puts men in places of _____, God's anointing is on him. David saw Saul in this light, even after Saul had given in to _____ and _____. He saw him as the anointed of the Lord, and never did he _____ his way ahead of God. The next thing we are to do, is build his _____ power by _____ for him on a _____ basis. All too often we feel that, since the spiritual _____ is a praying man, it is not _____ to pray for him. The man of God is one of the _____ of satan, and possibly one of the most _____ within the whole body since he is always on the _____ of _____. Paul consistently _____ with the churches to pray for him. We have _____ of the Pastor's need to build up the body. It is also _____ for the body to build the Pastor up. One of the ways to _____ this, is to build up his _____. _____ speak well of him before others, especially your _____ family. You may not think your Pastor needs it, but also build his _____. Become an

_____ to your Pastor. Say an _____ word or use your _____ and see what you can come up with to build your pastor's morale. How can you help your pastor's _____? Few feel that they can _____ their pastor preaching. An _____ now and then may help to draw the Word of God out of him. Not only an _____ response, but if we could be _____, take _____. Search _____, and/or nod in _____ so he will know we hear him. No man can take care of the flock by himself. There must be some dedicated followers. Build his _____ by _____ with him. Pull with him, not against him. There is no room in the Body for _____ and _____ toward the man of God. If the Word of God is to go _____ there can be no striving to build our own _____. If you have a _____, it will make a way for itself.

Pro 18:16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men. David is a prime example of one that waited for a way to be opened for his ministry. Wait on God, and in the wait, _____ with your God chosen leader.

Heb 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. A very _____ way to make your pastor's ministry effective is to _____ the Christ who he preaches. Let the Holy Ghost take the truths he is preaching and _____ them in you heart. Allow the Holy Ghost to work these things out of your _____, and into your _____ walk! As the Pastor sees the flock applying his preaching to the everyday _____ it will do for his _____ what nothing else can do.

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The Ministry of the Teacher

The Lord Jesus himself is the first example I will discuss of one who was called to the teaching ministry. The teaching ministry is vividly seen in his life and ministry. His teaching and preaching are tactfully blended together. This is seen clearly in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 when he is described as: teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom."

Jesus' words are described as teaching with authority and life in Matthew 7:29 and John 6:63. His words were not only delivered with authority but they were and still are infused with life giving power. The Word is quick (living) and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). How much more would we accomplish in the teaching ministry if it were the Word of God we would give forth instead of our own words or opinions?

I will endeavor to examine several New Testament teaching concerning the teaching ministry. It is clear that there is a definite and distinct ministry of teaching presented in the New Testament. However, it is necessary to proclaim emphatically that teachers are to be called and equipped by the Spirit of God. This is just as true of the teaching ministry as it is with any of the five-fold ministry. The ministry of teachers is to be duly recognized and approved by the other Elders within the Local Assembly.1

The teaching ministry is to be a continuing ministry within the local assembly. It is a ministry that is to be passed on so that each succeeding generation will have the benefit of this much needed source of spiritual strength and growth. God never intended the teaching ministry to domineer in the five-fold ministry. He also never intended for it to be neglected:

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (Galatians 6:6)

In Timothy 2:2, Paul exhorted young Timothy to see that others would be properly equipped to carry on the work of the ministry:

"The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."

If this were the only verse in the New Testament referring to this subject it would stand alone to emphasize the necessity of the continuing ministry of the teacher since it shows a sequence of four generations of Christian teachers (Paul to Timothy to faithful men to others) all dependent on the teachings of their predecessors.!

James also instructs his readers in the teaching ministry. In chapter three, verse one of his Epistle, he warns his brethren that they should: "not be many masters (teachers), knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." I believe this exhortation cautions us to walk very carefully and to be completely assured of our calling into a ministry---whether it be that of the teacher or any of the other of the fivefold ministries. James places an awesome responsibility on all those within the teaching 1 This principle is clearly supported in Ephesians 4:11; I Corinthians 12:28; Acts 13:1 and Romans 12:7 ministry because teaching has a greater impact on the lives and character of those being taught.

James 3:1 offers a sharp warning against thrusting ourselves forward in the teaching ministry. We must not only be completely sure that we have been called by God, but that God has also equipped us to fulfill this call. Even then it is necessary for us to step into the ministry in all humility and be sure that our example is teaching the same message as our words.

The Importance Of The Teaching Ministry

The teaching ministry can be likened to the foundation of a building. Without it, the local Body would be very unstable, never able to come to maturity. The lack of a sound teaching ministry leaves the flock an unstable, emotional entity who live solely for an emotional "fix" from service to service. A Body that is solely emotional has no concrete material with which to build a sound spiritual structure. Every church must have a balance of all of the five-fold ministries.

Matthew 28:19,20 instructs those who are called into the teaching ministry to: "Go ye therefore and TEACH all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: TEACHING them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen."

The word "teach" refers to the winning of the lost, it literally means to "MAKE DISCIPLES". The word "teaching" refers to the training of those disciples once they have been won to Christ.

God has given us the authority to speak his word in his name to bring about the desired results of growth and maturity within the Body of Christ. He has invested in us the ability and the authority to speak a "thus saith the Lord".

Teaching, as Christ's example demonstrates, was and is his method of extending his kingdom. however, just how does teaching fit into the overall ministry of the Church? Just how does it relate to the ministry of the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist and Pastor? There is truth in the statement that we cannot qualify nor effectively function within any one of these ministries unless we are a teacher. One of the major differences in the qualifications of the Elders and Deacons, listed in Titus 1:9, is that the Elder must be one who has been taught the faithful Word. Paul also writes to Timothy that an Elder or Bishop must be able to teach (I Timothy 3:2). Whatever your calling into the fivefold ministry, you must be able to teach.

Deacons are not required to teach but it would be a plus in his favor for further ministry. This has been portrayed in the lives of at least two of the original seven deacons chosen in Acts 6:5. Goth Stephen and Philip went into ministry, beyond the call of duty, as able Preachers and Teachers of the Word.²

Some men active in these ministries will function to a greater degree in the teaching aspect of their ministry than others will. This is not because of their particualar calling as an Apostle, or Prophet, or Evangelist, or Pastor but depends on the gift of the 2 The following verses give examples of those who were active in the fivefold ministry who were able to teach: Acts 13:1; I Timothy 3:2; II Timothy 1:11; 2:2; 4:2-5; Titus 1:9. Holy Ghost which equips the individual to minister to the needs of the flock he is minding. God equips the servant to meet the need.

In order to teach, we must not only have the knowledge but also the ability to present the knowledge effectively--so that others may learn and retain it. TEACHING has not begun unless LEARNING has taken place.

Although all of the fivefold ministries require some teaching, there is a ministry that is solely devoted to teaching. This ministry may be seen int the "Traveling Teacher" who will also function as an Apostle, Prophet or Evangelist. There is a necessity, however, for Elders who are called to the teaching ministry within the Local Assembly (Galatians 6:6).

There may be novices on the local level who may not yet qualify as Elders yet who show promise in the Teaching Ministry. They may be deacons or they may not have progressed to that level yet. Although these men may be used to a degree in teaching, they must always function under the supervision of established leaders within the local Body. Their God-given ministries may be used in such areas as youth or children's ministries, ladies ministries or, possibly, in home meetings. As they grow and develop, their ministry may well develop to the capacity of local leadership as Deacon or Elder. While any individual is functioning as a teacher, they must continue in submission to those over them, seek to develop their ministry through intensive study and prayer, and earnestly strive to qualify scripturally for the office of Elder (as seen in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1).

Next, I will discuss how spiritual teaching operates. There must be a balance between the practical and the theoretical at all times. A man's doctrine and his experience must balance one another. Our knowledge of the "written Word" must equal our relationship with the "living Word". We should teach first by example and then by word.

Our everyday life must always speak of a life that is hid with Christ in God. This same lesson was taught by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount.

"But whosoever shall "do" and "teach" them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19) Demonstration and example have always been the best teaching methods. It is not the only way to teach but it is the best way to produce a Body Ministry within the Local Assembly.

Christ, as always, is our supreme example as the greatest teacher. He demonstrated the Sermon on the Mount by his personality and his practical dealings with people in the every day affairs of life. He demonstrated that the Gospel of the Kingdom had come by his healing of

the sick. He demonstrated his power over creation by calming the waves. Isn't this "DOING" and "TEACHING"? One who is not doing should not be teaching. It is imperative that a teacher do and then teach. If you desire to bring the flock to spiritual maturity, you must both instruct them and demonstrate what you teach. The Body must see it done to truly learn the lesson.

Doing is only one aspect of an effective teaching ministry. It is also essential that the Holy Ghost be able to "ILLUMINATE" our minds as to Divine Truths if we are to be able to effectively teach these truths. Even an unregenerate mind can have an academic knowledge of the Bible. Some of the most reprobate individuals have what is sometimes called a working knowledge of the Bible--often just enough to create a stumbling block to finding eternal life. For the Word of God to bring life, either to the teacher or the student, it must be coupled with the activity and ministry of the Holy Ghost as seen in I Corinthians 2:14. Verses 6-14 could be titled "the Principle of Spiritual Revelation".

There is no way possible that we can know God by MIND alone. Spiritual knowledge does not come by human deduction or reason. God is clearly portrayed as a reasonable being in Isaiah 1:18 when he says: "Come now, and let us reason together." There is room for reason in the work of God as is shown in the Apostle's decision to choose the first Deacons in Acts 6:2, "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables."

A teacher in the Body of Christ is not only a reasonable and well-informed individual with a vast knowledge, he must also be open to the move of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing wrong with being endowed with vast knowledge as long as the principle of revelation is active as well. One aspect of the work of the Spirit is to teach us that which the Lord would have us to know.

The Holy Ghost has taken the place of Christ as the Divine Teacher during this dispensations of the Church Age (John 14:26). It is the job of the Spirit to teach us and to bring all things to our remembrance. This facet of his ministry is nowhere more crucial than in the ministry of the teacher who must often recall truths on the spur of the moment (Luke 21:12-15).

It is common knowledge that much that was revealed to the Apostle Paul was received by direct revelation from the Lord via the Holy Ghost. Paul was also an avid student and reader. This was revealed as he speaks of having sat at the feet of Gamaliel and when he mentions the books and parchments he wanted brought to him.

What I am trying to impress upon you is that we must give ourselves to serious and in-depth study while we remain open to the revelation which comes only from the Spirit of God. However, extended periods of study during times of spiritual dryness are very dangerous because, without the Spirit's unction, we may easily regress to pursuing truth purely on a mental basis. As we plunge into a period of study, we must pray and seek the Spirit's quickening on our Body, Soul and Spirit, that our study will be enriched and anointed. Such topics as Hermeneutics, Bible Study Methods, are important, yet they may be religiously used and you might still dry up spiritually. A good practice to employ during your extended periods of study is to take time to worship, praise, and pray and, I could add, to physically relax.

If you try to treat the Bible as you would any other written book, you will operate solely on the human level. You will never be fit or qualified to step into the ministry of a Bible teacher. We need a sound balance between biblical doctrine and spiritual life to be suited for the task and ministry of a mature, anointed, Bible teacher. An individual who has sound doctrine but is lacking in spiritual life or experience, produces in his Bible teaching a dead, powerless religion.

On the other end of the spectrum, one who has a powerful experience and a rich spiritual life, yet lacks good sound doctrine produces nothing but emotionalism in his ministry. We need a healthy blend of spiritual life and sound doctrine and Bible study to produce a truly healthy, mature group of believers.

Most of us have a tendency to lean either toward excessive study or spiritual life in any particular stage of growth in our Christian walk. It is a good sign of maturity when we begin to find a balance. It is the Spirit dwelling within us who is able to bring this balance and give us the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16). It is the in-working of the Holy Ghost that enables us to discern and know spiritual truths far above and beyond the sensual and natural level.

Paul's primary concern was that new converts would enter into the spiritual life. It wasn't the theologians he was encouraging, but rather the common, run-of-the-mill, Christian. He not only offers understanding and knowledge of the things of Christ as seen in Ephesians 1:15-18. He also expresses his desire to see them strengthened, rooted and grounded in Christ, and to be endowed with a comprehension of the deep things of God (Ephesians 3:16-19).

We can see from these portions of Scripture, as well as from I Corinthians 1:26-31, that spiritual insight and usefulness in the ministry is not dependent upon intellectual ability. In order for a man to fulfill the Biblical Ministry of Teacher, he must be one who is so indwelt by the Holy Ghost that he is capable of receiving spiritual truth and is able to impart this firsthand truth to others. He will only be effective in as much as he knows the truth, that he has an experiential knowledge. As the Scripture puts it, the husbandman must be the first partaker of the fruit. Even then, however, he must be able to organize this knowledge in a logical, intelligible manner as God infers:

Precept upon precept, Precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little. (Isaiah 28:10,13) He must be able to think, talk and write with logic and clarity. A good teacher is able to speak in a way that is easily understood and at the same time interesting to listen to.

I would like to close this chapter by saying that if you feel a definite call into the teaching ministry and have difficulty in presenting good teaching or building good messages, a study in Homiletics could be of help, but above all else don't eliminate the necessity of depending on the Holy Ghost to teach and empower you.

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Chapter 14: Elders

In this chapter we will examine the necessary scriptural qualifications for Elders. Some churches go far beyond the scriptural standard on such points as education, wife's musical ability and many other such non-scriptural requirements. On the other end of the spectrum, there are churches which completely ignore the scriptural standards and lower the qualifications to such a degree that the quality of the ministry is brought to a place of reproach. Some make it so no man can fit the bill and other make it so that any man off the street could fit the bill.

There are definite qualifications found in the Scriptures for the man of God to attain before being considered for the office of Elder. These are found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Holy Ghost, through Paul, gave these qualifications to men who were responsible for setting the churches in order. These are not ideals to seek after but, rather, standards which **MUST** be attained before a man is even considered for the office. In I Timothy 3:1, Paul writes:

"If any man desire the office of a Bishop(Elder), he desireth a good work.""DESIRETH" means"to set your heart upon" or "to stretch out after". It is literally an inward motivations that will cause an individual to study, labor, sacrifice, and to set his house in order, so that he can equip himself for leadership.

Paul refers to preparing for the ministry as a "good work". I want to impress upon you that "the work of the ministry" is just that, "**WORK**". Even the preaching is work. It has been said that one hour of preaching takes as much out of a man as eight hours of hard work. Yet, the preaching event is a small percentage of the work of an Elder or Bishop. We must remember that the burden or the weight of the flock is upon his shoulders.

Next, we will consider the qualifications of an Elder. These can be divided into both Positive and Negative moral, domestic and spiritual requirements. Paul lists five positive moral characteristics to describe the man of God. He must be blameless, temperate, sober, of good behavior, and patient. We will begin our discussion of the qualifications of Elders with these traits.

Positive moral Qualifications

- Blameless (I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6)
- Temperate (Titus 1:8, I Cor. 9:25)
- Sober (I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8)
- Good Behavior (I Tim. 3:2)
- Patient (I Tim. 3:3)

The first, shown in both I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, is that he must be **BLAMELESS**. This means that the man of God is to be living a life above reproach, not leaving himself open to attacks of the adversary. It is speaking of his general character. His character must be such that the enemies of righteousness will not be able to lay hold upon it. He will be a man who is not consistently or habitually indulging in sinful practices.

An Elder is also to be **TEMPERATE** as is seen in Titus 1:8 and I Corinthians 9:25. This characteristic refers to self-control. Any man desiring the office of Elder is to be free from extremes and excesses. There is to be a moderation in his personality, appetite, speech, moods, dress and in his entire life-style. In general, every instinct and passion is to be under reasonable control.

Temperance is also reflected in the term "vigilant" listed in I Timothy 3:2. It means that he is alert to and knowledgeable of the devices that Satan uses to ensnare the man of God. Anyone who expects to be in leadership in God's program must be alert to the devices of Satan as he strives to ensnare him in extremes of lifestyle.

A man of God must also be **SOBER**, as seen in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8. Such a man is cautious and serious without being mechanical or dead. This does not mean that Elders must lead lives that are dull and mundane. On the contrary, he should have a good sense of humor and be excited about life.

Elders are to be men of **GOOD BEHAVIOR** as seen in I Timothy 3:2. This means that the life of an Elder is to be in good order. One wild burst of "temper" could ruin a man's entire influence as a leader. He must have himself under control. If a man cannot control or rule himself, he certainly cannot rule the house of God.

The last positive moral qualification we find is that the Elder is to be **PATIENT**, as seen in I Timothy 3:3. This means that the man of God is not to give up on helping individuals too quickly. He must be one who is not easily discouraged when the "horse bites the hand that feeds it". He must keep feeding. In his epistle, James teaches the necessity for quiet endurance under stress and annoyances (James 1:2-4). Elders must have the ability to maintain a calm condition while awaiting major events or changes.

Patience comes by trials and the Elder must be fully tried by God. All resistance and carnality must be purged out. The only way that this comes is through trials. The Elder must be willing to suffer wrongfully and release his "rights" for the sake of the flock (I Peter 2:19-21). The man of God must be "people" minded--he is not merely an executive. If he loves strongly enough, he will not notice the inconveniences that others often put upon him.

Negative moral Qualifications (Must not be)

- Not to be given to wine (I Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- Not to be a striker (I Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- Not to be greedy of money (I Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- Not to be a brawler (I Tim. 3:3)
- Not to be covetous (I Tim. 3:3)
- Not to be self-willed (Titus 1:7)

Domestic Qualifications

- The husband of one wife (I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6)
- Hospitable (I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8)
- Rule his house well (I Tim. 3:4-5, Titus 1:6)
- Lover of good men (Titus 1:8)

Spiritual qualifications

- Able to teach (I Tim. 3:2)
- Ruler (I Tim. 3:5)
- Not a novice (I Tim. 3:6)
- Just (Titus 1:8)
- Holiness (Titus 1:8)
- Hold fast the faithful word (Titus 1:9)
- Exhort and Convince (Titus 1:9)

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Deacons

extended periods of study is to take time to worship, praise, and pray and, I could add, to physically relax.

If you try to treat the Bible as you would any other written book, you will operate solely on the human level. You will never be fit or qualified to step into the ministry of a Bible teacher. We need a sound balance between biblical doctrine and spiritual life to be suited for the task and ministry of a mature, anointed, Bible teacher. An individual who has sound doctrine but is lacking in spiritual life or experience, produces in his Bible teaching a dead, powerless religion.

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Church Discipline

WHAT OFFENSES REQUIRE CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

A person should not be _____ under church discipline for every _____ that he makes. _____ mistakes within the individual _____ and _____ are disciplined by God himself. There are _____ of sin within the life of the believer which _____ discipline. _____ offenses and _____ offenses and _____ offenses. The first set of _____ that must be dealt with are doctrinal offenses. God's word provides us with many _____ regarding those who become involved in _____ as seen in I Tim 4:1-3. Heretics are men who depart from the truth giving heed to seducing spirits. 1 Tim 6:3-5, gives us an _____ of this type of offense. Your brother is not in doctrinal _____ if he disagrees on minor _____. Those who are in doctrinal error, deny the _____ on such _____ as the _____, the _____ experience, the _____ coming, and _____ by works. Errors will come, not only outside but inside the church. Acts 20:29. Scripture _____ tells us how to deal with heretics.

First, we are to _____ try to instruct them 11 Timothy 2:25. If heretics _____ in their doctrinal error, we are to avoid _____ discussions. 11 John 7:8,9 If a heretic _____ from his error he deserves full _____ within the body of Christ. The _____ of church discipline is centered around _____ offenses. Behavioural offenses involve errors in a Christian lifestyle which are _____ enough to be _____ to their personal life, and also _____ their testimony. We will use 1 Cor5:11 to _____ which offenses are to be _____ under church discipline. The first area listed is fornication. Paul is referring to a whole spectrum of _____ acts that are practiced by many today, including those within the church. It is _____ to note the _____ of the discipline administered to the man in the Corinthian church. 1 Cor 5:1-5. The next behavioural offense listed was _____.

This sin is no better portrayed than in the life of Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5: 1-11. Covetousness leads to stealing, lying, and hypocrisy. The sin of covetousness will lead to all sorts of _____ and _____. The next sin listed is _____. There are two _____ of this sin, _____ idolatry and _____ idolatry. Spiritual idolatry is usually seen under the _____ of covetousness. Col3:5, Eph 5:5. Spiritual idolatry is the sin of worshipping the _____ more than the _____. The next offense listed is _____ This refers to the individual who is given to _____ and _____. Railer literally means _____ brawler. He often causes division and strife within the body of Christ. The next sin listed is _____ This sin is usually accompanied by others such as _____, _____, and _____. The last sin listed is _____ Extortion is the use of force, fraud, threats, or _____ authority to take what is not his. Extortion is the sin of using an official _____ to obtain money or things unlawful.

Chapter 3: The Church Throughout the Ages

The Church was in God's Mind throughout the ages Eph 1:9; 3:3,5; Col 1:16,26

The Church was birthed on the Day of Pentecost Acts 2:1-33

The primary theme of our study is the "local church" and not so much the spiritual "Body of Christ" or "The Church." More will be said on the topic of "The Church and churches" later on, but it is important to express at the beginning of this chapter the difference between "The Church" or "Body of Christ and the "local church".

The Church was birthed by the Holy Ghost in Acts chapter 2. This is a spiritual and not physical "Body" whose head is Christ. In this sense, there is only ONE Church.

The local church is a group of believers that gather together (those "called out") for the purpose of worshipping God and fulfilling God's will on earth. In this sense, there are MANY local churches.

Even though the Church (the Spiritual Body of Christ) was in God's mind since the beginning, it did not literally come to existence until the Holy Ghost was given. Types and Prophecies of the Church are given in the Old Testament to foreshadow the Revelation that the Church would be built by God and Jesus Christ would be the Chief Corner stone with the disciples and prophets making up the foundation.

Eph 2:20—And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Old Testament Israel was not the Church or a part of the Body of Christ. There are many references to Israel in the New Testament and none of them directly mention the Church. The term Israel is used twenty times. The term church is used nineteen times, and these two groups were usually kept distinct. It was right to leave Judaism and become a Spirit filled Christian and be a part of the Body of Christ but it was never right to leave Christianity for Judaism.

The Church consists of those who are full of the Holy Ghost. (ONE Church)

The local church is a particular assembly of Believers. (MANY local churches)

The Local Church in the Wilderness

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness s with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

The Old Testament only foreshadows the spiritual "Church" with its types, but we can see a local church or assembly in action in the accounts of Israel. Israel was a "church in the wilderness" in the sense Israel was the people God gathered together for purpose of worship of God and fulfilling God's will on earth. This local church in the Old Testament consisted only of Hebrews. (With a few exceptions.)

The Local Church in the New Testament

The New Testament Local Churches consisted of both Jewish and Gentile Believers, something unheard of before. This is what Paul called a mystery among the Gentiles (Eph.3:5, 9). The Gentiles are in focus, because this mystery involves them (Rom.16:25) being united with believing Israel. The content of this mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory Col 1:27. To them God willed to make known what are the

riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. The fact that the Messiah now indwells every believer is the Old Testament mystery revealed in the New Testament.

The N.T. local churches and "The Church" had nothing to do with Judaism as practiced in Jesus' day but instead "continued in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and prayers." (Acts 2:42)

Acts 2:47: "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." At first, the New Testament local church was based in Jerusalem and consisted mostly of Jews.

The Feast of Pentecost

The feast of Pentecost is now being fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4 through the Birth of the Church

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and instructed them for 40 days, after which he ascended to heaven. Lu 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.⁵ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Jesus' words were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4), and the apostle Peter preached his first sermon, urging men to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (verse 38).

Pentecost is named after the Greek word pentekostos, which means 50th. It is the Mosaic festival observed by Jews, Shavuoth, sometimes called in the Old Testament the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15; Numbers 28:26; Deuteronomy 16:9-12).

Other names are the Feast of the Harvest and Day of First Fruits (Exodus 23:16; Numbers 28:26).

Pentecost was to be observed in ancient Israel on the 50th day after the priest waved a sheaf of the first grain that had been harvested in the spring (Leviticus 23:15-21).

Seven weeks elapsed between the day of the wave sheaf offering and the beginning of Pentecost, thus the name of the festival — the Feast of Weeks. This festival had come to signify for Jews the commemoration of the giving of the Law of Moses (the Torah) at Mount Sinai 50 days after the Exodus Passover (Exodus 20:24).

The Holy Spirit first came specifically on the Jewish day of Shavuoth, or Pentecost, to signal that God had now moved to write the Law not on tables of stone, but in the hearts of his people through the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3).

The Indwelling of the Spirit into human hearts and minds on that Day of Pentecost in the early 30s was God's sign that in Christ he was building His Church — a new Israel — an Israel of the Spirit (Galatians 6:16) that included Jews and Gentiles alike.

Many types of the church are seen in the Old Testament

The Boards of the Tabernacle Ex. 26:15-29; 35:11; 36:20-34; 38:7; 39:33; 40:18

Ex.26:15—And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up.

The Boards of the Tabernacle represent Holy Ghost filled Believer's

The boards are used for the framing system for the tabernacle.

(15-25) Boards for the sides of the tent.

Many Prophecies concerning the church are seen in the Old Testament.

Eph 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Jews and Gentiles are partakers of the same promise and the same body (Hebrews 11:40, Ephesians 3:1-11).

When Paul speaks to the church as a "mystery", he isn't saying that the church is mysterious, only that it was hidden, unrevealed, in Old Testament times. The truth was there even if those who lived at the time didn't comprehend it. Now it has been revealed by his spirit.

The church was instituted by Christ-it came into being through the Life and Ministry of Christ himself. The entire message of the church was centered on Christ from the very beginning (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 13:8).

As we look into the life and ministry of Christ we see God's revelation of His Eternal Purpose. For example Christ writes in Hebrews 1:1,2 "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom, also he made the worlds."

When Jesus said, "I will build my church," in Matthew 16:18, he was leading us from the type to the anti-type, from the shadow to the substance, from the natural to the spiritual. This is nothing more then the fulfillment of the natural order of events. Contrary to the belief of some, the rock upon which Christ was to build his church, was the revelation of who he was and the public confession that Peter referred to when he said, "thou art Christ, the son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). With this revelation, the foundation of the church was laid. Our task is to build upon this foundation, keeping in mind that Christ is both the foundation and chief cornerstone of a great Building, the church.

All natural barriers cease to exist when the church came into existence. Now all Holy Ghost filled believers are a part of that building. Everyone baptized into the body of Christ are living stones within the house of God. There is no longer a separate plan for Jew and Gentile. All the saved are one family in Him, all the Holy Ghost filled saints are one body in him. There are still prophesies to be fulfilled, which pertain to certain nations, but these will not take priority over God's plan for his Church and they will in no way hinder the progress of God's great building, THE CHURCH, THE BODY/BUILDING of Christ is the center of God's plan.

Just as the church was portrayed in the Old Testament and instituted by Christ, the Holy Ghost is structuring it today. In the same way old wine skins can not hold new wine, it is necessary to provide new structure for the church. This new structure is seen as an organism. The church throughout the New Testament is portrayed as a body.

For a body to be effective each member must function properly. The ministry of the body depends on the whole body and not on one or even just a few members of the body. Christ is the head of this body, the King of the Kingdom. We make up the entire body and are a part of him. The head is unable to function without the rest of the body and, in like manner, the body can not function without the head. Our relationship with him is often likened in scripture to the husband and wife relationship. The body of believers complement Christ and are to become complete in him.

Christ dwells in the church by His Spirit. As Christ dwelt in a fleshly body to become the sacrifice for sin, today he dwells in his body, (The Church) for the purpose for rescuing sinners. Are we allowing him to accomplish this great mission through His body, which body we are a part?

The church is a living organism. Adam, as God's son (Genesis 2:7) is a type of the church today. The church is made up of believers who are the children of God with the promise to become fully matured sons of God (1John 3:2). As the bride was taken from Adam, while he was in a deep sleep (Genesis 2:21), so the bride of Christ will be taken out of the church while the church is asleep. Could this be the day?

Jesus said, concerning the living organism of which the church is to be, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.". Also, the apostle John, in first John 5:11,12 wrote that:

" this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his son. He that hath the son hath life; and he that hath not the son of God hath not life." Obtaining life and proclaiming life to others is what the church is all about.

In an analogy of the church as the body of Christ, the work of the Holy Ghost can be seen as similar to the work of the circulatory system. His job is to give life to the body by flowing through all of the believers. In the same way as God gave man a skeletal system, God has also given the church a set form. The skeletal system of man provides him with shape and form and sets all parts in their appropriate place, so God has provided an organizational structure for the church to follow which allows the body to function effectively.

Just as the blood flows through our natural bodies, the Holy Ghost flows through the body of believers. The scripture tells us that "the life of all flesh is the blood (Leviticus 17:14)?". It is the Holy Ghost that gives the spiritual body life.

It is only as each member permits the spirit to flow through him or her, that health and the ability to function effectively will be maintained in the entire body. It is the Holy Ghost that keeps each member healthy and active in the Work of God. The body can only function properly if each member is capable of accomplishing his appointed purpose within the body. This can only come to pass as individuals allow the Holy Ghost to flow through them with both gifts and graces to minister to the needs of the rest of the body.

For anybody to function properly it not only needs the flowing of life spoken of in the previous paragraph, it must also have a set form.

In Genesis 2:7 it is stated that "the LORD God formed man". This refers to the fact that the LORD shaped man with organization. Even a casual observation of the human body comes up with the conclusion that man is truly, "fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalms 139:14), man is put together in an organized fashion. The organization of the church provides her with shape and form, just as the skeletal system does for the physical body. It supports the organs, holding each in its place, enabling them to relate to the other properly. Just as the skeletal system is necessary for life, organization is necessary for spiritual life in the church.

The organizational structure within the church must be kept as simple as possible and in accordance with the pattern revealed in the scripture. However, if we ignore organization all together we are disobedient to God's order. The scriptural pattern for the organization of the church is very basic. The groups of officers of the church are called elders and deacons.

The elders are always presented in the scripture in the plural form. For example, it is stated in Acts 14:23 that, "they had ordained them elders in every church."17There should be more than one elder in each local church. They must be qualified scripturally (1Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9) before being placed into the governmental leadership of the house of God. Elders may follow into one of five ministerial categories or perform multiple of any or all of these ministries, presented in Ephesians 4:11 "and he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers."

The witness of the Holy Ghost to the individual reveals the ministry or ministries to which elders are called. Only then is it confirmed by the same spirit through gifts of the Holy Ghost and then shown unto other elders to the body.

The very title deacon implies the duties they will perform. The word itself means servant. They were called to serve in the temporal duties of church work (Acts 6:1-4). Deacons are to be spiritual men with a holy love for the body even though their work is to be more on the natural or physical level. The purpose of calling them into existence was to release the elders from temporal duties so that they could give themselves to the spiritual aspects of the work of God.

When the twelve apostles called for the selection of seven assistants, deacons, to perform the natural work that was claiming much of their work, they proclaimed in Acts 6:2 "it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables."

It is obvious from the appointment of the deacons, that God is concerned with the natural every day needs of our life as well as with our spiritual needs. You will notice in Acts 6:1, that the widows were being neglected because the apostles were overloaded with not only the spiritual aspects of the work but also the natural.

This brings us to a truth, found in Acts 6:2, which is often neglected in our day of "super-spiritualism and mysticism". REASON or COMMON SENSE has a very important, indispensable, role in the work of God. Notice the wording of the apostles "it is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables". The results of dividing the natural and spiritual aspects of the word of God are recorded in Acts 6:7, "the word of God increased and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith".

This confirms the wisdom of both the appointment of the deacons of the natural tasks, and the releasing of the elders for the spiritual work in the church. If we lack reason or common sense we are not spiritual at all.

The more heavenly minded you are the more earthly good you will become. There are those who lack common sense. The men chosen to be deacons were to be spiritual men, with a concern for the everyday needs for those within the church. Even though their work is temporal, the deacons must also be qualified scripturally (1Timothy 3:8-13).

The church, structured by the Holy Ghost, has been striped of her glory by false doctrine and spiritual decline. Historically, when Gods people have sinned by disobedience, rebelling, and unbelief, they have been given over to their enemies for chastisement. The church has surely had her dark ages. The climb in apostasy which was spoken of as coming upon her in the last days, has come upon us today. Apostasy and decline begin with leaders. In order to have any lasting restoration we must have restored leaders, "and there shall be, like people, like priests" (Hosea 4:9). As leaders of God's flock we can not expect the flock to rise any higher than we are ourselves. During the period of time when Hosea wrote this passage, there was a dearth of the knowledge of God and an increase of sin and corruption seen within the priesthood.

God proclaims that, because of this lack of knowledge, not only leaders but the people would utterly fall (Hosea 4:6,14). Joel, in chapters 1 and 2 of his prophesies, presents us with a vivid picture of spiritual decline and restoration.

Revelations, chapters 2 and 3, are prophetic of different periods of times throughout the church age. The scriptures show some definite sin problems which progressed until complete corruption prevailed. These problems included but were not limited to, "loss of first love" (Revelation 2:4,) but fell into blasphemy in 2:9

The blessed hope that we have is God will have a people in the last days.

He will have a glorious bride to be united with, in that day.

As the powers of darkness increase in the world, we will see a greater manifestation of the authority and power of Christ. We are God's building and he is not going to have a rundown shack, but a temple fit for the king to dwell in. When he finishes with his church, how glorious it will be!

God has made every provision for his church to be built and restored as he would have it (Ephesians 4:9-15). The purpose of the five fold ministry of the elders is to bring his church to maturity, perfection, and completeness. It will be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. We will give praise to him (Ephesians 1:12-14). 19 One thing that points to the fact that God will send a revival and restoration in these last days is the fact that Jesus hasn't returned which proves that there is still some restoration to be completed. Peter states, in Acts 3:20-21 that, "he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began".

The basic truth, associated with the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:13-17), is that there is to be a restoration of praise and worship. This restoration can even now, be seen transpiring before our eyes.

(Joel 2:23) "he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain in the first month".

The early rain refers to God bestowing on us the power of the Holy Ghost which the early church had, while the latter rain refers to God pouring out upon us the power which this last century church has experienced, especially in the early 1900's as seen in men like smith Wigglesworth.

- The early rain was for the purpose of preparing the soil for the sowing of the seed
- The latter rain was for the purpose of ripening the crop for harvest.

Joel is telling us that we will experience all that they had in the first century church and all that they had in this last century church at the same time.

This out-pouring will bring about both a great sowing and a great harvest just prior to the fulfillment of God's purpose for this dispensation.

This is what God is speaking of in Amos 9:13 "behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed."

In this time of a great falling away, God is going to have a people.

Right now there is a great shaking going on, which is definitely ordered of God, if you can be shaken you will be shaken.

2 Thes. 2:2-3—That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Heb 12:27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

He is not only calling his people out of the harlot church and her daughters, (Revelation 18:4) but he is also calling them out of their spirit of lethargy and compromise (2Corinthians 6:14-17).

Will you heed the call and let God do the work and restoration he desires to do in your life and ministry?

Chapter 4: The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God

In this section we will examine the Kingdom. The term itself denotes sovereignty, power, and dominion. As we consider the Kingdom in relation to God and his sovereignty, power and dominion, we will see the many facets of his Kingdom.

God's sovereignty is in the heavens. Jesus asks that we acknowledge this on a daily basis when he taught us how to pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10).

First, let us look at his rule on earth. God only rules where his rule is acknowledged. His earthly rule only exists on two levels. On the first level, he rules in the lives and heart of the individual believer.

Are study is more concerned with the second, the local assembly of believers.

The scriptures reveal several things about the kingdom.

First, the good news of Christ is the Gospel of the kingdom. Matthew reports, "Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the Kingdom." (Matthew 4:23).

Second, the kingdom is at hand here and now. John the Baptist commanded us, in Matthew 3:2, to "repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Third, entrance into the kingdom is only through the new birth. Jesus emphasized this in his interview with Nicodemus when he said, "except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God," (John 3:3).

Forth, the kingdom is within the believer. When the Pharisees asked when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied that, "behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Even while on earth, as believers we have a part of the affairs in the kingdom. The scriptures teach us emphatically that we have authority over angels, demon, disease, the world, and sin. (1Corinthians 6:2-3, Mark 16:17-18, Romans 6:11-14). This authority should not be mistaken for a guarantee that the believer will not suffer any tribulation. Even though we have the power to work miracles, we must remember that in this present state in the kingdom, there is a degree of tribulation involved.

Paul exhorted the believers of his day who were subjected to much persecution by assuring them "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Jesus also warned, in John 16:33, that "in the world you should have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.". As we face the trails of life let us ascertain that we are in Christ. It is only as we are in him, that we are found to be overcomers, worthy to be a member in the kingdom at the time of the end when Christ subjecting himself to the father presents the kingdom unto him (1Corinthians 15:24).

There are numerous erroneous views concerning the kingdom. Some see it all Jewish. If this is so, there is not one scripture concerning the kingdom, which could relate to the church. Others see the kingdom as all future. If it were all future, none of the scriptures pertaining to the kingdom could relate to today. Still others see the kingdom as all literal and leave no room for any spiritual application to the scriptures speaking to us of the kingdom.

God fit truth together to fit his eternal plan. Man tends to separate and categorize truth, forgetting that he has a limited vision of god's eternal plan for the ages. The kingdom is not separate from God's plan. It blends in with the church of the living God. Which is God's one new Man, his holy nation and royal priesthood. Christ died for the Church he came to build. His dealings are first with the church, God's spiritual Israel, and then with the nations. The millennial reign will simply be a continuation of the one great kingdom of God.

In summery, we have briefly studied what the Bible has to say about the kingdom.

We have seen that the kingdom and the church are one.

We must endeavor to see the kingdom in its spiritual form now and not just as a natural reality for the future. As all studies of the Holy Scriptures, we must give the Holy Ghost freedom to apply the scriptures concerning God's entire kingdom to our lives. It may mean being open to truths contrary to traditional views of the kingdom. Jesus was an example of this when he rebuked the religious people of his day to holding so rigidly to traditions that they couldn't see the true teachings of the scriptures (Mark 7:5-9).

While studying the kingdom, as with any other doctrine of the scriptures, each and every scripture pertaining to that subject must fit into the doctrinal conclusions you arrive at. If you can't fit each scripture into your conclusion, it would be best to draw no conclusion at all, until the Holy Ghost is able to open the eyes of your heart to the matter. As Paul writes in Ephesians 1:18, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened."

The church is in Christ, unbelieving Israel as a nation is not. Paul explains in:

Rom. 9:31-33: "but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

After Paul is saved and filled with the Holy Ghost we begin to hear of churches being established "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 9:31).

Barnabas was to go as far as Antioch (Acts 11:22), and they quickly developed Acts 13:1. they were called the churches of the Gentiles (Rom.16:4).

Holy Ghost Believers are the body and Christ "He is the head of the body, the church, (Col 1:18), Eph. 5:23 Christ is head of the church;" Christ is the head of his body the church, which did not exist until after Christ ascended (Eph. 4:7-11, Eph. 1:22).

Holy Ghost filled Believers become a living temple, each person is united with the others like bricks in a building. in the old Testament Israel had a physical temple, the Holy Spirit did not dwell in every person who had faith.

The church is from "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

The terms Israel and the church should never be confused.

In the book of Acts, both Israel and the church exist simultaneously.

Eph 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

The new entity the church is made by "the blood of His cross" not the Old Testament sacrifices.

Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Christ's blood that purchased the church, again distinguishing the sacrifices of the Old covenant that was for Israel.

The Holy Spirit's purpose was to bring a spiritual birth to us individually and bring both Jews and Gentiles that were separated to be together a new entity- called the Church. Jesus sent the one He promised to empower them for the ministry so they would carry the message to the world. Acts 1:5 views Spirit baptism, our entrance into Christ and becoming the church as a future event. The church was birthed by the Spirit at Pentecost, Israel existed for 1500 years prior

After the Holy Spirit gave the church its birth, Acts 2:33 everyone throughout history that believes in the gospel continues to become part of the church by spirit baptism (1 Cor.12:13), by being baptized in the Spirit. You don't join a church you are baptized into it. The Greek word for church is ekklesia (used 114 times in the New Testament) it means a called out assembly (Ek = out of Kaleo= to call).

Until the New Testament, the Church was a Mystery

Eph 5:32—This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

The Church of God was known only in types and shadows before Christ came and and before the Holy Ghost was given in Acts chapter two. The Church was and in some ways still is a spiritual mystery. The Church is Spiritual and Consists of Spiritual Things.

- A Spiritual Love

The Church consists of a spiritual love. Paul shows that it is a *secret* or that it is *spiritual* and differs greatly from the carnal ability of man.

- A Spiritual Power

The church consists of the power of the Spirit, and not of the flesh, by faith, and not by a natural bond.

- A Spiritual Mystery

The mystery concerns bringing Jews and Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ Jesus

Ro 16:25—Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

1Cor. 2:7—But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

When we come to the New Testament the church was in prototype before Pentecost as Jesus was training the 12 and the 70 and others. But the church is not in the Old Testament. Why?

Matt 16:18—And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Throughout the New Testament the church is liken a house built upon a foundation- which is Jesus and those who confess who He is as Peter did. Since one did not (nor could not) confess this in the Old Testament they cannot accurately say the nation of Israel was the Church.

It is only in this passage and Mt.18 that a church is first mentioned, and the prevailing view would be His instructions for the future.

Chapter 5: The Church and the Churches

The Church and the Churches

It is imperative to our study of the local church that we understand the difference between the "Church" and "Churches". The Church, when it refers to the universal body of believers, speaks of God's general overall plan as given in the message of Ephesians. The church, when it refers to a local body of believers, speaks of tangible, real manifestation of His body in a given locality.

The "Church" is mystical, invisible, universal, and general. Jesus was referring to the church when he said, in Matthew 16:18, "...upon this Rock, I will build my Church." It is singular, for God has only one "Church". It is the same Church in the past, present, and future.

The "churches" are real, concrete, visible, local and specific. Matthew speaks to us of a specific local group of believers when he writes, "Tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church," (Matthew 18:15-17). It is the "Universal Church," as it is taking on local or temporal form. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 were written to specific local churches, as were numerous other epistles such as Ephesians, Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Philippians, I and II Thessalonians. Thus we see that it is the local church with which we have to deal and that all local churches are part of the universal church.

The word "Church," Greek "Ekklesia," means, "to summon forth" or, "to call out the people". The equivalent in Hebrew is "Qahal" which is often translated "Assembly" or "Congregation." It is used 70 times in the Old Testament in such scriptures as Psalms 22:22 when David writes: "...In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." In the Old Testament it has the connotation of summoning forth for the purpose of hearing from God.

In the New Testament the word "church" also included the thought of being called for an purpose-- even for a town meeting. This usage is seen in Acts 19:32-41 when the town clerk of Ephesus spoke to Demetrius and his followers of the necessity of solving town problems in a lawful assembly which precluded the necessity for individuals taking matters into their own hands.

In our study of the word "Ekklesia" we will be considering it in the context of a local body of believers gathered together for worship and fellowship. "Church" was a common word in use in New Testament times. It was frequently used in speaking of a gathering, and, as always, Jesus and the writer of the New Testament used words as familiar to their hearers.

As we consider the "Ministry" of the church we must recognize that it consists of REAL people, with REAL needs, in a given locality. Thus, as seen in I Corinthians 11:29-32, we must properly discern the Body of Christ and its needs. If we are going to have any REAL MINISTRY, our vision must not only be in the MYSTICAL REALM. We must relate to the local body as an active organ or member of that body.

No man is an Island unto himself. To separate ourselves from the local body is unscriptural. It is the same as a man choosing to live his life without any national affiliation. We are all parts and joints of the same body. Paul teaches this in Ephesians 4:16 when he wrote:

""For whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which, every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.""

The effectiveness of our ministry, individually or collectively, depends upon the spiritual health of each member and their relationship to each other. Not one of us is to be independent of the others.

In our day there is a lack of emphasis on the necessity for any form of local structure, which requires local leadership. Today, many do not seem to realize that the local church is God's permanent order for this, the Church Age. The structure of the local church may vary with size or locality, but, none the less, it is still God's order for this age. The local church is God's pattern for evangelizing the world and bringing his people to maturity.

Violation of God's ordained order is the main cause of confusion and of much wasted effort within the Body of Christ. A man, or woman, who refuses to join themselves to a local body of believers often feels like they are wasting their effort just as the children of Israel must have felt when they wandered in the wilderness. The unaffiliated believer may also feel the same confusion as the children of Israel felt when they were in captivity in Babylon. It is God's plan and purpose that each member of his universal Body be joined to a local Body of Believers.

Church order and leadership were clearly seen in the Old Testament. Aaron and his four sons, the Tabernacle Officers, was a type of the fivefold ministry seen in the New Testament. Aaron and his sons and the New Testament Elders were given responsibility for the spiritual oversight of God's people. Many of the leadership positions held by those in the Old Testament are types of the positions held by New Testament leaders.

The Levites of old can easily be compared to the Deacons of the New Testament. Both the Levites in the Old Testament and the Deacons in the New Testament were responsible for the physical, temporal duties within the local body of believers.

Within the tabernacle itself, there was to be a designated place of worship. The believer was not to remain at home to worship. He was to gather with the Local Body in a designated place of worship:

"there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to call his name to dwell there...Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest.(Deuteronomy 12:11, 13)"

There is no scriptural basis for remaining at home to worship while the local body is gathering even if you do enjoy the Electronic Evangelist more than the Local Elders. This type of spirit is a rebellious and independent spirit and is contrary to the clear teaching of the Word of God.

The WATCHMEN on the walls of the cities of Israel are a type of the leaders of the New Testament Church who are watching for our souls. In Hebrews 13:17, believers are urged to:

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they "WATCH" for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

Just as the life and welfare of the city and its inhabitants depended upon the alertness of the WATCHMAN, so the life and welfare of the Body of Believers depends upon the alertness of the Elders. It is the responsibility of the Elders to guard against those who would steal in unawares, with erroneous teachings and charisma, to destroy and to kill.

The SHEPHERDS upon the hillside of Judah and Israel were a type of God's chosen leadership for his church today. Today's leaders are not only the leaders of God's spiritual flock. They are not only entrusted with the care and guidance of the flock but also with the responsibility of feeding the flock of God with wholesome and nourishing spiritual food.

If God's present day "SHEPHERD" will grow good green pastures to feed the flock sufficiently, he will amply provide for the needs of the flock God has given him. He may even notice that some sheep from less fertile pastures will break through the fence and feed in his pasture. God will add to his flock in the most unusual ways.

God uses the terminology of the shepherd when making reference to his people and leaders in the New Testament. Paul, in Acts 20:28, warned the Elders of Ephesus to:

""Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood.""

Various terms such as "Feed," "Pastor," "Shepherd," and "Father," are used to make reference to those who have oversight of His flock.

In the Old Testament the office of PROPHET was very important in the spiritual aspect of leadership. The PROPHET was to speak to the people for God more often than not. The call to be a prophet was accompanied by the call to a holiness walk before the Lord.

A study of the lives of the Old Testament Prophets reveals that this was not only a very lonely ministry but also a physically dangerous one. It was, however, a very rewarding ministry spiritually. A good example of the way in which God rewards His prophets can be seen in the manner in which God called Elijah home:

""...there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," (II Kings 2:11)"

In these last days, the ministry of the Prophet is to be restored in a vivid fashion. As we look around, the need for the ministry of the prophets is very evident. Will you answer the call to the Prophetic Ministry?

It is time for us to look at church Leadership specifically in the context of the New Testament. First and foremost is the teaching concerning the fivefold ministry, which is found in Ephesians 4:8-15.

The fivefold ministry is referred to as "GOD'S GIFT" to the church for the purpose of bringing her to maturity and unity. God has often chosen the "SPOILS" of the battle--men who were base, uncouth, and crude--to sanctify and fit for leadership positions. What precious gifts the fivefold ministry is to the church!

Just as the individual members cannot function properly unless they are in the context of the local body, men called to the fivefold ministry were given to the local church. In order to function effectively in their given ministry they must join themselves to the local body and move in and out from the local body.

The New Testament carries a stronger emphasis upon spiritual leadership than does the Old Testament. The New Testament is the spiritual fulfillment of the Old Testament leadership, which we have previously studied.

The book of Acts offers a good pattern for studying strong leadership in the local church. It offers the workable illustration of the teachings of the Epistles. In the early chapters of Acts we see a very simple form of government, beginning with only Apostles, then adding Deacons and finally Elders in all the churches. Elders included all of the Fivefold Ministry and not just the Apostles.

The book of Acts also shows the development of the local churches. All of the Epistles were to a local church or to an Elder within the local church. There were about 25 to 30 Local Assemblies mentioned in the New Testament. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 were written to the messengers (Angels), or pastors, of each of those local churches. In the early church, Angels were spoken of as "WATCHERS". We might see these letters to the church as Christ's message, through the prophet, to the pastors of the churches.

Strong leadership is the clear teaching of the New Testament. Even though the New Testament mandates a strong leadership, the structure itself is always kept simple, the simpler the better. Simplicity eliminates the power struggles, which occur so frequently among leadership ministries today.

A spirit of antichrist, nothing new to human society, seems to prevail in our day. It was present in the apostle John's time (I John 4:1-4), and is seen even more strongly today. As believers, we need not fear this spirit but we need to be watchful, those of us who are called into leadership ministries must be especially vigilant. We must always remember that He that is within us is greater than the spirit of antichrist, which is in the World.

The spirit of antichrist is vividly manifested today in the breakdown of authority seen on every hand. It has touched every facet of life--"civic", "secular", "military", "domestic", and has even effected the "church". Scriptures exhort us to emphasize the necessity of submission to those in authority in the church, the home, civil government, on the job, and in the military. We must earnestly contend for this truth lest the enemy gain an advantage over us. Don't allow a rebellious, unsubmitive spirit to control any phase of your life. This spirit will surely bring destruction.

The spirit of antichrist is endeavoring to coerce us into denying that Christ "IS COME" in the flesh. Christ is very present in his body today and he will continue to be present throughout this age. Are we not the body of Christ here on earth and does he not dwell in that body in a very real way? Paul answers this question in Colossians 1:27 when he speaks of: "...Christ in you, the hope of glory," and again in II Corinthians 4:10,11 when he writes: "...that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

The enemy of our soul is trying very hard to bring the believer to a point where he no longer recognizes the salvation given him by Christ's death in redemption and his continuing salvation experience. If the enemy can bring us to the point where we no longer properly discern the body of Christ many of us will experience sickness and some will even die prematurely as is indicated in I Corinthians 11:29,30. Foolishly, we frequently seem to tempt God as we blatantly and boldly strut about as though these verses did not exist in God's Holy Word.

In establishing proper authority within the local church, the Holy Ghost will never violate the priesthood of the believer. He will not hinder the effectiveness of the ministry of the individual as he functions in the body. Proper Scriptural leadership doesn't bring bondage. To the contrary, it brings liberty. God's work isn't moved forward by men's opinions but by men's obedience to God's established pattern as it is found in His Word. All that God has established in his Word brings liberty when properly put into practice.

Just as in the days of Jeremiah, a major concern of our Lord today is the restoration of both Flocks and Shepherds. In the Old Testament God promised that he would restore both if His people would:

""Turn, O backsliding children---And I will give you pastors, according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding," (Jeremiah 3:14,15)"

This promise is repeated in Jeremiah 6:2,3.

In His Word, God offers a pattern for the formation of local churches. Nowhere in Scripture does God teach a denominational type of church government. Each local church is to be a sovereign body, even though they are to enjoy fellowship with other local assemblies. This was practiced in New Testament times.

Now, let's look at the specific pattern that God has offered for the formation of local churches. First, he directed believers to assemble together in given locations:

""Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much more, as ye see the day approaching," (Hebrews 10:25)."

Next, He ordains where to establish a local church and often where not too. God may indicate the right location for a church to an individual via vision, witness of the Spirit, or in some other manner (Acts 16:6-10).

God puts in place the leadership ministries He would have in each local assembly. The Lord gives each local church the leaders they deserve and/or need. Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, recorded the responsibility of Senior Elders to assure that those being placed into leadership meet the Scriptural qualifications:

"...When they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed," (Acts 14:23).

Though most in the body recognizes that God designates leaders, they don't give much thought--pro or con--about the fact that God also brings in members. Paul writes, in I Corinthians 12:18, that: "...now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." We should carefully consider God's placement of members in the best church for them--especially in this day of running to and fro by many church members. It is recorded in Job that:

"The Lord said unto Satan, whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it," (Job 1:7).

Going to and fro in the earth is the business of our adversary. If God sets us in a particular church as members or Leaders, we must remain there until God moves us and not before.

Just as some believers come and go at their own beckoning, others whom God would move out remain with a bad spirit and bring disunity. He gave the fivefold ministry to watch, warn, instruct, rebuke, and pray to the best of their ability under the leadership of the Holy Ghost.

They should be sensitive to any spirit of disunity in the congregation and they should act against it.

We regularly see that some will leave who should have stayed, while others will stay whom God would lead to further and richer ministries. Each individual stands or falls to his own master. God will not force us against our wills. He may, however, make us wish we had obeyed His voice when he directed us to move or to stay.

Never! Never! Never! should we move because we have been "offended".

We must always make right what was wrong before leaving the nest, even if we are moving at the direction of God. If we make a wrong move, there is, generally, opportunity to make corrections and get back into the will and purpose of God for our lives. God still allows U-turns

God is well able to equip and enable us to accomplish whatever ministry He places upon our lives. Our goal is to edify, encourage, and comfort one another. The Holy Ghost is given that we might do this effectively. God equips both leaders and members to accomplish their several ministries within the body: "But the manifestation if the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," (I Corinthians 12:7).

There are some basic principles of church government, which we must observe if we want to fully follow God's pattern. The church is first to be a spiritual "organism" and then to be an "organization". However, we cannot ignore either "life" or "structure" if we desire spiritual strength and maturity as a body of believers.

Good church government will not produce spirituality. When God created Adam, there was structure before there was life. However, in the church of the living God, there must be life before structure. After there is life good structure in the form of church government will HELP to maintain life and will assist each organ to effectively relate to the other members. Don't depend on good church management to produce what only a healthy ministry of the Word is capable of producing.

God is looking first for good shepherds, and feeders, and then for good administrators. If we dedicate ourselves to feeding, He will help us to administer. He can anoint us with the gifts of "Ruling and Governments," or he can anoint others in leadership to assist along these lines. In the two portions of Scripture, (Romans 12:4-13; I Corinthians 12:7-11) dealing with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, we see that God made provision for the ruling and governing of His flock: Romans 12:8, "He that ruleth with diligence," and I Corinthians 12:28, "God hath set some in the church--helps, governments."

In II Chronicles 12:9,10 the Scripture tells us that while Rehoboam was in a backslidden condition the King of Egypt came and carried away the shields of gold which Solomon, Rehoboam's father, had made for the purpose of going before him as he entered the house of God. Rehoboam in this sad condition took it upon himself to replace these with shields of brass. Brass in the Scriptures speaks to us of judgement. So we see instead of going into the house of God with the divine blessing upon his life he is entering under the condemnation of God's judgement. How far do we have to go in the wrong direction before we have only a form of godliness left? Let's never specialize in substitutes, not when we can have the real thing.

It never pays to take the service of God into our own hands, God insists that we do things his way and not our way. The entire church, each member and each leader, must be a vital organ, alive and functioning effectively in the body. Until this is put into practice it only theory and is unprofitable.

As we consider the foundations of spiritual church government, there must first be quality, then procedure; first condition, then method; first organism, then organization. As we look at quality, the elders and deacons, must be qualified Scripturally. As a family requires parents, and as a flock requires a shepherd, so the household of faith requires spiritual leaders. We need the fivefold ministry so that we may come to maturity within the body.

Leaders can't give you what they don't possess. They must meet the Scriptural qualifications seen in I Timothy 3. If we lower the standards (qualifications) of God's Word, it will show up in the quality of the work produced. This brings frustration for both the shepherd and sheep alike.

Church leaders must be firmly established in present revealed truth and be able to convey it to the body of believers. It is essential that feeding be the heart of any ministry. Good government cannot exist without good feeding. Without good feeding, all types of disease and complications will set in and eventually the church will die though you may still have the skeleton (FRAME).

A common error today is the belief that we don't need men to lead us, that "we have the Holy Ghost to lead us--don't we?" The Spirit leads and governs the church through human vessels (Hebrews 13:17). To bypass everyone and seek leading only from God is usually a sign of a rebellious and independent spirit. These people often use a verse of Scripture out of context, such as I John 2:27:

""But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath aught you ye shall abide in him,""

to justify refusing submission to God-anointed and God-called teachers. He gave teachers. The reason for this is given in Ephesians 4:8-15 where we are told that all of the fivefold ministries, including teachers, are given to the church to bring her to perfection, unity, and maturity.

If we desire to go our own way instead of accepting the truth of God's Word, he will permit us to take a scripture out of context to support any error we choose to believe. This will be to our own destruction (II Thessalonians 2:10-12). If we choose to reject the teaching that God has ordained a strong oversight ministry within the body of Christ, God will permit us to find isolated Scriptures to satisfy our rebellion and independence.

God appoints leaders and directs them to set the house in order. They must, as in Old Testament times, walk in the Spirit of unity and submission to one another. It was commanded, in Isaiah 52:8, that:

""Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.""

There is to be no power struggle within the body of believers, the Elders are to flow together in unity. By following the Scriptural pattern of plurality of Elders, there is a balance between those who would be harsh and those who would be permissive. In the past I have seen this balance work wonderfully in they Body of Christ. Strangely, God seems to give an unusual blend of ministries to each local church. Ministries compliment one another and bring a balance that edifies the whole body. In order to have this supernatural blend of ministries, each leader needs to be quickened to the fact that God only governs through men to the degree that He is able to GOVERN THE MAN HIMSELF. If God can't govern you, don't be mistaken in thinking that He can govern through you. He cannot.

The leaders of the local church are not to "lord" it over the flock nor to make decisions independent of them: "Neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples unto the flock," (I Peter 5:3). A true theocracy is God leading through men who are called and ordained by God, who recognizes the scriptures as the final voice of authority.

Every leader must ask himself if he is a dictator or a theocrat. Leaders must be well acquainted with the scriptures and be able to lead the body into a life which compliments scriptures. Their authority is delegated from God in accordance with scripture. Authority does not come from man--neither from others nor from the leaders themselves.

In a thorough search of the scriptures, you will not find a single instance where the Elders were voted into office by the people. The possible exception to this is found in Acts 1:26. Even if we consider that God allowed lots to be cast in order to choose the twelfth Apostle, it is not

this practice which we frequently see in churches today. In many churches politics and personalities become heavily involved, and carnal nature often is the deciding factor. Senior ministers always appointed the Elders after the individual's ministry had been proven and confirmed by God. Even then no appointment was made until the Scriptural qualifications had been met.

The Elders work was always spiritual work and the true people of God willingly submitted to them because of the Divine call upon their ministry. Their ministry both proved itself and made room for itself: "A man's gift maketh room for him and bringeth him before great men," (Proverbs 18:16). There was never any coercion from either the people or the individual to get a man into office.

Study Appendix A at the back of this book where I provide an extensive contrast between the spirit of a dictatorship and the spirit of a theocracy.

The choice of the twelfth Apostle by lot has, throughout the Church Age, been an issue of much controversy. In this instance we do see that two were chosen but it is not clear whether they were chosen by ballot as is common in our democratic society. Lots were cast. You could say that this vote was by chance. However, we do see that they did pray and ask God which of the two He would choose to take part in this great ministry.

The people chose Deacons when men were found who were qualified for the work. Next, they were presented to the Elders for approval and ordination. This is first seen in Acts 6:1-8. The Apostles saw the rationality of being released from the temporal tasks within the Body of Christ. They called upon the body to choose qualified men. After the nominees were presented to the Apostles, they prayed and laid hands upon the Deacons, setting them aside for their work.

As leaders of God's heritage we are not to rule without considering the flock. If we try to lead with an independent spirit we will eventually lose the respect and cooperation of the flock and may even drive some into rebellion. An example of strong leadership and response, of cooperation between followers and leaders can be seen in the relationship between Jonathan and his armourbearer:

""And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart," (I Samuel 14:7)."

This is also illustrated in the relationship between Ezra and the Israelites as seen in Ezra 10:4: "Arise: for this matter belonging unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage and do it."

Let's follow the Scriptural pattern. It is God, who established the Scriptural chain of command, so why shouldn't He work through it? However, leaders must be extra sensitive to the moving of the Spirit since it is an important part of their ministry.

Before there can be any lasting spiritual growth in the body there must be unity and fellowship.

Leadership must teach this by example and precept.

Only when we are in one accord can God flow freely through the body.

When there is division and carnality even the gifts and ministries are unable to edify.

Let us examine the Corinthian church, as seen in I Corinthians 1:5-12, for one example of unedifying worship and ministry. This church excelled in the gifts of the Spirit. However, due to division, strife, and carnality within the church, the gifts were not edifying to the body. Therefore, Paul saw the necessity for exhorting them, in I Corinthians 12-14, concerning the operations of the gifts.

A genuinely heaven sent leader will produce love and unity among the believers. Unity and love is necessary for body ministry to function effectively.

Both Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12 emphasize body ministry and both go on to stress the necessity of each member relating properly to all the other members.

There are foundations that need to be established if we want to develop true unity in the body.

First there must be a Christlike attitude at all times, in all things. A good motto would be: "What would Jesus do in this situation?"

Secondly, our speech must always be such that it edifies and ministers grace to the hearers. Don't use someone's ears as a human garbage can and don't let anyone else use yours as one either.

Thirdly, there must always be a loving spirit, even when we have been spited.

Fourth, the truth must always prevail in our words, actions and in the impressions we leave with others. If there is really going to be unity, others must be able to trust and believe us.

Last but not least, we must have a submissive spirit, to God, to our leaders, and to each other. Let's not let the spirit of rebellion against authority grip our hearts and lives.

God led and ordained leaders will do all that is within their ability to create strong cooperative prayer and worship in the body. This is the very hub and life of the church.

It is not "organization," but life flowing from one member to the other.

If there are no gifts or ministries in operation in the body there is no need for governing. We need spiritual "motion" before we need spiritual "government".

Only after there is spiritual motion can spiritual government guide unto spiritual growth.

The "Body Ministry" must be taught, contended for and practiced.

It is only through this ministry that the body receives exhortation, edification and comfort as seen in I Corinthians 14:3: "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

Chapter Four Homework

Read Chapter four and answer the questions at end of chapter.

Give the office or officers seen in each of the following Scriptures.

Acts 13:1

Acts 14:23

Acts 15:22

Acts 20:17

I Corinthians 12:28

Romans 12:7,8

Philippians 1:1

I Timothy 3:1

I Timothy 5:17

Titus 1:5

Prepare to present to the class one of the three basic forms of church government practiced today

Papal or Episcopal:

Presbyterian:

Congregational:

Chapter 6: The Independent Church

Every New Testament church was an independent church. They were "self-governing", "self-supporting", and "self-propagating". Each was completely free of all ecclesiastical authority outside of its own local membership.

Organized groups of churches with a central headquarters did not come until much later. This latter structure was intended for the purpose of maintaining moral purity and doctrinal truth. Although it was a noble aim within itself, it was not seen or taught in the context of the New Testament pattern. In fact, this type of church government tends to constitute unscriptural authority for the local church.

The New Testament pattern for the authority of the local assembly is solely "self-governing". There is no pattern of denominational ecclesiastical leadership seen within the context of the New Testament. The leadership of each new Testament church rested within it with them at times looking also to those who founded the work.

Independent churches should not be "lawless" or "divisive". It is of utmost importance that all churches have fellowship and unity with other local bodies of believers. Otherwise we could very easily become stagnant and self-centered in our worship and efforts for the Lord. Although inter-congregational fellowship is necessary, the concept of denominational control for the sake of purity has not proven to be effective. Nearly all-historic denominations have turned to liberalism, modernism, apostasy, and lack spiritual power. This is not only true of the old line denominations but also of many of the more recently formed ones, those formed within the last eighty years or so. These facts show us that the denominational concept has failed to do exactly what it was meant to maintain.

I must confess that some, if not many, "Independents" have also been deficient in these areas. The very fact that they are independent, however, has confined their lack of purity and doctrinal error to a given body or, at worst, to a given locality. The denominational concept allows the error to spread rapidly throughout a particular denomination. The rapid spread of denominational groups within the Pentecostal ranks have accepted divorced and remarried brethren into the ranks of the ministry. This is not only true of doctrinal error such as this but is also seen in the liberal life style among many of the denominational ranks.

There are several "safe-guards" of authority remaining within the local assembly. It retards the misuse of authority by politically ambitious men. In the denominational structure there is ample room for politics to become involved as there comes the need for sectional, district, and national leaders. Thus, men strive for these positions outside of the local assembly. It also hinders false doctrine from spreading beyond the local church. Finally, it keeps groups of churches from forming into denominations.

Error and heresy generally come because of lack of spirituality and sound doctrine--not as a result of the wrong kind of church government. Those found in these errors are usually divisive and lawless or completely spiritually dead. It is very easy to become spiritually dead when the proper mixture of the study of the Word and the anointing of the Holy Ghost is not present in an individual's life. This leaves us open for error. A spiritual person is one who, as he delves into the Word, seeks the anointing to illuminate the Word to his heart and mind. The spiritually dead are those who, though they may as readily study the Word, they look at it from a carnal, natural outlook and in turn, often become very heady and high minded.

It is difficult to establish what New Testament church government was like since the lack of Scriptural information on the subject makes it so that we cannot accumulate a complete blueprint of the construction of the church. However, enough is given in Scripture for us to build a firm foundation of proper New Testament church government. We will find that ALL MAJOR ORDER was given and ALL MAJOR QUESTIONS were answered within the Holy Scriptures. We must accept the New Testament pattern as valid for us today.

As an example we will begin by looking at the church in Jerusalem and glean what we may from her. Though the Apostles and original leaders of the early church located their ministries, for a time, in and from Jerusalem, it was by no means a legislative body for all the local churches then established. By reading the book of Acts very carefully we can find there are no Scriptures that contradict this view. We will look further into the reality of Acts 15 in Chapter 7 of this book.

The first twelve chapters of the book of Acts deal primarily with the churches at Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, and Antioch. The first church to be set in order was, naturally, the church at Jerusalem, since the first converts worshipped there. This can be seen in a review of Acts 1-7. It was in this church that the first Deacons were chosen so that the Elders (Apostles) could be released from their temporal duties to be able to give them fully to the spiritual work. We also see in this church the development of the fivefold ministry as seen in Ephesians 4:11,

""And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;""

The second local church, documented in Acts 8, was established in Samaria. It was founded under the leadership of Philip, who was one of those first Deacons chosen in Jerusalem. In the interim, he had progressed to the position of Elder since he is spoken of as Philip the Evangelist in Acts 21:8. There is no indication that either the Apostles or the church at Jerusalem sent him to Samaria. His mission to

Samaria was not a pre-planned evangelistic mission. We see strong evidence within this very chapter that he was an Elder of the body of Christ who moved under the direction of the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice Acts 8:26,29,39, "The Angel of the Lord spake unto Philip," "The Spirit said unto Philip," "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip."

If only the leadership of the churches of today would be under the same leadership and direction. How much better than man's leadership or that of some headquarter doing the directing. There were no superiors, or mission boards directing the New Testament church but, rather, the Holy Ghost directed it. How much better off our churches would be today if they would rely wholly and completely upon His direction.

The next church, documented in Acts 10, was established at Cornelius' house at Caesarea. Here, again, we see that it was completely and altogether under divine direction and not under man's direction. God used a series of supernatural means to bring about the establishment of this church, even against Peter's better judgement, who was the instrument used to be the founder of this church. For we see that Peter, a Jew would not enter into the home of a Gentile, which Cornelius was. However, God, through a vision, convinced Peter that it was completely God's will for him to go into Cornelius' house and preach to them.

Finally, we see the church of Antioch being set in order in Acts 11:19-30. This church was not established by the original Apostles but by other able men called and chosen of God for this purpose. Never, never, never, in Scripture do we see one church put in a place of authority over another church. This is an important principle of church government for us to keep in mind. Authority over the local church is, only and always, the responsibility of the local church leadership, under the direction of the "ONE HEAD," the Lord Jesus Christ, by the anointing of His Spirit.

While on this thought, I would like to mention that the principle of local independence is the pattern for the ministry of the Elders. Pastors have no authority over other Pastors, nor do Apostles have authority over Pastors, etc. The authority of each individual within the five-fold ministry lies within each one's own sphere of ministry, "For we are laborers together with God," (I Corinthians 3:9). An Elder is not under the direction of other ministries, yet we do see that the Elders of the local assembly do release other Elders to the clear leading of the Holy Ghost for that individual's life and ministry.

Notice in Acts 13:2-4 that Paul and Barnabas were released, not sent, by the remaining Elders at Antioch that they might follow the clear leading of the Holy Ghost, who in reality is the one doing the sending. If there is a need for disciplining an erring Elder, it is the responsibility of the responsibility of other Elders within the given local assembly to administer the discipline.

This is a good place to stress the necessity of all Elders being part of a local assembly yet free to work out of the local assembly. However, some may choose not to be part of a local body to their own detriment. It could be that they would rather not be in the position where discipline could be administered when needed.

Each Elder is responsible to minister the Word with, "power and demonstration of the Spirit," (I Corinthians 2:4). Only then will our ministry be effective. It is always well to remember that our ministry is not to have dominion over the souls of men, but to be "HELPERs," in building their faith according to the power that works in us (II Corinthians 1:24; Ephesians 3:20b).

Though one church, or one Elder, does not have dominion over another there is a New Testament pattern for "mothering" churches. Keep in mind, however, that it is for the purpose of sheltering the new body in its infancy. When "mothering" a new church we are to help provide scriptural ministry, to help establish and protect her in her early stages. It should be solely, not an administrative relationship. Also it should be a completely voluntary relationship on both ends of the ministry--the mother church and the mothered church.

All leaders of both assemblies must qualify for leadership as per I Timothy 3. It should be the call of the Elder or Elders establishing the new assembly to do so. It is not to be the decision of the mother church to establish the new work. She is simply there for support and protection in the early period of the new church's life.

In concluding our thoughts concerning the first churches to be established in Acts 1-12 we must recognize the special call of the Apostles. Jesus called the twelve, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles," (Luke 6:12,13). This was in the divine plan and design for the church.

The number twelve represents divine government and administration. A brief look at some Bible twelve's will bear this out. Jacob had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. At Elim we see twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees (Exodus 15:27). Could this be typical of these twelve sons and the seventy elders of Israel in the Old Testament and the twelve Apostles along with the seventy Jesus send out in Luke 9:1; 10:1?

In the Tabernacle we see the twelve stones in the Breastplate (Exodus 28:21), twelve loaves of shewbread (Leviticus 24:5). In the Temple twelve oxen bore the molten sea (I Kings 7:25). These are similar to the twelve Apostles who bore the Gospel of cleansing, with the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

In Revelation we see twelve stars (12:1), twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, twelve foundations, names of twelve Apostles of the Lamb, twelve pearls (21:12-21), and the tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruit (22:2)

In the light of all of this we must say that the twelve Apostles had a unique place in the building of the church. First, we must recognize that they were personally chosen, trained and commissioned by the Lord Jesus Himself. Thus, their word and doctrine was final and authoritative, "And they continued steadfast in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship," (Acts 2:42). Paul also wrote that the Church was, "...built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," (Ephesians 2:20).

In this aspect of their work and ministry, the Twelve had no successors. This part of their ministry was "PERFECT" and "PERMANENT". However, their ministry of church planting and caring is a continuing ministry. The ministry of the Apostles has not ceased in this respect, "And God hath set some in the church, first Apostles," (I Corinthians 12:28).

No one man or specific group of men is essential in our day for Christ is the builder of his church (Matthew 16:18). He is building by His Spirit. His Spirit will call, direct, lead, empower every worker to accomplish his work in His way.

The last sixteen chapters of Acts cover the expansion of the church outside Judea. We see churches being established throughout the Roman Empire. Roughly seven years was spent on ministry solely within Judea, before this expansion began. The church, the body of believers, not just the local assembly, was well established both numerically and spiritually. Those that were scattered were not babes in Christ. This may possibly provide a good clue as to why, when the church began to establish local churches, throughout the Roman Empire, they grew rapidly both numerically and spiritually.

Next, I would like us to take a brief look at the church in Antioch, the third largest city in the Empire. While the church remained at Jerusalem, the bud of Christianity opened, but when it reached Antioch it burst forth into full bloom. The congregation at Antioch was, naturally, a strong Gentile congregation while the one at Jerusalem was strongly Jewish. The Gentile church was vividly portrayed in Ephesians 2:11-22. This church was not established by the twelve Apostles, yet it was built upon their foundation (Ephesians 2:20) since the church was built upon their doctrine, even though their bodily presence was absent.

We see the five-fold ministry spring forth in its fullness at Antioch, "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain Prophets and Teachers," (Acts 13:1). The Church at Antioch did not "Ordain" or "send" the laborers, they simply "released" them to the clear direction of the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:2-4).

The Scriptures make us wonder who it is that is directing many of the ministries of today, "the Church," "the Overseer," or the Holy Ghost". Is it "Thus saith the Lord" or "Thus saith the board"? We should not intend to destroy sound Scriptural church government, but neither do we want to do away with Holy Ghost government and replace it with human government. Human government has destroyed many a man's ministry, and weakened many a local church's ministry by missing God's direction and anointing. To have God's best for our ministry and for His church; we must always be under the direction of the Holy Ghost, both individually and collectively.

This brings us to ask how does one know the leading of the Holy Ghost for our own specific ministry? In considering the five-fold ministry the Holy Ghost will burn His call into your inner being. God will, in some way, speak to you personally about your own calling. It may be through Scripture, to your inner consciousness, by the witness of the Spirit to your heart, through that still small voice, or even by a strong compulsion to fill a need. Thereafter it may be confirmed by outside ministries, such as the prophetic ministry.

All too often, individuals tend to rely on the confirmation of an outside ministry to direct them and it plays havoc with both their ministry and the local church. For those of us who are presently functioning in our ministry, let us not violate the "priesthood of the believer", and try to direct everyone into the ministry we think they should be called to. Yet, as the Spirit leads us, let us permit Him to use us to confirm the young seeker in the direction the Lord is leading him into.

Chapter 7: Principles of Church Government

Chapter 8: Plurality of Church Government

Chapter 9: The Ministry of the Apostle

Chapter 10: The Ministry of the Prophet

Chapter 11: The Ministry of the Evangelist

Chapter 12: The Ministry of the Pastor

Chapter 13: The Ministry of the Teacher

Chapter 14: Elders

Chapter 15: Deacons

Chapter 16: Church Discipline