

Part I

HOUSE BUILDING

You are welcome to this edition of Light in the Evening Time. We will begin our meditation this evening by observing that we are continuing in the series: God's Pattern Church. The last two editions were mainly introductory considerations. Even though certain vital things were mentioned in those two editions, which will be further developed in other editions, we will start up today's meditation by saying that God loves to speak to his people. In doing this, he would always employ the language his people understand. When God speaks, man should have an understanding of what he is saying. It is for this reason that divine things are set forth in human language, in figures familiar to man, so that his understanding might be fruitful.

Now, the challenge of living the Christian life is set forth in scriptures under the figure of building a house. How a man lives as a Christian is shown in the character or nature of the house he is raising up. Just as it is with individuals, so it is with local assemblies of God's people as they seek to fulfil their commission. The character of the work they do, and their belief system: those things that inform their practices and their teachings are all set forth in the figure of building a house.

Now, if you will turn with me to Mathew 7, beginning from verse 24 (a passage we are all familiar with), we will do quite some study. Mathew 7:24-17.

“...Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. ...”

The context is the Sermon on the Mount. Mathew chapters 5, 6, and 7 cover the essence of three days teaching. These teachings set forth the lifestyle of the kingdom, the life style of the true believer, what our lives should be like on daily basis. We may tern call it kingdom lifestyle. At the close of his teaching, he gave this illustration. We are titling this meditation House Building.

First, we are to understand that in these four verses of scriptures, the Lord is speaking to Christians. Neither the wise man nor the foolish man can be said to be a non-Christian. Remember the parable of the ten virgins (Mathew 25:1). The Bible says five of them were wise while the remaining five were foolish. Quite often, we are quick to charge a situation like this to the unsaved to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as saviour. But here, Christ was speaking to his disciples.

Notice the first few verses of Mathew 5. There it is said he went up and sat on a mountain, and his disciples came unto him and he begins to teach them. The foolish and the wise in those four verses speak of the believers. Notice, both classes are said to hear with understanding the words of Christ. And the Bible says if any man is not born again he cannot appreciate spiritual truth, he cannot see into the kingdom of God, he cannot have an entrance into spiritual things (John 3:3). The wise the foolish have this common element that they are able to understand the words of Christ. But, the difference in both, lies in the fact that while one obeys, the other does not obey. And, the emphasis in the original Greek language is rendering true obedience. It is for this reason that the Greek word translated “sayings” here is *Logos*, which is the same word we were studying in the last two editions. There is a difference as we found out between the *Logos* and the *rhema*. In the beginning was the *Logos*. The full range of the word of redemption is set forth in scriptures under the Greek word *Logos*. The foolish believers do not consistently allow the principles of God’s word to influence their lifestyle.

Now, if you will come with me to verse 21 of the same chapter, we will be able to gather something that is quite instructive and that will provide a key to strengthening our understanding of the observation just made. Mathew 7:21-23

“...Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. ...”

Now, it is not a word against prophesying in his name or casting out devils or doing many wonderful works in the name of Jesus Christ. The Christian faith is wholly supernatural, and there is no way you will walk with Christ that you will not be introduced into the supernatural. To cast out devils is a must. To prophesy in his name, including teaching and preaching and the primary forms of prophecy are things that the believer must walk in on daily basis. To do wonderful works lifting men up from oppression, depression, sickness and diseases and from a confused mind is part of the mission of the church. But here is set forth the truth that some give a selective attention to God's word. They pick out what is of fancy, that is what is attractive to them, and leave out the rest hoping that by that which they have chosen to give themselves unto, God will approve of them. The phrase "*I never knew you*" mean you did not have an intimate relationship with me, you veered off at a tangent, you took that which you wanted. The word translated "*know*" is the same word used in Genesis when it was said that Adam knew his wife Eve, and it speaks of intimate relationship. So, the phrase I never knew you here means that I never knew you as one of those who came into an intimate fellowship and walk with me following me all the way to the end.

Quite often, walking in the supernatural has been greatly abused in the church. Men touch the fringes of divine power and they begin to Lord it over and exploit those who come to hear them, using it to their own advantage. But God is restoring the fullness of power back to his church and with it such character disposition that agrees with the nature of Christ. This is important. Returning back to our passage we find that the wise man hears and does the will of God. But the foolish hears, and may selectively do some aspects that appeal to him, but does not allow the word of God to fully rule over his life.

Then, the next point we want to consider here is that Christ is either a rock or sand. That is, to the wise, Christ will manifest himself as a rock. But to the foolish, to them that do not regard his words, Christ will also not regard their words or confessions of faith in him. He will be sand unto them. He is sinking sand to the disobedient. He is a rock of safety to the obedient.

That Christ is to God's people what they choose to be to him is set forth in several scriptures. So, do not think that it is the unsaved that is building his house on sinking sand. Rather, it is the saved that hears God's word but does not pay particular attention to all the provisions in it. He allows his carnal mind to determine how he will live his life. To such, Christ is sinking sand. But to the believer who obeys and desires to know more and more of his will and live according to it, Christ is the rock.

Turn with me to Psalm 18, we want to emphasise this aspect that Christ is to you what you choose to be to him. Psalm 18:22-26 says, "***...For all his judgement were before me...***" the original says each one and everyone of all the judgements, and the judgements here means the

doctrinal teachings, the principles of God's word... *and I did not put away his statues from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.*

“...Therefore, hath the Lord recompensed me according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight...”

Now follow closely the reading.

“...With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. ...”

The word froward means is the disobedient, the presumptuous; the self-willed; one who lives carelessly is the froward, One who undermines the rights of God in his church by doing his own things and setting aside God's mind is the froward. It says to the froward, the Lord Jesus Christ will show himself froward.

Now, turn with me also to Isaiah 8. What we are trying to emphasise in all these is that Christ is to his people what they choose to be to him. If we obey his words, he will obey our words. Remember what is said of the relationship between God and Moses, we are told "*and the Lord obeyed the voice of Moses*". But Moses began by obeying the voice of the Lord. This is important, he is to his people what they choose to be to him.

Isaiah 8:14 says, **“...*And he shall be for a sanctuary...*”** (that is a place of safety, a place of help, for in the sanctuary of God are the things of God found); *but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence ...* So, he is either a stone of stumbling or a rock of offence... *to both the houses of Israel, and for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* And verse 15 says, *And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.*

God is to his people what they choose to be to him. He knows what we confess as our relationship with God, but what we are in our actual estate is most important. *The foundations of God standeth sure, having this seal: the Lord knoweth them that are his* (II Tim 21:19). If you

think you know the Lord and belong to him, it says you should depart from iniquity. From the heavenly side God knows those who are his. And from the human side, let those who profess faith in him take out time to ensure that they live according to his will.

We return back to Mathew 7. Here, we are shown that a set of things happened to both the wise and the foolish. In verses 25 and 27, we are told concerning both the house that was built on the rock and that which was built on the sand that the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house. Whether a believer is living his life according to the mind of God or not, all will experience these things spoken of here that answers to divine judgement, diving measurement: the floods, the winds and the rain. But while the house built upon the rock stood firm, that which is built upon disobedience fell flat, and the Bible says, "*Great was the fall of it*".

Now, we have looked at the individual believer, and, we can transfer the same figure to the corporate setting, the local assembly of the Lord's people. For just as the way a believer lives his life is taken as building a house, so, the believers in a local congregation are by their works building a house. If you read Ephesians 4:11-16, 2:19-22 in the light of 1 Peter 2:4, 5, you will find that the church (the local assembly) functioning on daily basis is said to be building some house. And what house they build, the character of that house is determined by the extent to which what they do conforms to the will of God.

Now, we move a step further. I want to draw our attention to some scriptures that demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation. Now, we all know that there are three distinct stages in the building of a house. The first is that part that is not visible to the human eyes, the sub-structure, which we normally call the foundation. Thereafter we have the main body of the building. Finally, the roof structure comes on. So, we have three distinct stages.

Now, the scriptures show to us that Christ is the foundation of the church. I will like to reading out some scriptures, first as it appears here, then taking it in a slightly expanded form to bring out the meaning.

Speaking to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:19 – 22

“...Now, therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord;

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit....”

Now, the chief corner stone, the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation. The ministries of the apostles and prophets are foundational. They are foundational ministries. The apostles and prophets themselves are not the foundation but their teachings, their preaching, the setting forth of Christ in all of their teachings and spiritual labours is what is meant by being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner. This is important.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul was speaking to the Corinthians Christians. He said in 1 Corinthians 3:10 - 11

“...According to the grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ....”

Christ is the foundation. And we are built upon the foundation of Christ, first as it is set forth in his teachings in the first four gospels then in the writings of the apostles from the books of Acts down to the Book of Revelation. It is for this reason that we are told that the foundations of the city of God, the foundation of the walls contain the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. That is the foundation contains the ministrations, the labours of these apostles.

What all the above mean is that we are to understand that Christ is the foundation. And, the practical implication is that the teachings of Christ, the revelation of the person, power and purpose of Christ in the raising up of the church, is the foundation. And Christ who is the cornerstone is also the top stone (the capstone - Zech 4:7) and also the main building ... the building is Christ all the way. This is important. And, this is how we must understand it from the reading in Hebrews 6. There we are told.

***“...THEREFORE leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundations of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,
Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement....”***

These doctrines of Christ are said to be foundations. Thus, how the church is to operate must be drawn from the consideration of God's word.

Now, turn with me to Hebrew 8, I will read verse 5. The reference is to the typical or symbolic tabernacle that Moses was asked to build. That was not the real house of God, but God showed the complete confidence he had in his plans and purposes and how that he will settle for nothing else than that which, is in his mind by saying that even that typical house, that shadow of a house, that type of Christ should be built according to the pattern.

In verse 5, we are told that certain things done under the Old Testament "*serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, saith he, see that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount*".

This is a direct quotation from Exodus 25:40. Moses was to build, but he was to build that typical house of God according to the pattern that was shown him on the mount, the mountain of God, and the mountain of revelation. And, in Exodus 31, when the people were to build, a special anointing came upon them additionally. They had seen the pattern, but they were to be made able to understand the pattern and build according to it. This is important. Even in the natural setting, a building is made according to the pattern set forth by the architect. Any building may be good to live in, but from the onset, the architect knows exactly what he wants, and he cannot settle for anything else. As it is with the human architect, so is it with the divine architect. He said, "*I will build my church and the gate of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18).

We are told that man may co-labour with God (1Cor 3:9), but the builders themselves must have their eyes fixed on the cornerstone drawing their inspiration from the things that are set forth in Him. Matthew 21:42 says, "*the stone which the builders have rejected, the same has become the head of the corner.*" That is a situation that is always there; for men who seek to build the Lord's house to reject the Lord, his instructions and that which he has set forth in his will. But all that build must build according to the pattern. The scriptures reveals the pattern, there is nothing

left to the human mind. This is important. We have been labouring to set forth these principles of God's word, so that when we begin to go into details of the deviation of the visible church systems from the purposes of God, we might find that it is because the mind of God was not consulted. There was no patience in waiting upon him. God cannot be known in a hurry. There must be intimate relationship with God. Infact, it can be shown that the principles of God's word are given here a little and there a little. That pattern of revealing themselves has been adopted by God so that there will be continuous dependent upon him.

How much of waiting upon the Lord do the servants of God give themselves to? Some just stay around a few things supposing that somehow God will be satisfied with their labours. But all things must be built according to the pattern. Christ is the pattern, and the pattern in practical terms is set for us in all the writings of scriptures. May the Lord help us to focus on these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In closing, we turn back to that representative church, that church that answers to the mind of God, that church that contains those elements that the Lord Jesus Christ approves of: the church in Philadelphia. Whereas the Lord Jesus Christ is the pattern church, the church in Philadelphia is an expression of how a local Assembly of God's people can operate according to that pattern. Rev 3:7,8

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;

“...These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works...”

This is worth noting properly. What we say to ourselves may be important, but what God says is of the utmost importance. And here, God was saying to this local assembly of his people, "*I know thy works*". He knows our works because he measures it. And from what we see in Isaiah 28:17, after he has measured our works, he said judgement will he lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet. And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

When things are not done according to the mind of God, there are certain things built up in the practices and teachings of the people that hold out a hope of the future with God to them who listen which hope is not the true hope. And, in future editions, little by little, we shall show what this

refuge of lies are and we will see how total will be the collapse of those system of things that are built upon those lies.

The Lord help you, the Lord bless you, the Lord cause his face to shine upon you, in Jesus name. Amen.

Part II

HOUSE BUILDING

We will begin our meditation by listing four observations drawn from a consideration of God's word on our subject. How much of these we will be able to cover remain to be seen. But we trust that we should keep these four points before our eyes as we look up unto the Lord to speak to us.

The first of these four things we want to observe at this beginning is that Moses was to the Old Testament church what Christ is to the New Testament church. This is a very significant statement.

Secondly, the ministries of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (notably the eleven apostles and Paul who came in after the departure of Judas to his own place) and of other writing ministries in the New Testament, that is all those who wrote the New Testament. All these persons have a superior standing in the kingdom of God than any ministry after them. We must note this superiority. The apostles of the Lamb have a place in the overall scheme of things that no one (no believer) can assume to have. Putting it more clearly, no one can exceed the glory that the Lord has given to these ones. And we are talking of the place of their ministries in the operations of the church. That is the second point. The apostles of the lamb occupy a superior position than any other ministry that the Lord has raised up since the church was birthed on the day of Pentecost.

Thirdly, the body of Christ is God's means of expressing life. We are to find that since this is so, in this last hour, the body of Christ will occupy the centre stage. No longer will man take the central stage. The body of Christ is the focus and not one man or several individual men. God is going to place a lot of emphasis on the place that the body of Christ occupies in the expression of Christ on the earth. God is no longer interested in stardom. It may have served him in time past, but at this last hour, he desires to raise up a body of sons that shall be able to reveal him in all of his glory.

These four points must be noted properly. And we go straight into the meditation, taking them one after the other. We want to establish the first point. And in doing this, we turn to Hebrews 3. Hebrews 3:1-6

“...WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus:

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

For every house is builded by some man: but he that built all things is God.

And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end....”

Now, verse 5 is a direct quotation from Numbers 12. What is set forth here is simply this. No man came to a glory that exceeded that of Moses. And all men that laboured and operated under the Old Testament did so according to the principles of God's word laid down by Moses. In that sense, Moses laid the foundation of that house (the old testament church) and others built upon that foundation. Now, turn with me to Numbers 12, and you will see the context from which Hebrews 3-5 is taken.

Numbers 12:1-8. The occasion is the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness, from Egypt to the Promised Land. And after two solid years of that journey, this event took place.

“...And Mariam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he married an Ethiopian woman.

And they said, hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

And the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, hear now my word: 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.

My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?..."

Here is demonstrated the superiority of the ministry of Moses over and above all others. God said, if there be a prophet among you, I will make myself known to him through a dream or through a vision, but Moses does not occupy such position only but something higher.

Now, I want to comment on verse 8, God said, with Moses He would speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches. Thus, ministering to an individual by vision or by dream can be said to be a dark speech, for that also must be interpreted before it may be received as God's word.

Verse 7 reveals that Moses was the nursing father of the Old Testament church. That is, he laid the foundation. And any other prophecy and ministry that came forth after the time of Moses drew inspiration from the writings of Moses. There is no prophecy in scriptures from the book of Joshua down to Malachi but that we can find the principles of God's word in the writings of Moses either confirming it or rejecting it. Moses stood superiorly over and above all others. That is why in 1 Corinthians 10, we are told that Israel of old all baptised unto Moses.

Now, Moses in this sense is a type of Christ. Christ occupies a position over and above all others. The headship of Jesus Christ is the first thing to take note of when talking of the proper functioning of the church. If the house of God is to be built according to God's mind, if God hath said, "*build me a sanctuary that I may dwell among you*" (Exodus 25:9), if God's purpose in the raising up of the house of God is that he might dwell in it, then the house must thoroughly satisfy him. Christ is the pattern church and he is the one who supervises the building of that church which is according to his mind.

Now, turn with me to Ephesians 1. Our purpose in all of these is to show that the headship of Christ is to the body. All of Christ's exaltation is to make possible for the body of Christ to fulfil its mission. Therefore the setting aside of his headship either wholly or in any measure, answers to the setting aside of that system of things which meets divine approval.

Ephesians 1:15-23, take particular notice of the last three verses.

“...Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

Far above all principality, and power and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

And hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all ...”

The headship of Jesus Christ is to the body. The exaltation of Jesus Christ is to the body. All that may be said of the Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-eminence is said in order that we might see him as the suitable head over the body of Christ. He does our thinking for us. How we operate must be informed by what things he says to us. He is the head. Now, in the natural setting, that is, in the human body, our head does the thinking for us, and, it is inconceivable to think of a headless body. But that is what really operates when any assembly sets aside the authority of Jesus and set up some man or some things in its place. This is the first point. The Lord Jesus Christ is to the New Testament church what we find Moses occupying in relation to the Old Testament church.

Now, we move to the second point. That God said concerning Moses, “*Moses is faithful in all my house*”. “*Moses is not just a prophet, he is a nursing father, he is a founding father. All come to acceptance with me who operates according to the things that I have commanded Moses to teach and to write down in the first five books*”. And that is summing up what may be gathered from Num. 12. Now, if Aaron, Miriam and others were to say something other than that which Moses had said, then, there will be plurality of heads, many heads. It is the satanic system that has many heads. Remember the dragon in Revelation 12. But the woman, the overcoming church shown to us in the same chapter is seen as having only one head and the crown upon her head has twelve stars that stand for the ministry of the twelve apostles.

Now, if any man of God or men of God arise setting forth practices in the visible church system other than the apostles of the Lamb ordered there would be confusion. It is for this reason that we are told in Revelation 21 that the names of the twelve apostles of the lamb are written upon the foundations of the walls of the city: the new Jerusalem. This is important.

How may we judge a man's ministry? How may we judge a man's service? How may we look at a set-up and say it is according to the Lord's mind or it is not according to God's mind? By measuring it against the principles of God's word quickened to our understanding by the Holy Spirit. The word of God measures whatever we profess to do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Living Word (the Lord himself), and the Written word as quickened to our understanding by the Holy Spirit continue to be that which influence our operation. That is the second point.

Although the glory of this latter house will be greater than that of the former, it is not to suggest that the Lord will by-pass the principles already set forth in his word governing the new testament and set up something else. What is here shown is that a demonstration of God's power and glory shall come forth in the closing hours of the church age that will assert the authority of the kingdom of heaven over and above all other kingdoms. The Bible says the kingdoms of this world shall be subdued and to become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ (Rev 11:15). These observations take us to the third point.

Now, the body is the instrument for expressing life. The human body is given to us to express the life inside of us. What answers to that in the spiritual life is the body of Christ. The body of Christ has been given to the Lord Jesus to express the life of the Son of God on earth. No longer will one man here, one man there bestride the church world like a colossus. All such stardom will be done away with in this last hour. The fullness will be revealed in his body, and, it takes a many-membered body to express the many-sided beauty and glory that are in Christ Jesus.

Now, we have taken the first three points. In discussing the second, we touched on the fourth, which we will now revisit. And, that is, the church must function according to the principles of God's words. A properly functioning church must be seen to operate the way the apostles operated. The early church was run on a simple note, and all of that provision, for over three hundred years served God supremely. It was later when Spiritual dryness set in that another system of things was introduced into the church. Even since man's prevails in the visible church systems. There shall be however, a restoration of the due order, the divine order as the church age winds up. In fact, this restoration has already begun.

Now, I will like to go straight to Ephesians 4 that discusses some of these other points we have mentioned. We have looked at Ephesians 1:15-23 and took particular note of the last of this nine verses, and now, we go to Ephesians 4. How should a church function? Or putting it more simply, what things constitute the proper functioning of a church? Ephesians 4:8-16

“...Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things.

And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelist; and some pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ

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:

That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

From 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. ...”

Here then are the four things that may be drawn from this passage that answers to the proper functioning of the church. First, the headship of Jesus Christ: It is he that fills all things in all. He ascended to the highest heaven and descended to the lowest earth that he might fill all things. Submitting to the rule and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ then is the first mark of a properly functioning church. That takes us to the second.

The second is that there must be ministry gifts operating in that local congregation. The calling of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers must be found in the midst of the assembly. We can call these five-fold ministries the apostolic ministries. They fulfil a ministry to the body. There must be a ministry to the body. There must be persons that have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry in the given congregation. In particular the anointing of the apostle and prophet must be in some. They are the expressions of God’s authority in the body. This is the second point. Then, the third point: There must be the ministry of the body to itself. The body must build up itself. There is a ministry to the body, and there is a ministry of the body for the

building up of itself. And, the purpose of the five-fold ministry is to prepare the general house unto the work of the ministry.

There is a fullness of Christ, which cannot be known until more, and more persons within the local congregation know how to minister the life of Christ. In such a setting Christ may break forth in a fresh revelation of himself, his power and glory from just anyone in the local assembly. If there is no provision made for that, if every church service witnesses only persons that have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry dishing out the stuff, as it were, and there is no corresponding ministries flowing from the congregation, Christ cannot be fully known. There is no greater way to move into death than for one person or some few persons to operate as lords over God's house. That is the meaning of verse 12: "for the perfecting of the saints with a view to fitting them for the work of the ministry".

The priesthood of all believers is a core issue in the building up of the house of God. Under the Old Testament, the priesthood was by the law of carnal commandment. If you are not of the tribe of Levi, you cannot be a priest. In order to be a priest, you must be of the tribe of Levi, and you must come from the family lineage of Amram, Aaron's Father. The distinctions under the Old Testament revolved round certain carnal ordinances, certain natural laws. But, under the New Testament, it is by the power of the endless life that we serve him, in the power of the indwelling Christ. And every believer, everyone who is born again has Christ life indwelling him: Christ in us is the hope of glory. There is no superiority of one man over another in the New Testament church. The Lord Jesus Christ is so great that it takes more and more persons to be available for him to reveal himself more fully.

There must be the ministry of the body to itself. We must so operate as to encourage everyone to be subject to this arrangement the Lord himself has instituted.

That takes us to the fourth: the life of consecration. All of the church is a holy priesthood. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and, we are all called in the Lord's calling. There are no two callings: one for the priesthood and the other for the laity as the visible church world has laboured to make men believe. It is one and the same calling on all: the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And, the life of consecration makes possible for the principal witness of the Holy Spirit to be received by all. He it is who makes Christ known, and when all are available to him, then Christ is revealed more and more.

The church must move forward upon the wings of the revealed word of God. And, it is only a life of consecration entered into by all vital members of the local congregation that makes possible for God's house to be built according to the mind of God. And these are the essential things we find in the Philadelphian church. That church is said to keep his words, and not to deny his name. Operating according to the principles of God's word is something that will bring the result that God is looking for in and among his people.

Now, we will conclude this meditation by making a reference to something that happened at the time of Samuel and at the time of David. You will note that Samuel came in as the last of the Judges and as the first of the prophets. He closed the era of the judges and opened the door to the era of the prophets. He also anointed Saul, and David

Now, Eli was said to be an unfaithful priest. His two sons, Ophni and Phineas in their moral attitude of taking other women to bed confirmed that order as unfaithful. During the time of Eli, just before he died, the Philistines came against Israel. Israel carried the Ark of the Covenant to the battle. That ark which stood for the presence of God was carried to the battle. But they lost that battle, because even though the ark symbolised God's presence, they had not been faithful to observe the provisions of God's word, and God chose to be sinking sand to them who had set aside his headship. This is a far more important observation than many may realise at the first reading.

The ark was carried to captivity in the land of the Philistines. Twenty years later, when it was to be taken back faithful and loving David encountered a serious problem. There was death, Uzziah touched the ark, and it was said that this happened because they did not seek the Lord's face, and they did not operate according to the due order. What the due order is, will be the subject of our meditation in the next edition.

The Lord bless you. We have rushed this meditation but we trust that God will bring these words into your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.