



God's
PATTERN
Church

Hope Owwah

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1

The Crown of Pride

Our first reading will be taken from Revelation 19. It will be necessary for us to establish the link between this message and the things that have been shared in the previous editions, especially during the last six months. We read verses 1-3

19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God:

19:2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

19:3 And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

The first verse of the passage says “*after these things...*” We ask, after what things? From what we read in the second verse showing the judgement of the harlot, we know that the reference is to the last two chapters that precede Revelation 19, i.e. Revelation 17 and 18. In Chapter 17, the revelation of the judgement of Babylon is given, and in Chapter 18, the judgement itself is described. Here we find a people rejoicing in the overthrow of Babylon, and with all it, marks of unfaithfulness and we find in the visible church systems today.

It would be recalled that in the message: “*The Language of Prophecy*”, we observed that the word “*heaven*”, in this context, refers to heavenly-minded people. Thus, it was not

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just that there was rejoicing in the celestial glory... Of course, we know heaven rejoices to see God's purpose advancing in the earth... but the reference here is to the faithful class, those heavenly-minded of the Lord's people who follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, who are influenced in everything they do by the principles of God's word.

So straightaway, we come to a very basic principle in the dealings of God: Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:17 that judgement will begin in the house of the Lord. It will begin at us, using the words of Peter. In God's plan and purpose, He uses the house to judge the house. That judgement will begin in the house of God is clear to all. But that the instrument of judgement will be drawn from within the house is what we want to emphasise in this message.

Recall that the seven letters to the seven were the main focus in the immediate past meditation. We promised that in this new series, we should be looking at God's Pattern Church. This is because we know that ever before God's judgements are visited upon a people, He, in compassion, will sensitise them to things pertaining to judgement. He will always make clear before hand both things that please Him and the things that He disapproved. He does these through the ministry of the word. Those who have reverential fear of the Lord will in the circumstance break free from things God condemns. Others, who lack a proper disposition to the things of God will, quite often disregard warning signals. Wrist still, these take up an attitude of discrediting any word that challenges them to deep repentance. But quite definitely the hour of judgement is near to be revealed. It is a time all true seekers after God to give ears to what the Spirit of prophecy is declaring. In the next few editions we would be looking at issues God's judgement will concern itself with.

Please, come with me to Isaiah 28. We have as a subject "*The Crown of Pride*". We will discuss principles of divine judgement by appealing to a prophecy that relates to our day. Notice the certainty of God dealing decisively with all things

that obscures His purpose and undermines His counsel. Isaiah 28:1-8;

28:1 Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

28:2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

28:3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet:

28:4 And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

28:5 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

28:6 And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

28:7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

28:8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

Now, there are many figurative expressions here, and we will do well to begin to take them one by one and to examine them. This will enable us to have full entrance into this prophecy, which has direct bearing upon the events of the last hour.

We begin with "*The Crown of Pride*". What does this mean? Let us for a while come back to Revelation 19. Something is said of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 12. It says, "*his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself*". Here we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ is seen wearing many crowns. We know that it is not possible for one

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man or individual to literally put on many crowns. What then does this represent? It represents the great victories that the Lord Jesus Christ has won, and the great marks of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, power, grace, which are so fully developed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The crowns upon his head reveal his achievements, the character of His majesty.

And now, if you will turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:19, you will find yet another reference to a figurative use of the word "*crown*". Paul was writing to the Thessalonians Christians amongst whom he had laboured. He had seen the great power of God coming upon that land, gathering people unto the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, constituting them into a local assembly of God's people and leading them in the knowledge of God's will. To these people, he was writing, in a form of a follow up. And in verse 19 of the second chapter he said certain things that have direct bearing on our subject matter. We read verse 19 and 20.

2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

2:20 For ye are our glory and joy.

Here Paul was saying that the Thessalonians Christians were a crown of rejoicing to him and his fellow workers. When the scriptures talk about the crown of rejoicing which, the faithful shall put on, the reference is not to some physical, shining objects, but to the glory that shall be worked into the believer because of the anointing of fruitfulness that has attended the believer's labour. The crown of rejoicing in 1 Thessalonians 2:15 is figuratively speaking of the results that accrued to Paul and such fellow servants that worked with him.

Let's get back to Isaiah 28. What is the crown of pride? One disturbing feature in many of the church systems of our day is recourse to empty show of pride in successes recorded in ministry. Quite often what are counted as marks of success

hardly meet God's approval. It is even more abhorring when because of such measure of success real or imagined; they cause the Lord's people to worship at the altar of their assumed greatness. In the figure used to depict their sad condition – "*the crown of pride*" God witnesses against it. Babylon the Great, the great city, always boasting herself of her achievements. So much for the first figure of speech used in this passage.

The next is "*the drunkards of Ephraim*". Recall that Joseph had two sons, which his father, Israel adopted. So, when we talk of the twelve tribes of Israel, it includes the two sons that Joseph had: Manasseh and Ephraim. And you will recall that when Israel was blessing these two sons, though Manasseh was the firstborn, he laid his right hand upon Ephraim, and conferred upon him the firstborn rights. Ephraim means fruitfulness, and Manasseh and Ephraim combine to give us a two-fold description of all of the Lord's people. Manasseh is that part of the church that has long gone into apostasy and dead orthodoxy; while Ephraim stand for the Pentecostal church, that arm of the church that know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Baptiser in the Holy Spirit.

But again when we come to the figure of Ephraim, God uses yet another figurative expression to distinguish between two involved classes: the unfaithful and the faithful. In Jeremiah 31, we find the figure of Mount Ephraim. There, the reference is to the faithful who serve in the will of God. But when the word Ephraim is used without qualification, it refers prophetically to those of the Lord's people who have known God in salvation and in the baptism and workings of the Holy Spirit but are nevertheless walking measurable in disobedience to God's revealed will. This is especially applied to Spiritual movements, denominational churches having these characteristics

The drunkards of Ephraim therefore speak of persons who stand in the room of Teachers, Preachers, Leaders, but who nevertheless are overtaken by the intoxicating wine of this evilage. Remember that in Revelation 17, we are told that that evil lady, that lady of the kings, that harlot woman carries a

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golden cup in her right hand full of "*the wine of her fornication*". Now, the drunkard, quite often, is off his senses. Persons who stand in the room of leaders in the house of God ought to be examples in life and service, wholly given to the purpose of God. But when in effect, they lead the flock of God away from the will of God it is a pitiable sight. The pursuit of personal agenda and the wine of illicit pleasure deaden spiritual series and sets up a soul against God.

Then the next figure we want to examine is "*fat valley*". We are shown in several places in scriptures that one of the things God does in bringing severe judgement against that system of things which no longer vitally nor adequately represent his interest in the earth, is to first of all dry up the resources of such systems. Remember before the Medo-Persian overthrew the typical kingdom of Babylon, the first thing it did was to dry up her waters – the river Euphrates, which was the main river that serviced the empire of Babylon. We read in Revelation 16:12 that just like it happened with ancient Babylon, river Euphrates will be dried up in the case of spiritual Babylon. That is in a figure. The figure is that the supply system that keeps the visible denominational church systems going on in unfaithfulness will be greatly attacked by God.

Fat valleys refer to persons with great substance, with much financial blessings, who stand to keep the church systems going. We are told that there will be a judgement against these fat valleys. Those who support systems that are opposed to God are direct enemies of God, and they will first of all, bear the brunt of divine displeasure. May God dry up those resources, which in their use are directed against His redemptive purpose.

Isaiah 28:1 says, "*Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower*". That is, the prospect of visible church systems that are unfaithful to God, continuing in their religious empires, expanding their frontiers, conquering and ruling over the people like despots, will dim. It would be in essence a fading flower.

And that prospect is rested upon the fat valleys, those that supply the systems with funds. It says the glorious beauty, which is upon the head of the fat valley, shall be as a fading flower. In Isaiah 40, the princes among men are referred to as flowers while the ordinary people are referred to as grasses, Verse 7 says *the grass withereth, the flower fadeth...* One of the things that God will surely do in this last hour is to dry up the fat valleys. The financial support base of great denominational empires seems unassailable. But God will break through with the force of His righteous judgements.

We will just take two or three more observations and we close our meditation. We are told that these fat valleys are overcome with wine. Now, the teachings of the drunkards of Ephraim have had the effect of overcoming these financial wizards, these men of great wealth. Their senses have been overcome. So, they think they are serving God when they make their resources available to serve the programs of the church systems. They are overcome with wine. And we are told that the glorious beauty, which is upon their heads, shall be a fading flower.

In verse 3 we are told emphatically that the crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot. But under what feet? Verse 2 brings out the answer. And that is something we will want you to take very seriously. Because, in a previous message we talked about the power of justification, and showed that the work the Lord is involved in at any given time is that which should exercise His servants. And that when we co-operate or co-labour with the Lord in that which He is doing at any given time, then our services are counted as justifying works. And we used the figure of Rehab. While in the figure of Abraham we said we must give our all in pursuing the outworking of God's plans and purposes, in Rahab, we are shown that no matter at what costs, no matter what interpretation men may give to our actions, we must be involved in what God is doing at any given time. We are not to be in the vanguard of those whose works are contrary to the will of God.

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Let us return to verse 2 of Isaiah 28. It says, “*behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.*” The hand in spiritual symbolism always talks about works. They also talk about the works that are fulfilled by persons who have been called unto the estate of the five-fold ministry. So, here we are told that the Lord hath a strong and mighty one. The one individual referred to, is actually a many-member body. God is gathering to Himself as many persons as will give him ears. First He will cleanse them, (because the pollution of the times and the unfaithfulness of the denominational church systems measurably stain us all). When the Lord calls us unto Himself, He first of all, beams His searchlight upon our lives, and we are able to see some awful things in our lives that we were not conscious of. And we begin to cry out unto the Lord in repentance. Then He begins to cleanse and strengthen us to stand as His mighty ones.

Let's take a look at the “*tempest of hail*” and “*mighty flood of water*”. Through the ministry of teaching and preaching, as we shall show in later considerations, God will manifest such things as are according to His will, so that those who are found in it might rejoice in the goodness of the Lord towards them. At the same time, He will manifest those things, which are contrary to His will. This will lead those who have the spirit of the fear of God but find themselves in these things, to cry out unto the Lord for help and deliverance. By prayers, by the ministry of the word and by prophetic decrees, the present unfaithfulness in the visible church systems will be brought low. About seven hundred years before the Lord Jesus Christ came, Isaiah spoke this prophecy, and we shall see the fulfilment of this in our time. In the years ahead, some couple of years ahead, we will see things happening in the church world that answer to judgmental acts of God.

May the Lord bless and keep you. May He stir up in your heart a strong desire to submit and to keep on submitting to His

processing. Only such persons who render due reverence to God may abide in the day of the coming judgement.

2

God's Pattern Church

We will be starting a series in this meditation subtitled *God's pattern church*. The burden specifically, is to speak in the Lord's word to His people, as He has revealed it to us. We have in the previous twenty-two editions (which are contained in the book *Living letters from the Book of Revelation*) shown that from the same holy beginning of the church history, two histories developed; the one in unfaithfulness charting an earthly course, and the other in faithfulness charting an heavenly course. We found in all of those ministrations what results from faithfulness and what results from unfaithfulness.

Now, in taking these series (and this edition is merely an introduction), we would like to suggest that we come with open minds. Because that which God will do, he will bring unto completion. We expect that God will shine His light more and more on His word. Only those who submit to the dictates of His word will be relevant in the divine scheme of things in the years ahead.

We begin with a reading from Revelation 21:22. The passage in context discusses the New Jerusalem. We have seen that this is the church in perfection, or putting it more correctly, the church being brought to perfection. We are also shown in the finished picture, what the church is when she is brought to the perfection of the image of Christ. And still talking about this holy city, verse 22 says

21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

This is important. When you come to the city of God, the holy city, this New Jerusalem, we are told there is no temple found in it. Then it goes on to say that the temple therein, is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. Not the temples but the temple of the city has two great expressions: The Lord God Almighty in His power and great glory makes the church a supernatural organism. The Lamb element indicates that those called to serve in the city of God, must have the same character structure that they find fully developed in Jesus: vicarious sufferings, selfless service, ministering to the people in the interest of God, not taking advantage of God's calling and graces to exploit the people. So, the temple is a two-fold description: The Lamb of God and The Lord God Almighty. The temple service in the city of God is not patterned after the Levitical order of the Old Testament church.

This should arrest us very powerfully, because this is the day when there is an increase in rituals and ceremonies, even in Pentecostal assemblies. When we read and understand this in the light of what Jesus said in John 2, our understanding will be more fruitful. He was speaking to the Pharisees, and He said unto them, *destroys this temple, and I shall raise it up the third day*. And it was said later that He spoke of the temple of his body. Let us distinguish between the "*house of God*" and "*the temple of God*", two terms used to describe God's church.

Now, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ can be described as the house of God, when the emphasis is the services that the church fulfils towards the visible world, although it includes the idea of her devotions to God. But when we call it a temple, the main emphasis is the devotions of the church to God. It is something that becomes characteristic of all her services as she comes to adulthood in the Lord. Even when ministering to men, there is a continuous reflection of credit to the character and glory of God. So that in worship, or teaching and

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preaching, it is all in the same vein; the character and glory of God is ministered to.

We see here that, *'the house of God'* is the church in the early stages of her growth, and the temple of God is the church when she comes into the full scheme of things as God has designed it to be.

Now, let us turn to Exodus 25:8. You will recall that when God's power went forth through the ministry of Moses and Aaron to deliver the children of Israel from the Land of Egypt, they were brought out into the wilderness of Sinai. There, God manifested Himself to them. In Exodus we see God coming to dwell with His people. In Leviticus, God shows how man, in whom He dwells, can receive more and more of the glory of His life. In the book of Numbers, we are shown how God judges His people in the Light of the unveiling of Himself to them.

In Exodus 25:8, we read something that is interesting. There He says, *and let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.* God commanded Moses to make Him a tabernacle, a sanctuary, since He desired to dwell among the people. And from Exodus 25 to Exodus 40, those sixteen chapters describe the details of this great structure that God commanded Moses to build. We are told God cannot and does not dwell in building made with hands, even though He once commanded Solomon to build him a temple (Acts 7:48). He dwells in buildings that are fashioned by the power of His Spirit. Jesus was God's temple, and the church today, the Lord's people, is the temple of the Living God. When this emphasis becomes clear at the beginning, it will assist in delivering others and us from so much error and deviations from God's pattern for His church.

Now, you know in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul was writing to the Christians, and he said to them, *"know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ"*. A little later, he said, *"know ye not that your body is the temple of the Living God"*. So God's emphasis at this last hour is the church, His people, these

Living Stones through whom He is raising up an invincible, mystical sanctuary for the blessing of humanity. This is important. That is the first thought that should sink into our minds as we enter into these series of teachings.

Now, let us go to 1 Peter 2, which is quoted from Isaiah 28. From Peter's inspired pen, one readily sees that the prophecy in Isaiah 28, which we began to examine in the last edition, speaks concerning the church and the events of this last hour. In 1 Peter 2, beginning from verse 1 and taking note of verses 4-6, particularly, we read,

2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, all evil speakings,

2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

The church is a word used to interpret the Greek word "*ekklesia*". It is that Christians are called out of the world and invited unto the inheritances that are spelt out in scriptures. The meaning of *ekklesia* is "*called out*". In Philippians 3, Paul tells us of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. We are out of the world, from among men to become divine in its finished picture. And here in the figure of a building, we are told that the church as God's house has Christ as the chief corner stone. All parts of the building take their characteristic lines from Him. This being so, the house is to be built in a continuous reference to Christ. But if the builders reject Christ, what house could they be building? But the stone, which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner, the chief corner stone.

We know in this last hour, the Lord will clean up the church and lay the foundation again, in the unveiling of Himself, and must have all things done according to His will.

It is clear that there is a confused picture of what the church is supposed to be... because you only need to run your eyes through ten, twenty denominational churches, and you will find great contradictions and conflicting signals. But God has not left us in the dark to just grope for light and to try to do things to the best of our human knowledge; God's pattern for His church is clearly revealed in the scriptures. God is in this last hour demanding a return to the pattern His wisdom has graciously provided for the church. When the Lord Judges the various assemblies of His people, He does not meet any operating in full conformity with His mind. But those who begin to repent and open up to His instructions and corrections and begin to pattern their affairs according to that which is revealed receive a further help. A change is a must to obtain the change that brings in perfection and glory.

That God in the midst of the religious confusion of the present hour and desires to constitute a people according to His will is indicated in the letter God commanded John to write to the church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13). We will not be doing a full expository consideration of it now, but it is important that we go into it.

Of the seven churches, only two churches had the mark of divine approval, nothing was condemned in these two church types: the church in Smyrna and the church in Philadelphia. The letter to the church in Philadelphia contain much of what will assist our minds to understand the things that God wants reproduced in His church. When that is read and considered side by side with the history of the early church as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the teachings of the apostles, in the epistles, we find the picture coming out clearly of how the Lord will have His church operate. We would find the things that make for the heavenly growth of the body and what the true inheritances of the church are.

Now let's move to Revelation 3:7. We are challenged to see that as it was then so it could be now. In the midst of today's religious confusion, a local church can operate in harmony with God's will. No assembly, with open mind, should say, "*We are already operating in that*". But if we seek to pattern ourselves increasingly according to that which is revealed, while yet not claiming to be that church, but evermore seeking God in humility and holding unto him, it may be that the glorious promises made to these seven churches will be fully realised in us. And thank God that there are things already happening that are evidences of God's commitment to bringing about a great church revival in this last hour. We will just take the reading before rounding up the message.

3:7 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;

3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

In the next edition we will be looking expositively at this passage. And we will spell out certain key things, which

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answers to the Lord's mind and receive the Lord's approval. The Lord bless you, the Lord strengthen you, and increase His son in you. And he will do away with so much of what is called the refuge of lies. And we have better be prepared for a great shake-up, for that must come, in Jesus name. Amen.

3
Part 1

The Church in Philadelphia

We are so grateful for another opportunity to come your way preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are continuing in our series on God's pattern church. In this edition, we will be looking at what in scriptures is an expression of that pattern. Turn with me to Rev. 3. We will be looking at the letter written to the church in Philadelphia. For a background, you will recall that there are seven such representative churches, standing for all times, in the room of all churches. That is, there is no congregation of the Lord's people, worth its name, known of God as belonging to Him, but that it takes a picture of one or the other of these seven typical churches.

Come with me to Revelation 3:7-13.

3:7 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;

3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

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3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

We begin by making two strong observations. One, the central concept in all of the New Testament revelation, is the body of Christ. That is, all of God's revelation detailing how He would carry out His programme upon the earth is bound up with the body of Christ. It is the central theme of all scriptures. Now, the body is an instrument for the expression of life. The proper functioning of the body, in its local expressions, is one of the strongest features in the outworking of God's purpose. If the church does not function properly according to the mind of God, then divine results cannot be received. It is important to know why all of these seven letters are addressed to the church, to the angels of the churches, but the call to overcome is addressed to the individual believer in the local church. The individual can only overcome when he is grown in a spiritual environment that is according to God's will. This is important.

Now, what is God's pattern church? Again, who is God's pattern church, for we know that the church is a people. We answer in this manner: The Lord Jesus Christ himself is God's pattern church, and the church in Philadelphia is an expression of harmony with this pattern in a local setting. That is, in discussing the pattern, we are talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the temple of the living God, He is the house of the Living God, He is the church of the Living God, And when

we are talking about a practical expression of what all of these mean amongst men, the church in Philadelphia gives us that pattern.

In our examination of the features that we find here in the letter to the church in Philadelphia, we will be looking at four things. And of course, we will be moving from one to the other, discussing them in as much detail as possible. Now, the first thing we will want to draw our attention to in this letter is the way the Lord introduces Himself to the church.

Secondly, we concern ourselves with what Christ approves of in the Philadelphia church. Thirdly, a warning is given. That is, even when a people are operating according to the mind of God, they need to watch against drifting. They must constantly lay hold upon the things the Lord has revealed to them, only then can they be kept on track. So, a warning is included, and, that is the third feature in this letter. Fourthly, a promise is made to this church type, a promise to the overcomer.

Let us begin with Christ's presentation of Himself to this church. He says in verse 7, "*these things saith He that is holy; He that is true*". And lastly, "*He that hath the key of David*"... And as having the key of David, he opens and no man can shut. He shuts and no man can open.

Now, let us look at these three elements in Revelation 3 in the light of how God reveals Jesus Christ in Isaiah 28. They are parallel passages in this case. You will remember we used this passage in connection with "*The Crown of Pride*". Our purpose for now is to see the things mentioned in Revelation 3:7 also discussed in Isaiah 28:16. Notice we are talking about the church, the church that is built by Christ, the church which, when built is Christ, and the church that must be measured by the things that are found in Christ. Christ is the ultimate picture of the church when perfected in His image and likeness. So, in building the church, the finished picture is always in view. Christ is the building plan, Christ is the builder, and He builds by means of Christ, and what is built is Christ. This is important.

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Now turn with me to Isaiah 28:16. There we read, *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.* Now, we take verse 17 quickly. It says, *Judgement also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall over flow the hiding places.*

First we observe that Christ is He that is holy. The moral glory of Christ is referenced here. The humanity of Jesus is in view. Christ is the holy one, tested and tried amongst men and found to be absolutely one with the Lord God Almighty in all of his works. So, Christ is the holy One. In Isaiah 28, He is said to be the tried stone. It says "*I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone*". Zion is a type of the church Hebrews 12:22 says, "*we are come to Mount Zion*". Psalm 48:1 and 2: "*Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the side of the north, the city of the great king*".

I lay in Zion, I lay in the church for the building of the church, a foundation, a stone, a tried stone. The tried stone of Isaiah 28:16 answers to Christ presentation of Himself to the Philadelphia church as the One who is holy.

Then secondly, in Revelation 3:7, he is presented as the one who is true. And that answers to the phrase "*a sure foundation*" in Isaiah 28:16, so, while the word "*holy*" refers to His being separated from sinners undefiled, holy in life and conduct, the fact that he is true means that he does all his works and mission in line with the will of God. The Father speaks; He receives it and goes to fulfil the will of God. He is faithful. While the word true refers to the character of the ministry he comes to fulfil, the word holy relates to the character of his person. These are two great matters, and we shall touch upon them when we examine the seventieth verse of Isaiah 28.

We shall be going straight to the third element. He is said to have the key of David. The reference is to the fact that He is the elect one; He is the chosen one. It is upon Him that the Father has set the seal. What He determines is final. He has the first say, the final say and the only say, in any matter that pertains to the kingdom. He is an elect stone. Notice this picture of one possessing the key of David is drawn from Isaiah 22. We may not be able to go into all of that, but the fact that Christ is the elect one is what is set forth in Revelation 3:7 as "*he that hath the key of David*". He is holy, He is true, He is elect. And in verse 16 of Isaiah 28, the fact of His election is figured in His description as "*a precious corner stone*", elected of God. 1Peter 2 also bears this out. He is the one elected; He is the one upon whom the Father has set the seal. No other!

In Christ's introduction of himself to the church in Philadelphia, he is saying to us in effect that He finds these same characteristics true of them. Now, the first thing he says in his letter to the church in Philadelphia when He addresses her directly is to be noted carefully. Come with me to the first part of Revelation 3:8. It says. "*I know thy works*". It is of great importance always to remember that all our works are carried out in His sight. He will bless that which is in accordance with His set goals.

Whether our works are done in secret or in public, whatever we think of ourselves notwithstanding, the truth is that the Lord knows them that are faithful. The Lord knows our works. We may ask, "*How does He come to know our works*"?

The fact that He knows our works is because He measures them, of what sort they are. Whatever we may say of ourselves, whatever we may say of our congregation, there is One who knows our works. There is the elect One, the precious corner stone who comes to measure our works. And He relates to us according to how our works are found to be. Let us look closely at Isaiah 28:17.

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28:17 Judgment also will I 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.

These are figures borrowed from the building industry. In the word “*judgement*”, is used in connection with the moral character of His people. He will measure them. The word “*line*” denotes a tape; a tape with which the dimensions of a building are ascertained. He is the holy One; He is the precious corner stone. All the building must take its bearing from the corner stone. He will measure the character of His people. Their character must conform to His, since He has the power to fully save them. The good things in our lives are a result of His works in us. Therefore, if there is anything in our lives that is out of course, it is because we are refusing him to be Lord in that area. Since He knows what He wants and He himself is the finished picture, he cannot settle for anything less. In talking about judgement being laid to the line, the reference is to testing the character structure of the Lord's people.

Next, it says, “*righteousness to the plummet*”. Whereas, judgement to the line is something like a horizontal measurement, the plummet is vertical, speaking of conformity with the Father's will. The reference is to the faith structure of the Lord's people, that is, the content of their belief system. What is believed and taught and what influences their practices are to be inspected, and judged. Notice, in the figure of a building when you are laying a column, you want to be sure it is upright. The plummet is used to ascertain its verticality. Our relationship with the Father, conformity with his will, is in view in this aspect of judgement. So, our faith structure, what we believe and teach the things that instructs our practices will be measured. Remember that He knows our works because He measures our works. It says and “*And righteousness shall he lay to the plummet*”.

When we come back to Revelation 3, we find some other things the Lord says about this church. In the closing part of

verse 8, He says, "*thou has kept my word and hast not denied my name*". What does that mean? In verse 10 He says, "*thou has kept the word of my patience*". So, what is this thing that He found in the Philadelphian church? If you read all seven letters to the seven churches, no other church is addressed in the same way. Now, when He says thou hast kept my "*word*", the Greek word so translated is *Logos*. So, it talks about the *sum total of the unveiling of Himself to His people*. God, the invisible, makes himself visible by His word. In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him, there is nothing made that was made. In him was life and that life was the light of men.

The *Logos* is God revealed to men, so men can see him, touch him and handle him. The word kept in Revelation 3:8 is the *Logos*. That is different from the *Rhema*, which is an aspect of the revealed word quickened to the understanding of the believer. "*Thou hast kept my word*". And we can show, as we shall do later, that the full range of truth set forth by the term *Logos* covers all things that are contained in redemption.

If you read John 14, Matthew 7, you meet this same word. It says "*he that hears my saying and believes it and obeys it*" is he that built his house upon the rock. But he that hears it and does not obey it is as a man who built his house on the sand. Christ is either a rock or sand, depending on the word received and obeyed or the word heard and rebelled against.

Now, in practical terms, what does the *Logos* instruct us to keep? Come with me to 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3.

1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

“*Your work of faith*”, that is the first division of the *Logos*. The word of faith reveals itself in works that are done in harmony with that faith. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith: one-third division of the inheritance of the saints. The second division is the *labour of love*. Then the third is *the patience of hope*. Within these three are found all of the things that God looks for when he measures His people.

When you read Revelation 2 and 3 concerning the things written to the seven churches, you will find these are the elements that were picked; the faith, the hope, the love. Now abideth these three (1 Corinthians 13:13). In the present time abideth these three. Now in the future will abide these three: faith, hope and love. Those three things here set forth constitute the *Logos*.

But notice the way these three things are presented in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, the works of faith, the labours of love, the patience of hope. And that is why we find a little later in Revelation 3:10, “*because thou has kept the word of my patience*”. In relation to the *works of faith* and the *labours of love*, they speak about the outreaches of God’s people, while the *patience of hope* talks about the upreach, and it has to do with the blessed hope, the hope of full union with Christ in glory, honour and power.

In Isaiah 28 it is said that when the Lord measures his house, He will sweep away the refuge of lies. One of the characteristics of the unfaithful visible denominational church systems is that the prophetic word is almost entirely missing. It is the prophetic word that stabilises a people and keeps them focused upon Christ. Prophecy of scriptures provides the only sure way to deliver man from himself and services that have no bearing with the divine purpose. Most things taught and held out to the people as the hope of the believer are mere lies. But in this last hour Christ will sweep away the refuge of lies. As He is measuring His house, He will cause so many of His servants the world over to rise up, take up the measuring line

and measure the house (Revelation 11:1). For He will empower His servants to show to the church world, the things that are not in harmony with His revealed will. The refuge of lies will be swept off. They are the wine of the fornication of that harlot woman. All of these things call for times of separation and waiting upon God continually. Isaiah 28:16 says "*he that believeth shall not make haste*". There is time element in knowing God. We are to look unto Jesus, draw inspiration from him, and conduct all our affairs in harmony with His will.

This is just an introduction to this letter, and I believe that you will be glad when the refuge of lies are swept away and the true and proper foundation of the hope of the believer set forth clearly. The Lord bless you, in Jesus name. Amen.

4
Part II

The Church in Philadelphia

We have observed that in the last edition that the delivery of the word was rather fast. Thus, in this edition, we want to review some of those things, which we said in the last edition, going through them again. We are conscious of the importance of possessing a very clear understanding of these principles of God's word, which will assist us to take major decisions that will affect our lives in the days that are just ahead.

We began by saying that Christ is the pattern church. We are talking about the Lord Jesus Christ as God's pattern. The word pattern is used in reference to a building. The Lord Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. All parts of the building take their characteristic lines from the chief corner stone. Christ is the pattern church. And we said additionally that there is an expression of that pattern in the local church. That this is a possibility is set forth in the letter written to the church in Philadelphia. You understand that there are seven letters in all, and those seven churches are typical; representative. The seven churches reveal characteristics that may be found in any local Assembly of God's people all through the course of the church age. In the midst of the religious confusion, there is that church that satisfies divine pleasure. The church in Philadelphia types that church.

Again, we find that Christ builds up the church to be conformed to his own image and likeness. The building as we have seen is Christ the Builder is Christ. In the finished picture what is seen is Christ in His fullness, Christ in the fullness of His image and likeness. This is important.

What we see in the letter to the church in Philadelphia, are features that we can relate to. What are the things the Lord is looking for in His church? How is the church to function properly? How can divine results, results pleasing in the sight of God attend the works of God's people? And we answer that the Lord has not left us ignorant. He makes known in His word what things please Him. We have these things adequately revealed in the letter to the church in Philadelphia. And that is why we will be looking at this letter to the church in Philadelphia for quite some time.

Now let's turn to Revelation 3:7, 8. We will be commenting on those features in the church that interest us.

3:7 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;

3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

We saw in the last edition that the first important thing that the Lord does is the introduction of Himself. He is the holy one. That talks about the moral beauty and glory of Christ. He is the true One whose labours are in exact harmony with the Father's will. He does not work from himself but He works with what the Father counsels and reveals. He is the true One. Then He is the elect one. He is the one that holds the key of David. He is the one who exercises judgement. The Father judgeth no man but has committed all judgement to the Son, that all might worship the Son as they worship the Father (John 5: 22).

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Then again, He says to the church in Philadelphia, "*I know thy works*". We are to read from Isaiah 28, two verses that enable us to understand this passage well. And someone may ask why is it that a passage is read in Revelation and the discussion on it is drawn from Isaiah 28? And we answer that there is only one mind behind all scriptures. All scriptures speak of Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. "*Ye search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, but they are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39). So, come with me to Isaiah 28:16;

28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

There is time element in knowing God. Don't hurry out of the presence of God. For prayers and communion is a two – way system. We speak to Him and He speaks to us. And we increasingly speak to him by the things He speaks to us. That is true fellowship. We don't hurry out of the Lord's presence. So, he says in verse 17;

28:17 Judgment also will I 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.

There is indicated in this verse the fact of a two-fold measurement of the believer's works: character and service. And what is more, it is predicted that much of the labour of God's people contain what has been described as a refuge of lies.

The same verse provides that the refuge of lies will be flushed out by "*the hail*" and "*the waters*" of divine appointment. In the 16th verse, all that is said about Christ is to show His qualification as One who has the right to execute judgement. This means so much as we shall later see. For now, let's allow a few comments on the 16th verse. First,

Christ is described as the tried stone. In the days of His humanity, especially in the three-and-half years of ministry, Christ was grievously tested, tempted in all points but proved to be perfect, separate from sinners, undefiled. It is fitting then, for this glorious personage is made the cornerstone, the sure foundation on, which is built the human – temple of the living God.

Christ, indeed is the pre-eminent One, His varied offices include all that is of ultimate value in executing the program of God. He holds the keys of David and grants entrance to the full enjoyment of life rights and redemption honours to those whose “works” He adjudges approved.

But, our emphasis in this meditation is on the things He says concerning the Philadelphian church. After saying I know they works, He said, “*Because thou has kept my word*”... Recall that the Greek word used here is “*Logos*”. And it refers to the declaration of God’s thoughts and intent as they may be concretely demonstrated. The word became flesh. In the beginning was the *Logos* and the *Logos* was with God and the *Logos* was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by the *Logos* and without the *Logos* was nothing made that was made. As it was in the beginning so it is now. The *Logos* is at work again, building the new creation.

He says, “*Thou hast kept my word*”. That statement is not made to any other church but the church in Philadelphia. And this is important. Not the rhema. The rhema is an aspect of the revealed word quickened to the understanding of the believer to assist him to know how to relate to a given situation. But the *Logos* is the full range of divine intent and purpose in redemption. So He says, “*thou hast kept my word*”.

Now, we observe that with respect to salvation there are three divisions in the word of truth. And these are what God looks for when He comes to measure His people. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 reveal these three things. They are to be seen as the inheritance of the believer both now and in future. Remember 1 Corinthians 13:13. “*And now abideth faith, hope, love*”. Each of these abides now, continues to fullness

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ultimately. In the three divisions of the *Logos* are to be found all of the inheritances of God's people.

Come with me to 1Thessalonians 1:3. Paul in praying for the brethren without ceasing remembers their "*work of faith*". He also mentions "*the labours of love*" and the "*patience of hope*".

If you will turn with me to Revelation 3:10, something will strike you in that passage. This verse shows that the dominant work of the Lord among His people at the time of the end is to bring to focus what might be called the patience of hope. This grace found in a believer, qualifies him to be delivered from the grievous tribulation that is to come upon the world. Revelation 3:10

3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

In Revelation 1: 9, John was writing and said, "*I John who also I am your brother and companion in the tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*".

We find that when God measures the believer's works He resolves them into what is in harmony with either the works of faith, the labours of love or the patience of hope. Now, time was when the *Logos* was completely lost to the church. The parables of the kingdom recorded in Matthew 13 deals with that. Verse 33 says "*The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to leaven... error is leaven... a meal that a woman took and hid in three measures of leaven, until the whole meal was leavened*". That is a complete loss of the truth of God's word, of the *Logos*, in what is better described as the dark ages. Emerging from that, there has been a gradual recovery of lost truth. The treasure that was hid in the field (Mathew 13:44) is "*the works of faith*". The merchantman in search of goodly pearls (verse 45) speaks of the "*Patience of hope*". The kingdom of heaven

likened to the net (verse 47) stands for the "*labour of love*". And we are shown that all of these things shall be recovered.

The predicted order of recovery as is shown in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 is first, "*the works of faith*", then "*the labour of Love*" and finally, "*the patience of hope*". The patience of hope is the aspect that comes up last. And that speaks of the blessed hope. Whereas the works of faith and the labours of love speak of the outreach of the church, the "*patience of hope*" is all about the up reach. In the first two, the needs of men are met. In the third, God's needs are met. Redemption is all about meeting the needs of God and the needs of men. For when man is as God created him to be and called him to be in the upward calling that is in Christ Jesus, then God's needs are met. Our God comes to rest when a body of believers has been brought into fullness of divinity.

Let us come back to examining the first of the three divisions of the *Logos*. The Lord said to this church type, "*thou hast kept my Logos*", and we said the first part of the *Logos* is "the works of faith". In Romans 10, Acts 10, you find *Logos* and *Rhema* used together. Whereas the *Logos* speaks of all of the revealed word of God, the *rhema*, as we have observed, speaks of an aspect of the revealed word giving specific guidance enabling proper response in a particular situation. In Romans 10:8; Paul says "*The word is nigh thee even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the rhema of faith, which we preach. That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead; thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth and so he is accounted just, he is counted justified in the sight of God. With the heart man believeth unto a position of righteousness in the sight of God qualifying him thus to receive all the blessings of redemption. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*".

The first aspect of the work of faith, which is the *rhema* of faith, is shown in Romans 10: and how we are to enjoy it is also

revealed. There is a heart position and there is an active and aggressive declaration of the word of faith through the mouth.

Now, the first aspect of redemption concerns itself with the restoration of man to that which was lost in the fall: sickness, diseases, bareness, insecurity of life and property, a failing mind, ageing process etc. All of these are things that came with the fall. The first aspect of the work of redemption is to show that in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the believer is lifted up to the estate Adam had before the fall. Thus, the rhema of faith concerns itself with declaring to the Lord's people how they can enjoy the saving benefits of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are already accounted as standing in the same position or estate of life that Adam had before the fall.

But the works of faith goes beyond the rhema of faith, because it includes the plus, plus, plus of redemption. In Christ, something is added to us far beyond what Adam lost in the fall. In Philippians 3 it is called "*The high calling of God in Christ Jesus*". In Hebrews 3, it is called "*The heavenly calling*". So, that man of the earth, Adam, a living soul, of the earth earthy, had certain glory. In the first experiences of salvation, we are accounted as standing in that glory. But the works of redemption is not over in man's needs met, so, he is called up, he is called up to partake of the divine nature. As it is in the primary enjoyment of the things of redemption, so it is in this secondary aspect, the life of faith is required. And the works of faith concerns itself therefore in teaching concerning what might be called our common salvation and also our great salvation (the upward calling of God) in Christ Jesus.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in growing the believer in Christ takes him beyond reaching only for a restoration of the glory Adam lost. The great salvation

The thrust that may be seen in most teaching of the word limits itself to the rhema of faith God has always provided for the freshness in the Spirit's work in making Christ known, in making Christ to be revealed in His word, that our labours, our

understanding of God's word, should be made fuller and fuller as we fellowship with him.

But when there is a stunted growth situation even that which was once revealed, begins to be stretched beyond measure, and lies to creep in. There are certain emphases in the teaching of faith that are presumptuous; they do not give life, rather, they destroy. There is the (outer) front side of the word of God that relates to man's redemption bringing him to those rights and blessings which he lost in the fall and there is the inside part, the core part, that relates to lifting the believer in Christ up from the earth to the highest heaven, to be like Christ in all ramifications.

Now, we will talk about the labours of love. The best way to explain the labours of love is to look at the seventh parable of the kingdom of heaven (Mathew 13:47). Briefly put, it is that which talks about bringing other persons to the enjoyment of that which we have in the works of faith. So, "*the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea*". The labour of the Lord's people in ministering the blessings to others is here set forth. The net cast into the sea speaks of those labours motivated by love for our fellowmen, directing them to the love of the Saviour. When it is a ministration to the unsaved, the "*Labours of Love*" could be described as soul winning.

Now we come to "*the blessed hope*". The blessed hope is related to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the crystallising in us of full divine nature. The figure of the merchantmen in search of goodly pearls, which is the substance of the sixth parable in Matthew 13, is used to picture "*the patience of hope*". This is a longing for a full share in the coming kingdom that will rule over the whole earth. (Daniel 7:27). We must wait for it. We must live daily in the light of the kingdom. This calls for patience and living true to our sacred calling. We would take a fuller look into this in another edition. This is just but a brief introduction.

Now, come with me to Isaiah 28. We find that when the Lord Jesus Christ measures His church, He is sure to sweep

away the refuge of lies. Hope is a refuge; hope is an anchor. The hope of being with Christ eternally is the blessed hope. 1 John 3:1 – says;

3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

That is the blessed hope the hope of living and ruling eternally with Christ, fully united with Him in our will, heart and mind. This life purifies the heart, renders it submissive to God and strengthens one to walk in love.

There is so much error in the teachings of the visible church systems on this subject. God comes to correct this through shining His light on the scriptures and by acts of judgement.

In closing, let us go back to the rhema of faith. We know that in this last hour, the pressure is increasing. Unknown sicknesses, that is, sicknesses not known in time past are becoming scourges in society today. There is also an increased interest in occultism today. And, how shall the believer live in the midst of all these, living above the evil waters, enjoying the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Remember that the gospel is called the glad tidings, the good news that man can fully enjoy life through Jesus Christ. First we must understand our position of great authority in Christ. There is the first dominion restored to the believer, that dominion that was given to Adam at the beginning when God blessed him and said, “*Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowls of the air, and over creaturely forces upon the earth's sphere*”.

In justification we stand in that position, and the throne of glory, the throne power of God backs us up. In Christ, all

things in the animate and inanimate world are subject to us. This is something the believers must be thoroughly founded in this last hour. It will always consist in the following things; believing with our hearts the Lord's word concerning the redemption that is in His Son (with the heart man believeth unto righteousness). Upon the strength of this, declaring with our mouths in prophetic utterances, prophetic prayers, prophetic praises, power – filled words of command, of that which must be. With the mouth confession is made unto actual possession.

We believe that as God gives the latter rain revealing the things that pertain to the patience of hope, he will give again the former or early rain also, opening the minds of the Lord's people, causing the scriptures to be opened again, and making the words of faith to come alive in the midst of His people. The Lord bless you, the Lord keep you. The church honours God when she walks in victory. The believer honours God when he walks in victory. And may the Lord bring you to understanding faith in its first aspect and understanding faith in the second aspect. I believe that God will assist us to go further into this aspect of the works of faith that will enable us to know how to walk with God in relation to the kingdom that is to be revealed. May the Lord really bless you and keep you, in Jesus name. Amen.

5
Part I

House Building

We will begin our meditation 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 7:24-27.

7:24 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:

7:25 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.

7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

7:27 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 thus 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

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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

7:21 Not every one 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.

7:22 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?

7:23 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, which 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*

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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 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.

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Now, the scriptures show to us that Christ is the foundation of the church. I will like to read 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

2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
2:22 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

3:10 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.
3:11 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 foundation 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.

6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,
6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

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 reveal 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 Himself has been adopted by God so that there will be continuous dependence 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.

3:7 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;
3:8 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 these refuges of lies are and we will see how total will be the collapse of those systems 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.

6
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

3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

3:2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

3:3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house.

3:4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

3:6 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.

12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

12:2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

12:3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

12:4 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.

12:5 And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.

12:6 And he said, 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.

12:7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

12:8 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 1Corinthians 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 what 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.

1:15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

1:16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

1:17 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:

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1:18 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,

1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

1:21 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:

1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

1:23 Which is his body, the fulness 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 are 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. Ever since man's will prevails in the visible church systems. There shall be however, a restoration of the due order, the divine order as the church age wounds 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 these 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

4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)

4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

4:13 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 fulness of Christ:

4:14 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;

4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

4:16 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.

7

The Due Order

We shall be moving straight to our meditation, which is titled "*The Due Order*". This phrase occurs in 1 Chronicles 15:13. You will recall that this was the phrase we used to conclude the last meditation. We shall begin to read from the thirteenth chapter. We will pick some verses there before we go to the fifteenth chapter. The event being covered, concerning which there is going to be an exposition is the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant back from captivity into the place that was prepared for it. 1 Chronicles 13:2-10

13:2 And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:

13:3 And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.

13:4 And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

13:5 So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjathjearim.

13:6 And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjathjearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the

ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it.

13:7 And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart.

13:8 And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

13:9 And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

13:10 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

1Chronicles 15:1, 2, 11 – 14.

15:1 And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.

15:2 Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.

15:11 And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab,

15:12 And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it.

15:13 For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

15:14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

Now, it was in the time of Eli that the ark of the Lord was captured in a battle between the Philistines and Israel. You will recall that when the children of Israel got to the Promised Land, then began what is called the era of the Judges. For above five hundred years, single individuals from the several tribes ruled over the polity of Israel. Eli was the priest at the time when Samuel was born. You remember Hophni and Phineas, two men who took advantage of their public position to menace women that came to worship. They took some to bed. And, all Israel

was in a bad state, because those who were supposed to lead them in the fear of God led them in unrighteousness.

It was in such a setting that the Philistines the constant enemy of the children of Israel came against them in battle. And this unfaithful nation of Israel, having no regard for the Lord's word carried the Ark of the Covenant into the battle, supposing by that to get victory on account of what the ark symbolised. You will recall that all through the forty years of Israel's journey through the wilderness it was the Ark of the Covenant that was carried into all battles, and God in His power, presence and glory, fought for Israel. Recall too that when Jericho fell to the onslaught of the children of Israel, it was the Ark of the Covenant that went before them. They compassed the city round about seven times and as the glory of God thundered in response to the blowing of the trumpet, down came the mighty wall of Jericho.

So, there was a history, a precedence that they are to take with them the ark of the Lord when they go forth to battle. Infact, they are to say, "*Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered and let them that hate him flee before him*". So, Eli commanded Hophni, Phineas, and a company of priest to carry the Ark of the Covenant unto the battle against the Philistines. That symbolised God's glory in their midst. But in the battle, God proved to be to Israel what they had consistently been to Him. If they had disregarded his word, then He also will disappoint their confidences. Because they did not take to heart His word but disregarded him, he allowed them to suffer terrible defeat in that battle.

Now, the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant into captivity. That ark was not to return to the centre of the worship of Israel until seventy years after. In 1Chronicles 13, we find that for all forty years during the reign of Saul, no reference was made of the ark, except at the beginning of his reign when he went out to the outskirts of the land of Israel to consult the ark of the covenant. But he had not yet gotten an

answer when he ran back because there was a battle at home that required his presence and attention.

Let us come to the main story. In 1 Chronicles 13:1 we are told that David gathered to him all leaders, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds and began to say into them it is necessary for us to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to the city of Zion. Not only did David do that, he consulted with all the congregations. Their representatives were gathered and they thought about this matter. Messages were sent into all the land of Israel saying it is necessary for us to bring back the Ark of the Covenant. And they all looked into it and said, yes, the word "*Ichabod*" was born when the Ark of the Covenant was carried into captivity. The glory has departed. But now the glory of the Lord must return. Even though the Lord had been merciful to us, we know that there is something short of what God is looking for amongst us, and we are yet to reach the mark of the glory that God has purposed to manifest through us as a nation.

So, they set out. We are told that when they got to the house of Abinadab, they carried the ark into a new cart. In modern day language, that answers to a new wagon. And, they began to go with the ark to the city of Zion amidst tremendous rejoicing and praise. So great was the praise that it attracted the whole of Israel.

As they continued in their journey, they came to a point where it was as if the oxen carrying the cart were about to fall. The effect upon the ark was that it also tilted. Uzzah at that point stretch forth his hand to steady the Ark of the Covenant. And the Lord smote him with death. The Bible says he died right there before the Lord. That single incidence arrested the whole of Israel. David was afraid. In fact, if you read the account of this same story in II Samuel 6, you will find that it is said that David was greatly afraid and said unto himself, "*how can I take the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto me?*" and he sought for somebody close by who will allow him to keep the ark of the covenant in his house. And he ran back home confused and greatly disappointed.

Now, why did God smite Uzzah? Were the intentions of David and the rest of the children of Israel proper in seeking to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Israel, to the city of Zion? Now, all of these questions we shall seek to answers. But let us go back to 1 Chronicles 15:13 so that we can place the issue squarely before us. David said in that passage, *for because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.* God broke upon them and slew Uzzah with death, because they were carrying the ark in a manner not in harmony with the due order.

Now, let us look at the whole situation first, David was anointed of God three times. Samuel anointed him. Then several years later, he was anointed as King over Judah. And seven years after the second anointing, he was anointed the third time over all Israel. So, David carried the anointing. Again, the scripture says David was a man after God's heart. It was the tremendous love that David had for God that made him decide to bring the ark of the covenant of God into the city of Zion where the temple was to be built, that it might be the centre of the worship of the children of Israel as Moses had prescribed it.

Secondly, he (David) did not take an absolute approach towards accomplishing that desire. He did not say, *"well, it pleases me, so I will go ahead"*. He consulted with the people. In fact, he consulted with all credible people in the land of Israel. In the account of 2 Samuel 6, we are told that He took chosen men. We are told in 1Chronicles 13 that he gathered all Israel. He sent for persons all over Israel that had insight into the workings of God and asked *"is this thing right? Let us bring back the Ark of the Covenant of our God back to Israel"*. And they all agreed.

David did not operate by any absolute fiat, he knew he should consult the people. But brethren, no matter how many persons identify with what we are doing, no matter what support we garner from the people, if a thing is not according

to God's word, God cannot support it. Sincerity is not enough. Good intentions are not adequate. The Lord whom we serve has revealed himself in a particular manner. We must follow on to know the Lord according to the principles of his word that He has made known.

Recall David destroyed Goliath and brought great victories to the children of Israel during the time of Saul. But here, something was done that was in effect a rejection of God's wisdom. God had detailed how the ark was to be carried.

Now, what scripture is being referred to here? Remember that God revealed to David that that breach happened because they did not conduct themselves according to the due order. The reference is to Numbers 7:9 and Numbers 4:4-15. Those verses of scriptures were written about five hundred and eighty years before this event recorded in 1Chronicles 13 and 15. All that Israel was to do in the worship of God must agree with the principles set forth in the first five books (Genesis to Deuteronomy). Any deviation would incur the wrath of God.

Remember we came to this point in the last edition when we said the apostles of the Lamb and the writing ministries of the New Testament have received mandate of the Lord to chart the course for the church. And all are to operate according to their writings. Jesus commanded them to say to the people to observe whatsoever things they have given in instructions. Matthew 28:18-20.

The fact that David was sincere, the fact that David loved God, the fact that the people were mindful of the Lord's glory did not make what was wrong right. Sincerity does not justify a bad action. The street of religion is filled with so many people who hunger for God, who seek to serve God. But there has not been an equal zeal to seek to serve God according to the prescribed manner, according to the due order. Men have chosen to be lazy towards spiritual things that find strength to do other things. But in this last hour, God is drawing our attention back to how things are supposed to be. We are referred to our spiritual roots. The New Testament writings

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give sufficient direction as to how the church should conduct her affairs.

What are these particulars that constitute the due order. Turn with me to Numbers 7:9.

7:9 But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.

Numbers 4:4

4:4 This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things:

That includes all the seven furniture: the two in the outer court, the three in holy place and the two in the holiest of all. All seven furniture was to be carried by the Kohatites. This seven furniture represented the most holy things in all of the Lord's worship. Reading further, we find that they were to bear the ark upon stakes, upon rods driven through holes attached to the Ark of the Covenant. Eight persons were to carry it. And they were to carry the Ark of the Covenant upon their shoulders. Jesus said, "*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*". *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me and ye shall find rest for your soul, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30). This great provision that the children of Israel, in moving the ark from one place to the other, should have recourse to sanctified priests, is something that we will have to speak about in another connection. But let us go ahead.

What made God to strike Uzzah with death? It was because he touched the ark. In the fifteenth verse of Numbers 4 we are shown that anyone that touched the ark apart from the priest is to be visited with the judgement of death.

It reads, *And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall*

come to bear it; but they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

God had written in his word: don't touch the ark with your carnal hand or you die, don't touch the ark. Only the priests are permitted to touch the ark. Uzzah disobeyed that divine instruction under the penalty of death.

Now, let us begin to apply the message to our day. God has set forth in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament principles what should inform how the Lord's people are to do His work. It is important for us to know that God knows what will satisfy Him. Someone may ask, "*is it not easier to carry the ark on a new cart or a new wagon instead of the shoulders of men?*" Let us know that the new cart or the new wagon answers to man's mind. It answers to organising things according to man's mind. Organisation is not God's method of saving His people or of bringing glory to his people. Saving men are God's method. Men whom He has anointed and laid hands upon are the means of God expressing Himself in the world, not organisations.

Now, one will be tempted to call it a tiny slip. Could God not have by passed that, some may ask. But the truth is that if God did that concerning the shadow, concerning those things which were merely symbolic, how much more should we know and understand that he requires the same level of obedience from His people today. There is set forth in all scriptures how the church should conduct her affairs. We are just going to make few points before we round up this meditation trusting that in other editions, we will take a fuller consideration of these things.

First, God has provided that in any given locality, the local congregation should conduct her own affairs under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, there is a close connection between the absolute headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the autonomy of the local congregation. In our day we see denominations with a great network of branches and one man or a few men sitting over all of that as head. It is a repudiation of the authority of Christ in his church.

The Baptist convention stands out as one denomination that gives an expression of this principle. Every local congregation conducts her own affairs. It is too much for one man to suppose that he can exercise lordly control over thousands of congregation as head. This is important. We made reference to the Baptist Convention, not because we approve of any denominational system, but indicate that a measure of this truth has been recovered. And we know that in this last hour, God will have a body of people living and operating exactly according to that which, is in his mind. When man sits in lordly control over so many congregations, he begins to see himself as a god and the people will accept and worship him as such. We are only touching upon this briefly. We shall go into fuller details in a later edition.

Again, the Bible shows to us clearly that even in the local congregation, there must be plurality of leadership. The word of God does not witness to a situation where one man is head over every other person in a manner that makes everybody subservient to him. In God's house, there must be plurality of leadership. This is the reason why you find that whenever the Lord talks about leadership, He does so in the plural sense.

Notice in Ephesians 4:11, we read that God has set in the church some apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, all carrying the plural term. This is important. One man as pastor sitting and issuing command over the congregation, with perhaps a board of "*ordained*" ministers made subject to his whims and caprices is an outrageous departure from the principle of God's word. The great spiritual poverty among God's people can be traced to this departure. When one man does all the thinking for God's people and he is just a human being, then there is bound to be decay. For all that that man got from Adam is death. And he can only operate in death if he had recourse to the wisdom of himself.

If a man sees himself as being inspired or anointed of God, then let Him do what God says. God does everything by reference to the principles of His word that He had already set forth.

Whatever God does today is in harmony with what He did in time past for known unto God from the foundation of the world are all His works (Acts 15:18). Whatever a person witnesses, as being from God cannot be accepted if it does not agree with the principles of God's word. II Corinthians 13 simply put it this way, "*by the mouth of two or three (writing) witnesses, let every word be confirmed*". Ten persons from a particular denominational church may be persuaded along one line. They may all be ministers of God. But that does not make them witnesses. A witness must be one who is called of God and who operates by the principles already set forth in scriptures. At the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established.

We are going to witness a return to the basic principles that govern the operation of the local church, for the greatest force upon the earth is the local church. When the Bible says "*the kingdoms of this world. Has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ*" (Revelation 11:15), we are to understand that He takes over the kingdoms of this world by operating through the local assembly of his people. In a city, it is the body of Christ there that is God's power and God's strength in that locality.

The Lord bless you, the Lord cause His face to shine upon you. We might have rushed through this, but we believe the basic principles are plain enough. David and his people were not to excuse themselves from principles that old prophet Moses wrote many years ago, about six centuries back. They are to know that if they deviate from it, they will pay for it dearly, and know that God is not one among us but Lord over us.



The Word of My Patience

We are continuing in our meditation on God's Pattern Church. We will go straight into the scriptures. Come with me to Revelation 3: 7-10. Our burden is on the one condition given for the total protection promised in verse 10: the word of my patience. That is where the emphasis will be placed. However, to begin, we will touch on certain things that assist having a clear understanding.

3:7 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;

3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

We have previously observed that the proper functioning of the local ekklesia, the congregation of God's people in any

given locality centres around four things. We know that there is a close connection between the building of the church and the ministry of the word, the diverse ministrations of God's Spirit that take place among God's people, week after week. When we are talking about the proper functioning of the local church, the emphasis is on what things, if found among God's people would sponsor their growth unto perfection. What are the things which if found in the midst of a local assembly of God's people, a local church, will make all know that they are walking in the will of God, and that all of the Lord's promises, for full redemption will be realised by them.

The first of the four things is submitting to the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, that will mean allowing him to do our thinking for us. One of the problems in the visible church systems is that there is an importation of man's mind into how the affairs of the church are to be run. And whereas there might be sincerity and good intentions, when these things do not agree with the principles of God's word, they are in effect, a setting aside the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first of the four things is submitting to the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. In practical terms that will mean operating according to the principles of God's word and submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Then the second is the presence of persons whom the Lord has called to the estate of ministry, persons suitably engraced to stand in the room of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. Not all of these five offices may be present in an assembly, but there should be a reasonable number of persons who have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry. That is the second condition. And Ephesians 4:11-15 tells us the reason why.

The third is that there must be present in the midst of the local assembly, in the weekly meetings of the people, several persons, who though have not come into the estate of the five-fold ministry, are involved in ministering Christ. So, there is a ministry to the body through those who have come into the estate of the five-fold ministry, and there is the ministry of the

body to itself, building up itself in love. Now, there is no professionalism in ministry. There is no clergy laity distinction that places the responsibility of ministry on some who stand in an official way, while the others remain at the receiving end. Ephesians 4:11, 12 and 13 governs the first aspect of ministry which we have talked about i.e. ministry to the body of those who have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry, while Ephesians 4:14, 15, and 16 talk about this other aspect, the ministry of the body unto the edification, the building up of itself in love. And perfection can only be realised when these conditions are found in a local congregation.

In fact, the very way verse 12 of Ephesians 4 reads is that one of the principal functions of those who has come to the estate of the five-fold ministry is to prepare the Lord's people for the work of the ministry. That is, the effect of their daily labours among the brethren is that some grow up having the ability to minister Christ effectively to others.

Then, the fourth is the consecration of the Lord's people. In the New Testament, all who have given their lives to Christ, who have obtained forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, all those who know that Christ died substitutionally and that his death was for their lifting up from sin, who also have witnessed to the same by the coming of the Holy Spirit into their lives, all spirit-filled believers are members of the royal priesthood. And the responsibility to minister Christ rests squarely upon all shoulders. The meaning of that is that God's people are to live in consecration. Consecration is a word that has come up again and again in our ministrations, and God willing, at sometime we will be able to go into detail of what all of that means. But essentially Mathew 16:24 captures what that point to: denying oneself, taking up ones cross and following Jesus.

And then, we move on to the emphasis here in Revelation 3. When these four things – submitting to the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, allowing him to do our thinking for us, as He does through the medium of the written word and through

the workings of the Holy spirit who minister Christ to us in the word, and who opens to us the things that are in the mind of God; then the ministry to the body of persons that have been called to the estate of ministry. I am not talking of “*full time ministry*” as it is viewed in the visible church systems, but a grace to manifest and stand in the room of the five-fold dimension of ministry listed in Ephesians 4:11; the ministry of the body to itself, and finally a life of consecration evident in all vital members of the body – where these obtain, there develops a situation similar to the church of Philadelphia.

I will want to draw your attention first to verse 8 and then to verse 10. In verse 8, he says, “*Thou hast kept my word*”. And we said that the Greek language is very rich, in the sense that a specific thought is conveyed very forcefully by a specific word. That which is translated here as word in the English language is “*Logos*” and it speaks about the full range of God’s word. It takes all of God’s word to influence Christian character and to mould Christian ministry. When the word of the Lord is not abundant, if it is not rich, if it does not cover the full range of God’s plan and purposes in redemption, there will be something lacking in the character of God’s people, and there will be something lacking in the ministry of God’s servants. “*Because thou hast kept my Logos*”.

One of the problems of God’s people is that quite often, that which pertains to their immediate care is what they give their time and attention to. This hinders spiritual growth and relevance to the divine purpose. For many, there is the understanding that God’s deal is not realisable. But He says, “*Because thou hast kept my word, my Logos...*”. The church in Philadelphia is a constant challenge to all: God’s pleasure can be satisfied.

Remember, He says, “*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience I also will keep thee from the hour of tribulation that shall come upon all the world*”. Notice that “*hour*” shall test all of humanity but there would be some that are kept from it. There will be refuge in the time of great calamities, great momentous and disastrous events that shall vex nations, whole

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societies, whole countries, in this last hour and shake them to their very foundation. There is a refuge. God is the refuge of His people. And here, the one condition for that blessedness is given, "*because thou hast kept the word of my patience*".

Now, turn with me then to 1 Corinthians 13: 13.

13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Notice there is that which abideth forever. Whatever answers to a blessing from the Lord will be something that flows either from the works of faith, or something that relates to the blessed hope or something that expresses agape love. But let us look at this in a more definitive form in 1 Thessalonians 1:3. We read from verse 1. Our emphasis is to see what the *Logos* is and to show that there is a commitment, a total commitment from the throne of God towards the total deliverance, preservation and total blessing of His people when they indeed keep the *Logos*. This is important, because there is a close connection between the light of God's word, and the flow of God's power to bless and to keep. That is why it is said in Psalm 27, "*the Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat my flesh, they stumbled and fell*".

Now that grace, that glory round about the Lord's people that can accomplish the situation described in verse 2 of Psalm 27, flows from the condition given in the verse 1 of the same Psalm. It is as He is our light that He becomes our salvation. We must first respond to the light of God's word. For example, the Bible says, "*believe on the lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved*". And then the question: what shall I believe? And the Bible says, "*that he died for you, that he might break the power of sin over your life, that your sin may be forgiven, and that he might come to dwell in your heart, lifting you up to the honours of the divine life*". So, believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved from sin, you shall be saved from the nature of sin, you shall be grown in the nature of Christ and you shall inherit eternal life. When the light is not clear, faith cannot be exercised; faith is spiritual understanding. The things that belong to the final aspect of our redemption, God will trumpet at this last hour. And for the promise to deliver, to keep, in the midst of a world that is becoming increasingly insecure, having no respect for human life, we must come back to God who is our refuge.

If you come with me to 1 Thessalonians 1, you will see how these three things that constitute the *Logos* are given to us in a more definitive form. We read from verse 1:

1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

The three things are the works of faith, the labours of love and the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to see how these three things are presented. For faith, there is a working, for love, there is a labour, and for hope, there is patience. So, he says the patience of hope. What hope? And we answer back; it is the blessed hope; blessed hope of partaking with Christ in the glory of his manifestation that comes at the close of the age.

We are all expecting the coming of the Lord; He comes with glory and great power. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:4). That hope of seeing and partaking of that glory is the blessed hope, and it calls for patience (we shall touch on that later). The blessed hope of his appearing and our partaking in his full glory. If you don't see it, you cannot partake of it. 1

John 3: 1 says “*Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*”. There is a close connection between seeing the glory by the eyes of faith, as the blessed hope is thoroughly proclaimed and as we are enlightened thereby, and our receiving the change. II Corinthians 3:18 says, and we beholding in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed from glory to glory. As we see him we become like him. May the Lord help our understanding.

So, we are seeing the three divisions of the inheritance: the works of faith, the labours of love and the patience of hope. In the parable of the kingdom, seven in number, as rendered in Mathew 13, we have the knowledge of the glorious beginning the church had on the day of Pentecost. The tremendous ministries fulfilled by the apostles enabled the early church to be thoroughly enlightened as to the things that belonged to their inheritance. Not quite 300 years after there was a complete loss of the truth of redemption. And three of these parables, the fifth, sixth and seventh parable detail to us the recovery of truth in three particulars.

In the first of the three parables we are told, “*the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field*” (Mathew 13:44). That speaks to us of the works of faith. Martin Luther was a principal instrument amongst many, by which this truth was recovered and made public and available to the church world: *by grace are ye saved through faith* (Ephesians 2:8). Then the next parable says, “*The kingdom of heaven can be likened unto a merchant man seeking for goodly pearl, a pearl of great price*” (Mathew 13:45). That pearl of great price is our becoming one with the Lord Jesus Christ in every sense, fully in his image, fully in his likeness. That representation and manifestation of Christ in all of His glory is the blessed hope. And its recovery is represented in the sixth parable. The

seventh parable (Mathew 13:47), the parable of the drag net speaks of the work of harvest, the labours of love.

But, our concern and emphasis, brethren, is on the patience of hope. Why is this called the patience of hope? Because the hope of full union with Christ, the hope of glorification, coming into the fullness of his nature and glory, if truly found in the believer, births a life style now. There is a patience that is called for. There is a patient endurance that is called for in the now, because of the glory that is to be possessed in the future. Now, let us go to Titus 2. We shall be reading verses 11, 12 and 13, the passage, which include the mention of the phrase "*the blessed hope*" Titus 2: 11-13.

2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
2:12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;

Here we are shown that there is a life style that is birthed when the true hope of becoming one with the Lord Jesus Christ in all of his glory is in a man's heart. That hope empowers us to live in the spirit of the fear of God, to live a life, which is here, called the patience of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact 1John 3, which we read earlier, says in the third verse, everyone who has this hope in Him has power to purify himself even as He is pure. The way a man lives his life is a reflection of how concrete in him the hope of glorification with Christ is. In Romans 8:17, Paul puts it this way, "*if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified together*". There is a condition attached to glorification with Christ. May the Lord help our understanding, in Jesus name.

Coming back to the mainstream of our meditation, what does it mean to keep the word of his patience? The word of his patience enlightens us on how to conduct ourselves in the midst of God's people, how to conduct ourselves in the midst of

family members, and in the world. It calls for an understanding that the time to rule is not now, in terms of lordly controls. The Lord's people should live like believers in Christ Jesus who have him as their head.

Now, one of the painful things that we see in the midst of the denominational church systems is men and women becoming tin gods in the midst of their brethren. Paul was writing and alluding to this. He said, "*oh, you are already reigning, you are reigning without us*". Brethren, the time to reign is not now, and we are talking of exercising such lordly controls over fellow human beings. When the church is perfected, she shall rule over the nations. It could be with an iron rod, bringing the nations into submission to God, but the church will also shepherd the nations into the perfect worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. But that time has not come. And there is the need for men to live in the humility displayed in the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Because thou hast kept the word that restrain your excesses, because you have kept the word of my patience, waiting patiently for me to come to set up the kingdom of heaven over all the earth, because you live daily in the light of what shall be, and walk humbly in obedience to my word and will, I will keep you from the hour of tribulation that shall come upon all the world".

Things are preached in the visible church systems that hold out a hope for God's people that is so much of falsehood. It is as we walk in obedience to God that we are able to have the Lord, by His spirit, open our understanding into His word and will. The way to know that God's people are living in the light of God's will is how much of His word, How much of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, is opened to their understanding.

Titus 2:14 says, "*looking for...*" The word "*looking for*" means eagerly and longingly expecting, living in the

consciousness that the time is near. May the Lord really help us to live in the awareness of the glory of the blessed hope.

Turn with me to Revelation 1:9, you will find this same phrase appearing, the need for patience, the need to live and operate by "*Another person's mind*", the mind of Christ. Not by our own minds, but allowing the mind of Christ to crystallise in us, so that we are led and guided as he will have us do. Revelation 1:9, John was writing concerning his experiences and he wrote;

1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...

In I Thessalonians 1, we are told of the patience of hope in Jesus Christ. Are we being daily exercised in the spirit of the fear of God, living victoriously over the allurements of this world? Is the Lord your head, is he your captain, or some other man or some other men are acting as head over you. We have need of patience, not to use our strength to intimidate others but to walk humbly before men. And we trust that as the full force of these words dawn on us in the enlightenment that He gives, we will all begin to yield and respond to Him. And the church of Jesus Christ will again be cleansed, and be fully empowered to come into the full glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord bless you in Jesus name.

9
Part I

***Spiritual Leadership:
God's Pattern***

We trust that previous editions have been much of a blessing to you and to us, and the Lord our God will yet help us as we serve him in this capacity.

This edition will centre on a most important subject: Spiritual leadership: God's pattern. It will be a continuation of the series we have been taking on God's pattern church. You will agree with me that if the way a local congregation conducts her affairs and the ministry they fulfil answers to building a house, then, for those who play the more important roles within the assemblies, we should trust that the word of God will have something to say about them. Spiritual leadership is a most important topic. Under the Old Testament, the church that then was had so much of her fortune tied to the spiritual leadership over them. This is more so under the New Testament. In the New Testament, there is an elevation of some sort in terms of the responsibilities of spiritual leadership in the overall scheme of things.

Since the New Testament is a one-sided covenant, spiritual leadership is part of that arrangement that hinges on God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness will make sure that men and women are raised up in the church to fulfil their God given responsibilities.

Spiritual leadership can be said to be in two distinct groupings. That is, in discussing spiritual leadership in the church, we can identify two groups or forms of spiritual leadership. These are (i) ministry gifts and (ii) spiritual administration.

If you will turn with me to Ephesians 4 read side by side with 1 Corinthians 12, you will find the first of these two divisions in spiritual leadership. And, what we are talking about is that in discussing spiritual leadership, it must be clear to us whether we are discussing how the church organises herself administratively or whether we are talking about ministry or ministerial gifts in the church. Ephesians 4:8-11.

4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for

We have the five-fold ministry or ministerial offices. These are given as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherd (or as here called pastors), and teachers. These five-fold offices we can say are the principal ministerial gifts in the church. If you were following the reading you will realise that it is the exclusive preserve of God to place these ministry gifts within the church. This is important. The exaltation of the Lord to the highest heaven and his descent to the lowest earth, we are told in verse 10, is that he might fill all things. He led captivity captive. Men that were once bound to the powers of the flesh and to the forces of darkness are set free, and led to a new kind of servitude, being bond servants of the most high God. And they are given as gifts to the church. The calling of the apostle, the vocation of the prophet, the ministry of the

evangelist, the service of the shepherd or pastor and the service of teachers are in a class of their own. All five constitute what we are seeing here; it is God's responsibility to place these in the church as the next passage shows.

Now, let us take 1 Corinthians 12:28.

12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Here, we find that it is God's responsibility to place these ministry gifts in the church. In fact, the idea that can be got from this passage when read from the original Greek language is that God fills up vacancies that exist in his church. He sets in the church... He considers the needs of his people and raises up ministries to meet this challenge.

In the matter of ministry gifts, human persons are completely excluded in terms of their appointment. No man can appoint another man unto or into a ministry gift such as we have mentioned above. Ministry gifts are the exclusive preserve of the Most High God; God hath set in the church...

Now, that is different from spiritual gifts, which we find discussed in I Corinthians 12. Man may be involved in the laying on of hands for the impartation of spiritual gifts. But, for ministry gifts, it is something that the Lord our God does by himself. He sets men and women into these various ministries in the church.

Then, the next observation we will like to take is that there is an arrangement in the word of God for spiritual administration, taking oversight of the affairs of the church. For, all of the work of the kingdom does not consist in teaching and preaching. There is the work of taking oversight, which concern themselves with the day-to-day affairs of the Lord's people as they meet together in fellowship.

Man may be involved in relation to setting up spiritual administration in the church. But they are guided by God's

word in going about this. Now, let us look at the pattern, the arrangement in the New Testament. Turn with me to Philippians 1:1.

1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

The two duty-offices we find in the above passage (Bishops and deacons) relates to spiritual administration. The word translated Bishop here (the Greek word) is *episcopus* and emphasises the duties, responsibilities of such persons. Again, the word-translated deacon simply means servants. There are two levels of spiritual leadership in the local assembly: the primary spiritual leadership being fulfilled or occupied by persons whom the Bible calls bishops, and the secondary spiritual administration or leadership being fulfilled by persons here described as deacons.

Now, you will notice that in the passage above, Paul was addressing the saints in a particular city: Philippi, that is the local assembly of God's people in that city, together with the bishops and the deacons. Thus, in every local congregation of God's people, there ought to be several bishops and deacons, several persons taking oversight, who are overseers of the affairs of the local congregation. And, of these persons, there will be some who are more matured in the things of God than the others by virtue of which they are able to fulfil primary spiritual administration while the others assist them at a secondary level, in the work of spiritual administration. This is the pattern (arrangement) in the New Testament, and, we will be doing a little bit of reading to establish this point.

Now, God has not purposed for one individual to be a bishop over a whole city, over several cities, but that in every local congregation of God's people, be they fifty, a hundred, two hundred, one thousand, there should be a plurality of ministries, persons who take oversight of the affairs of the church. And these persons, the word of God enjoins, must

have certain minimum qualifications. But the responsibility of taking oversight is always there in every congregation, and there should be bishops and deacons in every local assembly. If we take an assembly of say five hundred saints, then, there should be five, six to eight or more persons who are involved in the primary spiritual administration here discovered as bishops. This is distinct from the practice that we find in the visible church system. We are not concerned any bit with casting stones, but simply indicating what should be as the Lord is restoring all things in his church. The years of ignorance God has overlooked but God is now calling all men to that arrangement that accords to his will in his house. A little later, these tools we are gathering will prove useful in showing what effects are produced when God's arrangement are taken to heart. Most deviations in God's house occur because men set aside the divine arrangement, and put in place their own arrangements.

In a local congregation, there should be several bishops. The word bishop emphasises their spiritual responsibilities that they see to the spiritual and material well being of members of the congregation. Persons occupying secondary spiritual leadership here called deacons assist them in these responsibilities. There are two levels of spiritual leadership and administration in the church of Christ, and these are bishops and deacons.

There is another word used in the New Testament for the same position here described as bishops. That word is presbytery, translated elder. The word elder emphasises the spiritual maturity that should be found in persons who take oversight in God's house. So, while the word presbytery emphasises that these persons must be spiritually mature, the word *episcopus* (bishop) stresses their spiritual responsibility. So the two words are applied to the same class of people and can be used (and are indeed used) interchangeably, depending on what is being discussed. He that is a presbyter, the same is an *episcopos*, or putting it in the English Language, he that is an

elder in God's house is also a bishop. This must be clearly understood.

Now, let us go to the scriptures to establish this position. Turn to Acts 14. Certain situations developed in the early church and it was necessary to pass the information to the Lord's people everywhere. Letters were to be written to the churches. Acts 15:23.

15:23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.

Notice the letter was coming from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a city, and in the church in that city are to be found many persons who were elders. Notice should also be taken of the ministry presence of Apostles.

Still in the book of Acts, turn with me to Acts 20:17. The reference is to Paul's missionary journey. He had come to Miletus and was to visit Ephesus next. And he needed to see those who stand in the room of leaders in Ephesus and wanted to have discussions with them. Acts 20:17-31.

20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

20:18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

20:19 Serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20:20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

20:22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

20:23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

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20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

20:25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

20:26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...,

The word translated "*overseer*" here is the same word that is translated bishop. Paul began by calling for the elders, and he said later that God hath made these elders, bishops (overseers) over the church of God to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Then in the next verse he says,

20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Certain ministerial characteristics and attitudes in persons occupying leadership positions in God's house, towards the congregation, are what are here symbolised as wolves. We have touched on this earlier. Leaders are supposed to take oversight of the congregation, and assist all to come into a greater and better position rather than exploiting them. Paul continues;

20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

20:31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

We have established two things: the same called elders (presbyters) in verse 17 were also called overseers (bishops) in verse 28 in the sense of the duties they fulfil.

Now, we go to James 5. James was writing to the Lord's people and counselling them on how to handle difficult situations in their lives, whether physical sickness, some form of afflictions, financial distress and the like. Then he comes to the matter of those physically sick James 5:14 -15

5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church...

The one that is chronically sick as not to be able to help himself is counselled to call for the elders (bishops) of the church. The reference is to the local congregation. You cannot suppose that an individual is sick, and bishops are gathered all over the country to pray for such one. The reference is to a local assembly, a body of people meeting in a local region. They should have this plurality of leadership and ministries, attending to the needs of such ones. We shall take verse 14 again and also verse 15.

5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

5:15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Let's take another scripture: Titus 1:4-7. Paul was writing to Titus, his own son in the faith and a fellow labourer and he said.

1:4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

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1:6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

1:7 For a bishop (an overseer) must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; (that is, monetary greediness).

Please, notice that the one described as an elder in verse 5 is referred to as bishop in verse 7, and the qualifications for such vocations are given in verses 7 through 9. Thus, the one that is an elder in terms of his spiritual maturity, which qualifies him to serve in the capacity of a spiritual leader, is a bishop, an overseer in terms of his spiritual responsibility.

Now, we go to 1Timothy 3, a very popular passage that is used to establish a practice of an overblown hierarchy in the church. 1Timothy 3:1.

3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

In the original, there is nothing like the office of a bishop, no word in the Greek rendering for the word office as it is used in this verse. But in other places where the word office is used, there is always a Greek word for it. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, it says, "*there are diversities of gifts but the same spirit, and there are differences of offices but the same Lord and there are diversities of operations but the same God that worketh all in all*". In the fifth verse, the word office is derived from a Greek word in the original. But it is not rendered to bring out that meaning in our authorised version. In proper rendering, 1Timothy 3:1 should read this way

...if a man desire overseership, he desireth a good work.

Men should desire such spiritual responsibility in the house of God as being joined with others in taking oversight or overseership over the flock. The thought is not to some position of great strength where one man is exercising rulership

over two, three, four, five cities or states, but of serving within a local assembly of the Lord's people (a local expression of the body of Christ), partaking or sharing with others of an equality of service, so that the burden of the work of the Lord rests upon the shoulders of not just one person but of such persons that have come up to that estate called elders.

Now, we want to distinguish between elders (bishops and deacons) who fulfilled spiritual administration on the one hand, and ministry gifts. No matter the level of spiritual awareness in a given congregation, there must always be persons who occupy the room of presbyters or elders. As you move from one congregation to another, those persons who are exercising themselves in spiritual administration or overseership may differ in spiritual maturity or qualification. That is, the elders in a given assembly may be more spiritually matured and enlightened than the elders in another congregation as you move from one local assembly of the Lord's people to another. Nevertheless, the more matured persons in a given congregation should (according to God's word) take oversight of that congregation, ensuring that God's will and purposes are served in and through them.

When we come to ministry gifts that is something else different from general spiritual administration. Now, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, because they have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry (having been thus engraced by God) would always be part of the spiritual leadership or administration in a given congregation. In this regard, what they should be called (like all other persons involved in spiritual administration) is an elder. Thus, an apostle may be seen as elder also. A pastor (shepherd) or evangelist is simply an elder in a given congregation. When the affairs of the Lord's people are discussed, ministry gifts may play an important role by virtue of what they have received of the Lord, but they do not lord it over others who have not been called to the estate of ministry. This is important.

Take, for example, in 1Timothy 5:17. Timothy was told, "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour,*

especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." The idea is that there could be some elders that do not have ministerial graces, that is, ability to teach and preach God's word. Not all elders may have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry, but, in a particular congregation, those who have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry share in spiritual administration.

Let us now take some scriptures to back up this observation. 1 Peter 5:1-3, Peter was writing to the Lord's people and said

5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Here, Peter the apostle called himself an elder. He was going to talk to them about the lifestyle that should characterise those who are taking oversight of a congregation of the Lord's people. And he says

5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

We believe that this simple observation is necessary for us to understand certain deviations within the church that has brought so much of spiritual poverty to the Lord's people. Let's take a last and final reference; Mathew 23. This comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He tells us certain things, and we will see why the teachings of the apostles from the book of Acts down to the book of Revelation are consistent with the principles the Lord Jesus Christ laid down here. I will allow the reading do the speaking, trusting that God willing, we will take this consideration in yet another edition.

Mathew 23:5-12, the Lord was speaking of the religious leaders of the nation of Israel

23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

23:6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

23:9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

23:10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

The words elders, bishops, deacons are not titles to be carried about, paraded, they are only indicative of spiritual responsibilities in the midst of God's congregation and towards the Lord's people. So also are the callings of an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and a teacher. These are not titles to be taken on. You can fulfil a ministry, without necessarily drawing attention to what you are. The key word is humility in service. It is an aspect of the *word of his patience* that we are commanded to keep (Revelation 3:10). The glory of the Lord upon us may command respect from men, but we must never demand such. We must walk humbly among our brethren and keep a humble view of ourselves in order to receive grace, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth more abundant grace to the humble.

We will be taking this consideration in yet another edition. The Lord bless you, in Jesus name. Amen.

10 Part II

Spiritual Leadership: God's Pattern

We will continue in our meditation: spiritual leadership: God's pattern. It is a continuation of our series of teachings on God's pattern church.

In the last edition, we examined the two grouping of spiritual authority in God's house. We will be strengthening the position that we established in the last edition, and that would mean taking on in a measure, a repetition of some of the points made. Paul said it is not burdensome to preachers to repeat themselves. Rather it is safe for those who hear to have the same things repeated (Philippians 3:1).

We began by saying that the first division of spiritual leadership in God's house is the apostolic ministries: those that have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry. Of course, all of the Lord's people are in some sense servants (ministers) of God. But, when we are talking of those that have come to the estate of the five fold ministry, we are referring to those who have received a definite call to the work of the ministry, and who have an anointing upon their lives along any one of the five-fold ministry that we find in Ephesians 4:11.

4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

These are persons that are indicated in the first grouping. A little later, we shall be coming back to talk about their duties relative to the local assembly, and relative to the body of Christ everywhere (that is the church as a universal body). But, here, we simply note that when we talk about ministers, we are referring to persons who stand in one or more of these five ministries.

Then the second grouping of spiritual leadership, we see in Philippians 1:1

1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

The second division of spiritual leadership has to do with spiritual administration. And, when we talk about spiritual administration, there are two levels in which this can be exercised: at the primary or at the secondary level. The people who among God's people exercise primary spiritual leadership are described as bishops in terms of their responsibilities, while those who exercise secondary spiritual administration are described as deacons. We could talk about ministers, and we can also talk about spiritual administrators within the church. In the course of time we would not only discuss the overlap but also take a critical look at ministry order in the local church.

Now, what is the similarity between the two, and how do we relate the two? We said that all that have come to the estate of ministry whether as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers are also elders or bishops in the church, in the sense that they do always share in the spiritual administration of the local congregation. But, whereas any minister of God can be said to be doing the work of a bishop, not all bishops have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry. This must be understood.

When spiritual administration in a local assembly is in view, all persons that have come to the estate of ministry are involved in running the affairs of the church. Thus, we can talk of a

meeting of elders in a local congregation as consisting of elders who have not yet received a call to the ministry, and elders who have already received a call to the ministry. Thus, not all elders have necessarily received a call to the work of the ministry.

Then we looked at the word bishop. We said the Greek word is *episkopus*. And, we said, it emphasises the duties that those who are called to serve in that realm fulfil in a local congregation. An equivalent word that stresses the spiritual maturity that is to be found in them is *presbyterus*. The Greek word *presbyterus* is what the KJV translated elder.

The same person called a bishop in terms of his responsibility is also an elder in terms of his spiritual maturity. We established this fact by reference to some scriptures in the New Testament. For example, in Acts 20:17, we read,

20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

Always take note of the plural form of the words elders, bishops, ministers, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and deacons. They speak to us that plurality of ministries and plurality of spiritual administrators in a local assembly is God's thought for his church. So he called for the elders of the church and said to them in verse 28, *take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers* ... hath made you to take oversight.

The word overseer here is *episkopeo*. It is the verb form of the word *episkopus*. It is the same word that is used to translate bishop in other passages. The bishops are elders by virtue of the spiritual maturity they have attained. We said that the elders in a given congregation might differ in spiritual maturity than the elders in another congregation. But the more spiritually matured persons (this has no reference to physical age) in local congregations are the ones that are supposed to

occupy the room of elders in that congregation. Where the ministries are greatly blessed and the church is functioning properly, those who serve in the room of elders must have attained to great spiritual heights (or maturity) and it is possible for all of them to be gifted in the ministry of the word. That is, all of the elders in such setting may have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry. But, quite often, there are some elders who have not yet received a call to the ministry.

In Titus 1:5-7, the above observation is made even clearer. Paul commanded Titus to ordain elders in every city, every local expression of the Lord's people who are to oversee the affairs of the church. And in verse 7, the elder is described as a bishop in terms of the charge God has committed into his hands. And Paul says, the elder being called to be an overseer, to take oversight and exercise spiritual care over God's people must have certain qualification, which he went ahead to list. Thus, all elders by virtue of their being elders in a given congregation take oversight, exercise themselves in spiritual care towards the brethren. And again, those who have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry by virtue of their spiritual graces are qualified to serve as elders. But not all elders or bishops have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry. In 1 Timothy 5:17, we are shown that while some elders may have teaching graces upon their lives, quite often, the majority of elders do not labour in the word and doctrine, this being a separate calling. Thus, an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor or teacher is first and foremost relative to spiritual administration a bishop (an elder).

The room of a bishop cannot be exalted over any position of spiritual ministry set forth in Ephesians 4:11. That system of things that makes spiritual administration in the church of Jesus Christ to take on a position higher than the five-fold ministry only brings about decay. The principal authorities in the church are the apostles and the prophets who as such can be put in place of elders.

Now, we will want to examine again the word presbytery, which in 1 Timothy 4:14 is a reference to the body of elders

1 Timothy 4:14, serving in a given congregation. In Paul was writing to Timothy and was exhorting him to be faithful to the ministry God has given him. So, he says

4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

The word presbytery means the body of elders. And, by transference of figure, a presbyter is an elder in a local congregation of God's people. Thus, the term "*district presbyter*" is a misnomer, for it presupposes that one person is exercising himself in that capacity over a given city, a given district in a given city or over several towns or cities. There is nothing like the "district presbyter" but simply a district presbyter: an elder among many others in a given region.

The above leads us to a consideration of the jurisdiction wherein spiritual administration may be exercised. Now, when we talk about spiritual administration, we need to know what this means. It is something very distinct from spiritual ministry (the service of ministers, that is, the five-fold ministry). It relates to taking oversight concerning the affairs of the Lord's people. Attending to such matters as deciding on which days of the week the Lord's people are to meet together in fellowship, at what places are they to meet? When we meet, how many hours would we want to stay? What arrangement do we make to visit the sick and minister to them? How do we take care of the welfare of the poor? If there be a problem that an individual is having, how do we go about solving it? How do we exercise spiritual discipline when the need arises? These are the things that come under the sphere of spiritual administration. What then is the jurisdiction of an elder or a body of elders? The scripture shows that the sphere of authority of an elder or bishop is within a locality that is within a certain area in a city or within a given city. The elder is ordained by God to function, to exercise spiritual administration in the assembly where he fellowships, that is, in the local

congregation that he belongs to. And the largest scope of a local expression of the body of Christ is a city: the church in Antioch, the church in Miletus, the church in Jerusalem, the church in Laodecian etc. Put differently, the greatest size of the church of Jesus Christ administratively is the church in a city. So, biblically, an elder is not supposed to have authority over local congregations of God's people outside the city of his residence. This is very important.

In fact, there is a denominational church called the "*Presbyterian Church*". They highlight the importance of this principle in their operations. Page 791 in Webster dictionary defines a presbytery as an assemblage of elected elders and ministers in a given area. When it is operated the way the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles ordained for the church, it is an assemblage of elders and ministers in a given local assembly or congregation. Their sphere of authority is limited to that locality. There is no such thing in the teachings of Christ and of the twelve apostles as a bishop (an elder) over four, five cities. This is the importation of man's idea and projections into the work of God and it brings about idolatry and spiritual decay.

Now, let us go again to 1 Peter 5:1, 2 where these two terms bishops and elders were used interchangeably. And that will further strengthen our understanding.

5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, (The word oversight here is **episkopeo**) not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

A willing spirit is ever ready to minister sacrificially for the blessing of the brethren rather than using the position to exploit the people. Paul said, "*I will gladly spend my life and my resources in ministering to you, even though, the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved*" (II Corinthians

12:15). There is a character disposition, a ministerial disposition that should characterise all true servants of God. We continue the reading. Verse 3

5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Ensamples in righteousness, ensamples in humility, ensamples in working hard with one's hands, as much as possible, to earn a living. We closed with this observation in the last edition, using the words of Jesus Christ in Mathew 23 to illustrate. When a position is exclusively belonging to one person, there is tendency for such a one to abuse himself and others. But when there is plurality of ministries and of spiritual administrations, then there is safety. When we operate according to the principles of God's word, we will find that God's servants are in His right hand and nothing can touch them, no force in heaven or on earth can destroy them. But when we operate outside of the principles laid down in the scriptures, we would be doing so at our own peril. And of course, a little later when we talk of the work of the ministers of God (that is those that have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry), we will find that this provision makes possible for a continuous growth in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Let us take verse 3 again.

5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

The reference to God's heritage shows that the people, the congregation belongs to God and not to the ministries. Verse 4

5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Now, when we talk of ministers, we do not refer necessarily to those that are into what is called "*full-time*

ministry". Somebody can make a profession out of the work of the ministry, that is, doing no secular work but giving oneself wholly to the work of the ministry. There is a provision for that in God's arrangement. But, not all persons who have so given themselves to not working secularly to earn a living are necessarily ministers of God.

A handsome percentage of persons, who parade themselves as "*full-time ministers*" of God, are a shame to the gospel. But the work of the ministry (because of the increasing demand) may require some to give up their secular work having demonstrated in their lives that they have the capacity to work and have worked with merit. A failure, a secondary school or university dropout, who has never earned a living by working with his hands, has no business being in a full-time minister. Such are only using the cloak of "full-time ministry" to cover their laziness and slothfulness.

When we are talking of ministers of God, we are talking of persons who have received a definite call of God to the work of the ministry.

Now, in a certain congregation, there could be an expanded leadership meeting that requires the presence of certain persons that have not come of age, spiritually speaking, to use the room of elders. These ones are referred to in the scriptures as deacons. They occupy the secondary level of spiritual administration or authority within the church. But in saying that, we are to note that God equally anoints males and females. That is why some of the words in the Greek used to set forth these positions are in the neuter form showing that both males and females can exercise them. In any case, in Christ Jesus, there is neither male nor female. In the middle court (the holy place), the continuing area of life and fellowship of the believer, there is no distinction placed between males and females. In Christ Jesus, there is neither male nor female, bond or free but we are all one in Christ Jesus. This is important. That is why in Romans 16:1, in referring to a deacon, a lady was mentioned. The word "*deacon*" is neither masculine nor feminine. Such terms as deaconess or deacons are all an

attempt of the church to create a title or office that man may bear. But these things are callings; they are spiritual responsibilities. And they are to be seen as things to do in the house of God to the honour of God rather than a title to carry.

One of the great possibilities in the house of God when these arrangements set forth in the scriptures are set aside is that it introduces politics. If you are simply a bishop, then, of course, you have such great authority. In fact, there is a form of church government called *episkopella* and that has to do with the government of bishops over the ministers of God (called priests) and over the lower clergy: a system of government in which a whole denomination, with branches world-wide, is ruled by a college of bishops. And, of course, that is a misnomer.

Spiritual administration should be limited to a local assembly. And, when a person takes on responsibility of exercising legislative functions outside his place of residence, he is only troubling his soul. And of course, he begins to suffer spiritual decline. Because the challenge of spiritual ministry requires us to continually wait upon the Lord, waiting upon our ministries. That is what we find in Acts 6. When certain responsibilities began to creep in, the apostles said, "*no, we shall not leave the word of God to serve tables. Let another level of spiritual administration be ordained that will be able to take care of that. We will give ourselves to prayers and to the ministry of the word*". And that brings us back to the functions and services of the five-fold ministry.

One: no one on being called to the estate of ministry begins as an apostle or a prophet. All that are called must first be exercised either as a teacher, a shepherd, a shepherd teacher, an evangelist, an evangelist teacher, or an evangelist shepherd. We know that the teaching gift being the operative grace in the work of the ministry, is quite often manifested in the ministry of evangelists and shepherds apart from those who are specifically called and have an anointing to teach God's word. Now, as people exercise themselves in these ministries, after a

passage of time, they receive an additional call to the ministry of an apostle or a prophet or a prophetic apostle.

Now, all of these things are not titles but ministries. For somebody to be saved five years ago and be parading himself as an apostle evokes laughter in those who have spiritual understanding. Paul, that great apostle was a believer for thirteen years with those deep encounters he had, before he was called into the ministry of an apostle. A situation where an individual who has the calling of a shepherd upon his life being a "*president*" and "*founder*" and supposing to have spiritual administration over many territories, shows the individual as bringing too much trouble upon his soul. Not even in a local church can the calling of a pastor place an individual as head in ministry. The most abused office is that of a pastor (or a shepherd). The visible church systems have given the world to believe that the pastor is the head of a local church. This same office is often times glorified beyond proportion through recourse to administrative skills to take a lordly position over hundreds, even thousands of local assemblies. The grace of a shepherd is only one of the five principal callings, not even a foundation ministry. There can be no meaningful growth in an assembly if there is no deliberate attempt to allow the other ministries to function in their God given roles.

Now, if we come back to Ephesians 4, we will find that the five-fold ministry is set in the body of Christ universal. Of the first ministries, some may be resident ministries (and quite often the shepherdic ministry is a resident ministry) while some may have travelling ministries, ministering to the body of Christ everywhere. But, for those that have a travelling ministry, when they go outside of their domain of residence, they are to exercise themselves in the teaching and preaching of God's word and other related ministrations. They are not to function legislatively. That is, they are not to tell the people what to do in terms of running their daily affairs. They may sit together with the elders in a given place sharing with them from their wealth of experience. But they have no right to exercise any form of legislative function outside their domain. Thus,

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concentrating on their spiritual ministries, Ephesians 4 sets them forth as "*joints of supply*" principally.

A special attention would have to be given to the two foundation ministries: apostles and prophets. When persons standing in these ministries in the New Testament scriptures are studied closely in the light of what is recorded about them, they appear to have greater latitude in spiritual – administrative authority beyond all others. This is true. For example, Paul could say of himself “This is my rule in all the churches”. Again, he interferes administratively in the affairs of the Corinthian church (see ICorinthians. 5). And yet again, he ordains persons into responsibility of eldership in various cities. He directs another, who also laboured as an apostle, to do the same (see for example the apostolic letters to Titus and Timothy).

The spirit of the word indicates that the principles of the word of God carry the same authority today and not necessarily persons in these offices. By the anointing of the Spirit, apostles and prophets as they fulfil their ministries travelling from one place to another, should patiently highlight principles of God’s word that should arm leadership in each locality with the wisdom to handle such functions previously referred to in the italicised portion. In this way they would be giving place to the Lord Jesus Christ to confirm to the heart of the respective leadership His will.

What this means is that sometimes, a counsel given as to a possible line of action may not be wholly adhered to. That should not be taken as a breach in the Spirit. True apostles and prophets would always find that if they have in manifestation the grace of patience and love, others would invariably follow their lead.

God’s true servants may always leave any difficulty arising from accepting to operate within their boundaries of authority to Him who purchased the church with His own blood.

Let’s sum up the foregoing. A teacher, shepherd, evangelist, prophet or apostle is called to serve the body of

Christ all over the world. And he is to be received by the various congregations of the Lord's people according to the anointing of God upon his life, and according to his or her moral character. But when he goes outside he must humble himself. He may teach the principles governing a particular issue in an attempt to guide the people by the light of God's word, but the leadership in that assembly or location must receive those principles, judge them to be true and so internalise them, and administer their own affairs under the headship of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the head of the church, whether the church universal, or the church as a local assembly, a local expression of the body of Christ.

To have a singular individual exercising a whole sphere of authority that span across congregations of God's people in different regions across the globe, is to repudiate the authority and headship of Christ over his church. And of course, when an individual begins to do that, he begins to decay, he begins to burn out. He spends five minutes in this city. And church politics will require him to move to another city. And the people will be saying, "*oh, our president and founder is coming*", and there is a lot of ceremony to give him a "*red carpet*" reception, as if the church of Christ is a secular state. And after all is said and done, nothing is ministered to the increase of the church.

Let us operate how the Lord wants us to. Then there would be safety; then, there is spiritual increase. Anyone who has seen the glory of God and seen the work of the kingdom of God twenty, thirty years ago, and come to see the system of things operating now, cannot but weep. But God is putting all things straight. The truth we are sharing with you are but tools we are gathering. Beginning from the next edition, we shall begin to examine the application of these tools in showing how they have brought about spiritual decay in God's house, and how God is reacting against it and bringing it to judgement. We hear with profit if we repent and turn to the Lord. He is not going to bring us into judgement concerning our past if we are prepared to repent. But the axe, by the principles of this truth, which we

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have preached, is laid at the feet of every tree. The Bible says any tree that does not produce the fruit of repentance shall be hewn down and thrown into the fires of affliction. The Lord bless you in Jesus name. Amen.

11
Part I

Spiritual Masquerading

We are continuing in our study on God's pattern church. And as we mentioned in the last edition, we will be applying the tools we have gathered in our meditation on spiritual leadership: God's pattern I and II. Accordingly, we will be doing a lot of scripture reading. If you will turn with me to Isaiah 28:9 we will be taking the first reading and going ahead in our meditation. Isaiah 28:9

28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

Isaiah 28:1-8: that precedes the above verse ends on a very sad note. The people of God have wholly departed from the ways of God, not only the generality of people, but also even their leadership. And here in verse 9, we find an offset, God reacting to the spiritual decay by raising up something, a body of people for the outworking of his purpose, for God cannot abandon his work of redemption. So turn with me to verses 7 and 8 of this same chapter that you might best appreciate what the prophet is crying out for in verse 9. Isaiah 28:7, 8

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28:7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way...

...out of the narrow way that leads to life. The wine of illicit pleasure, the strong drink of materialism and worldliness - these have an effect on the Lord's people just the same way alcoholic drink affects the drunkard (remember what is said in verse 1 and 3: the drunkards of Ephraim, drunk with the pleasures of this world). So, the prophet continues;

The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision (that is in the operations of the gifts of the Spirit what they see is not what God has given), they stumble in Judgement (that is, in the teaching of God's word). For all tables are full of vomit...

Peter says when a man begins to do things he once renounced, which things are moral vices, which he once repented from, he is as a dog that has returned back to its vomit (II Peter 2:22). And so, certain things that dead orthodoxy has thrown upon the church world which were sometimes rejected have now been embraced by unfaithful pentecostalism. And here we are told that all tables are full of vomit *and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.*

And so, God cries out in verse 9,

28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? (the knowledge of God and the knowledge of his will) and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? ? (the principles of God's word that governs moral behaviour and ministerial labour)...

Now, the mere fact that this question is asked shows that majority of God's people are not in the right condition to be taught knowledge and made to understand doctrine. And so, the prophet gives the answer to the question in the next part of

verse 9. He says... *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.*

Now, the word translated milk here is the Hebrew word *chalab*. Three English words can interpret it: either milk as here given or cheese or sucking. The reference here is to sucking; being the way a child that has no teeth draws food from the mother's breast. So, we can talk of the child that has been weaned as the one that is no longer sucking.

Thus, the emphasis here is that these persons must be weaned from sucking, not the milk of the word, for, the milk of the word will always be relevant. Even at the time of the end when time appears to be running out (Revelation 10:6), it is always God's way to turn the minds of the people to the way things were at the beginning, so that certain things may be corrected, and so that God's people might grow unto fullness. The sincere milk of the word will always be relevant. When the deep things of God are being shared, God will intermix it with things that govern the primary beginnings of salvation. Thus, the sincere milk of the word will always be needed, but then, the individual believer is expected to grow to a point where he is delivered from sucking.

Then, the next thing is that the people must be drawn from breasts. The word "*drawn*" as here used very forceful in the original. It speaks of a forceful break from a habit. Now, in the natural, in the first two years of a child, it is best that much of the food the child takes comes through the mother's breast. But, after the age of two, three, four, if the child is still desirous of sucking and will not eat solid food, a concerned mother will have to take drastic steps to stop the child from infancy. One of the things done is that the mother may go into a dry fast of seventy-two hours, and all of the fibre will dry up and the supply of milk to the breast will be no more. So, after few feverish attempts of the child to suck and there is nothing coming, he beaks off. That is forcefully stopping a child that is over-aged from sucking breasts.

The reference of the prophet Isaiah in this second consideration is therefore to *adult spiritual babies*. They are

adults in the sense that by reason of the number of years they have been saved, they ought to be able to feed on the solid meat of God's word, but rather, they have choose to remain babies.

Whenever the teaching of God's word gets serious, when God's servants begin to get into the deep things of God, most adult spiritual babies sleep off or begin to complain or murmur. And some persons put their minds at home when they go to church. Men who are successful in business and run their homes and offices very well, enter into a blackout when they get to church, they abandon the faculties of reasoning and intelligence. Thus ministries who operate their selfish agenda in opposition to the will of God lead them into bondage very easily.

We now come to this two classes of believers- the spiritual babies who are such because they have just given their lives to Christ, and the adult spiritual babies who ought to be fathers and mothers in the Lord but are still clutching to their Sunday-school materials etc and are not capable of independent reasoning. They clutch to such things as they are taught, whether or not it agrees with God's word.

The church world today consists of mostly these two categories of believers: spiritual babies and adults who have not filled their times. Isaiah in the closing chapter of his work speaks of an ancient that has not filled his days, a child of hundred years (Isaiah 65:20) speaking of adults who have always being there in the church (fifteen years, twenty years, twenty-five years) but have not come to a knowledge of God beyond the very basics. And even in the basic principles of Christ, they are confused.

When the Lord begins to do a work, while the spiritual babies cry out that their feeding bottles are being taken away from them, the adult spiritual babies become name callers, "*oh that man is a false prophet, he is this, he is that*". They begin to call names. But God by the power of his word and the power of his Spirit will deliver his people from that which characterise the church world of our day.

We come to verse 10. Here we are shown that even though the Lord will teach knowledge and make his people to understand doctrine, he will suit the method of delivery to the general condition of the people. It says

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

We will read verses 11 and 12 so that we can better appreciate the force of what is said in verse 10

28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak
to this people.

28:12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause
the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not
hear.

One of the things that will characterise the close of the church age is that God will give unto his servants (ministers) another tongue. The word *stammering lips* in verse 11 is a misnomer; and if you check other translations apart from the *KJV*, it is rendered another tongue. And in I Corinthians 14 where Paul quotes from this passage, he said, "*with men of strange language and another lips will I speak unto this people*" (I Corinthians 14: 21).

Here we are shown that when God begins to open up his word again (through his servants) it will look like something strange to God's people. This is so because the people have become married to things, which are taught in the city of religion. In the visible church world thing taught are only mixtures of man's idea with sprinkles of the principles of God's word.

He says, "*precepts must be upon precept*". Normally, when you teach children, you introduce one concept at a time, and you stay with that concept. Then, you introduce another concept, and this second concept must be related to the first. In this last hour, the church that is two thousand years old must be

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taught like a baby, because for all her physical age, she is still at best only an adult spiritual baby.

Now, come with me to Hebrews 5 and you will see where Paul laments the same condition in the early church. Hebrews 5:11-14, Paul was talking about another level of priesthood, a new priesthood, much more glorious than the old testament priesthood, but says he couldn't say much more about it for he was sure the people were not able to receive it.

5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered ...

There are times when spiritual things are difficult to be uttered, not because God has not made known His will, but because the church out there are not in a ready state to receive. Remember Paul's words to the Corinthian church. He said, "*and I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes*" (I Corinthians. 3:1). And that condition is still prevalent in the church today. Whereas many are claiming to be mighty men and women of God, we do not see the reflection of this assertion in the growth level of the church. So Paul says he has many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing that the people are dull of hearing. He continues;

5:12 For when for the time (that ye have received the word of God, by now) ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We find these two distinctions. Adult spiritual babies fill the rank and file of the church today. But God must speak, and he will suit the method to the condition of the people. In Isaiah

28:10 we are told precept must be upon precept, a line drawn from a passage of scriptures compared with another line drawn from another passage of scriptures, here a little, there a little. This is God's method of speaking to his people. In this programme, we will be very deliberate, taking each topic, one at a time, touching on certain things that relate to the growth of the church so that we might deliver ourselves from our traditional clutching to denominational feeding bottles and begin to think properly and act properly as it accords to our spiritual age.

The emphasis in verses 11 and 12 of Isaiah 28 is that the new tongue will lead the people into rest, into fullness of rest. Rest comes when there is no longer controversy between man and his God, when God has fully incorporated the nature and glory of Christ into the believer. When we have broken loose from the limitations of this world to the infinite dimensions that are reserved in God's word for full-grown sons, then we have come to rest. Here is a call to perfection; a mandate given us to grow up spiritually. And it says; yet the people will not hear.

I will go straight to the second aspect of this meditation. We take the reading again from Isaiah 28:13

28:13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken

By God's ordering there is no subject or theme of redemption in scriptures that is wholly covered by just one writer. This is so no matter how voluminous the writings are of that individual concerning that subject. God says, at the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established. The witness of any other writer on the same doctrine must be taken into consideration before a proper view is reached on that subject matter. And, quite often, for adult spiritual babies, immediately something they hold dear (eventhough it is only a refuge of lies, eventhough it is a not true spiritual hope) is faulted, they begin to cry out and to call names.

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But God says that he has this arrangement in place so that those who will not humble themselves to seek the face of God may have the misfortune of rejecting a true word. For many, if a teaching does not agree with what is contained in their Sunday school manual, they do not even seek to prove its veracity against God's word. Invariably they become as the 14th verse of Isaiah 28 says,

28:14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

28:15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Take note of these two things: the *refuge of lies* and the *hiding place*. We find them again in verse 17. And they constitute the two divisions of spiritual decay we shall be addressing in forth coming editions. Verse 16:

28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone...

When God will measure his people, Christ is the measuring instrument used. Things must be assessed as they conform to the character image of Jesus Christ, his wisdom and spiritual knowledge. So, he says I lay in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste Verse 17:

28:17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the Plummet...

This imagery is borrowed from the building industry. When a wall is set upon a foundation, by suitable instrument you can know whether the wall is vertical, whether the line is straight. When you read the plummet and there is a defect,

then the supervisor will call for that portion of the wall to be pulled down. We are told that judgement (doctrinal teachings) shall be laid to the line and righteousness (moral and ministerial conducts and character) shall be laid to the plummet in order that the hail may sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters overflow the hiding place.

Now notice that in verse 14, the leadership of the Old Testament church were addressed, it says "*hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule this people*". We shall be talking about the defects that constitute "*the hiding place*". What is here meant by the phrase *hiding place*? In the Hebrew dictionary, the word "*hiding*" mean *masquerading*. Accordingly, we have titled this message "*spiritual masquerading*". The reference is to the fact that under some guise, certain things are being perpetrated in the church world today that brings about spiritual corruption. The first reference is to this matter that we covered in the previous edition: leadership structure in the church.

We know that there was priesthood under the Old Testament with its laws of carnal commandments. We also know that under the New Testament, there is a different priesthood. But, there is a tendency in the church to revert to the Old Testament structure, to simulate things as they were during the time of Moses and Aaron and to seek to fulfil God's plan and purposes using a method that God more than two thousand years ago declared unprofitable. Let's take up the Levitical (Aaronic) priesthood and the Melchisedec (royal) priesthood. If you will turn with me to Hebrews 7, we will be doing quite some reading.

In Hebrews 5:6 and 6:20, we are told that Jesus Christ was ordained a priest after the order of Melchisedec. And in Hebrews 7:11 we read the following,

7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

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The first thing we are shown here is that the Levitical priesthood emphasises outward orders: garments, incense and the like ... We know that the Pentecostal church, of which I also am a member and could speak authoritatively about, has gone back into the old testament, raked up the dust, and is entrenching again the Levitical priesthood. We are told here that the goal of spiritual ministry is to bring about perfection. And God, not getting what he was looking for under the Old Testament, threw that order of things away and instituted a new order.

In order not to rush through this very important fact, I will allow the speed of delivery to be moderated by the reading of God's word with some comments where necessary. We have read verse 11, so we now take verse 12-14.

7:12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Under the Old Testament, you cannot be a priest except you are of a particular tribe: the tribe of Levi. That is not all, even if you come from Levi, you must be of a particular family lineage in the tribe of Levi. Only the lineage of Aaron's parents could be priests. So, no matter how much you loved God under the Old Testament, you could not be a priest if you come from a different tribe. And, only the priests accessed the deeper things of God, even the Levites (others from the tribe of Levi who were not from the family lineage of Aaron) were limited to worship in the outer court (the first of the three courts). So, things were limited by an outward setting. We are told that since Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, the fact of his priesthood is an indication that there has been a change in the priestly order. We complete the reading. Hebrews 7:14-17

7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

7:15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

The distinctive qualification of ministry under the New Testament is the power of the endless life. Christ in us, the hope of glory. Any other distinctions are mere fallacy. The system of things that sets up officialdom in ministry is a gradual drifting into the Old Testament order. We will take that in a fuller consideration in the next edition. But now, we continue the reading verses 17 – 19.

7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Follow verses 18 and 19 closely.

7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

The setting aside of the Levitical priesthood with all the routine services: animal sacrifices, garments, incense, blood and the like. The setting aside of all of that is that God did not get what he was looking for. That priestly order is said here to be weak and unprofitable: perfection could not come by that order. Verse 19.

7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The call to draw nigh unto God though limited to a select few under the Old Testament is, under the New Testament, not limited to persons who went to the Bible Schools or attended seminaries. Seminary and Bible School outputs are not

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necessarily tools that God must have to get his work done. All restrictions are taken out of the way and men can freely approach unto God and attain to the best in God without any prejudice.

The meaning and purpose of all of these things, we shall touch in the next edition. But turn with me to Hebrews 10. We are emphasising that perfection is what God desires, what he had in mind in setting up the New Testament priesthood. Growth is a mandate, for the church. She must grow to fullness of life in him. And, any system of things set up in the church that keeps the people in perpetual babyhood does so in order to be able to exploit the people. Men abandon their minds and support things that are contrary to God and his purpose all in the name of religion. No wonder somebody says, "*religion is the opium of the people*". But, in this last hour, the great sword of Jehovah shall be spread over the ekklesiastical heavens, and all things that are not according to his will shall be destroyed. In Hebrew 10:1-2, we are told,

10:1 For (that system of things which once stood in the time of Moses called) the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

Note that it says, "*it can never*". And, the daily repetition of these sacrifices only suggests the weakness of that order of things. Patterning the leadership structure or ministerial order in the church according to the order found in the Old Testament only brings about spiritual death. It is a hiding place, a spiritual masquerading for the purpose of doing things that better serve self than God. The Lord bless you, in Jesus name.

12
Part II

Spiritual Masquerading

We are continuing our teachings on God's Pattern Church, and, we will be taking the second part of what we ended with in the last edition: Spiritual Masquerading. Since that delivery was very fast we might need to establish two principal things that were brought out clearly in the last edition. First, God is straightening the things in His church both as to conduct (character), practices and her belief system. Secondly, as God does this, it is accompanied by the release of judgements to flush out all errors some may stubbornly cling to.

We will be very deliberate in how we approach today's teaching. May God bring enlightenment to every heart. Join us in this prayer as we continue in this meditation.

Let's begin with a little bit of recap of what we found in the last edition. We said that in the midst of that which is not according to God's mind (the spiritual decay and apostasy of the times), God cries out in Isaiah 28:9 "*whom shall he teach knowledge?*" *And who shall he cause to understand doctrine?* The two-fold answer speaks volume: "*them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast*". And, we observed in the last edition that two categories of believers are shown here. First we have sucking babies: those of the Lord's people who have not been saved for a long time, and, who are only

accustomed to taking food through sucking. To be weaned from the milk means weaned from sucking, that manner by which food is taken by a little child is the imagery used here.

Then the second "*drawn from the breast*", and we said this speaks of "*adult spiritual babies*", adult in the sense that they have been saved for quite a time (five, seven, ten years), yet, in spiritual matters, they are still babies, and incapable of doing an independent study of God's word; not benefiting from the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Apostle John tells us in 1 John 2:20, 21 and 27 that we have the anointing in us which can teach us all things. And yet, people can only relate to that, which they are taught in their Sunday school manual, still clutching to their denominational feeding bottles. But, in this last hour, God will teach the church the knowledge of himself and His will, and will highlight and impact principles of truth that enlightens the mind and so govern the moral and ministerial conduct of the people.

It is worthy to note that we have in the church sucking babies and adult spiritual babies, and we said these constitute the greater majority of God's people. Scarcely ten percent of believers today go to the Lord and seek his face concerning the things that pertain to the perfection of the church. And, God is reacting against that situation.

The next thing we found is that God will suit the method of teaching his people the knowledge of Himself and of His will to the condition of his people. He will give one truth at a time. That is why we have been taking these teachings in bits in order that our understanding may be fruitful. But, in spite of this, some are already getting agitated. And, we trust that the agitation, which is in the will of the Lord, will continue to great proportions. There would be loud cries. One of the things that we find is that adult spiritual babies are masters in name-calling. Something is taught which do not agree with what they have in their manuals, and they begin to scream "*false prophets*". But, wisdom shall be justified by her deeds. The Lord Jesus Christ told us how to identify the false prophets. He

says, *by their fruits, ye shall know them*. The moral character of an individual tells us who he is. Beside, by the gifts of the spirit we can know. When we are not sure of anything and we seek the face of the Lord, by the many distributed workings of the Holy Spirit in revelatory gifts, he might make us know the character of the one ministering.

Thirdly, we can know by the word of God. For, no lie is of the truth. The truth has no lie in it. If what is spoken agrees with the scriptures, it is best to receive it as the word of God.

The prophet says precept must be upon precept, line upon line. The little child writes a, b, c, d and stops, and does that for a week. And, for the second week, he learns to write e, f, g, h. So, God will suit the method to all, and bit-by-bit, as we continue, you will find that a whole system of truth emerges. Not another truth necessarily, but the same truth, the meaning behind the same words, we have always read but never understood. And there will be a witness in our spirits that God is ordaining it.

That brings us to the second point we mentioned in the last edition. In this last hour, God will speak to his people with another tongue. John the Baptist came forth; he had another tongue. What he was preaching and teaching was not what the people were used to. And that caused a stir. But, if you read the preaching and teachings of John the Baptist, you will wonder what other persons were teaching, for what he taught were the basic principles of righteousness. The Bible says in Luke 3 that John preached the baptism unto repentance. That was the summary of his message. Yet, it caused a stir, because the majority of the people were living in hypocrisy.

So also it was with the Lord Jesus Christ during the time of his first advent. He brought a new tongue. But when you read Mathew 5, 6, 7 and see the practical things brought forth in his teachings, and you read through the gospel you will wonder why the people fought against him. It was a new tongue, it wasn't teaching on things that were not in the scriptures, but opening the understanding of the people to what God sought for in the things that he caused his prophets of old to teach and to

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write. And it is a paradox that while David, looking at those animal sacrifices and the emptiness of that old testament order cried out “*burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldst not*” and reached out in the spirit to the word of God’s grace, we in the new testament age, two thousand years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are seeking to pattern our worship after the old testament order. We will be closing with that, but it is sufficient to note here that Jesus had a new tongue. Verse 11 of Isaiah 28 says.

28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

And, we saw that the word stammering lips means a strange language, another tongue, another teaching, a teaching of another kind, drawn from the scriptures but different in spirit in the sense that it is serving God’s purpose. All must admit that there has been a great mixture of men’s ideas with sprinkles of God’s word in what is now building the church systems of our day.

The apostles came with a new tongue; it was something distinctively different from what the people knew. In this last hour, God is going to open the scriptures as never before. Many fairy tales we have held as biblical hope will be swept away. The Bible in Isaiah 28:15, 17 calls them refuge of lies. Many pet doctrines will be swept away. All attempts to gather the broken pieces of these doctrines upon many altars shall fail, for the Lord’s people shall be able to identify God’s word, and the common people shall hear it gladly and turn their heart to Jesus.

And, he says with another tongue, with a new disposition of men that brings this word, will I speak to these people. Their emphasis will be “*come to the rest, come to fullness, come to perfection, and come to maturity*”. For, even after two thousand years of the birth of the church, the church is still behaving like a baby, and, we expect the marriage of the bride

to Christ will be soon. You don't expect a thirty years old man to marry a two-year old girl. If he says it, we will not believe him. But if he sends a card, we will know that something is wrong somewhere. The church cannot be married to Jesus Christ in this state. As we look forward to our full union with Christ, we know that there is yet a tremendous work to be done in the midst of the church.

The apostles began to teach and preach the principles of God's word that accord with the New Testament. It was a period of transition the taking away of the first with a view to establishing the second. Peter in II Peter 1:12 calls their message "*the present truth*". Paul says he wrote and taught nothing but what was contained in the Old Testament. Their authority, the authority for their teaching and preaching was the scriptures. But to the people, because of their unfaithfulness and the darkness that has covered men's eyes and deafened their ears on account of an age-long association with a system of things founded on error, it was a new tongue, a strange language, a strange thing.

We know that at this last hour, God shall remove every misconception and error crowding around about the truth, exposing the truth that men may behold Him and live. The Bible says that the path of the just is like a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18). And we trust that God, who by his spirit and by his word has promised that he would so visit his church, will do so at this time and hour.

When we come to II Peter 1, the apostle begins to talk, from verse 3, of things that pertain to life and godliness, partaking of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust. He began to build one block upon another until he comes to verse 7 where he speaks of charity. He said if we do all these things, we will have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then, in verse 12, he says

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1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Another tongue is the present truth. It will be in conformity with the scriptures, it is not going to be anything strange. But it will draw the carpet from the feet of hypocrisy, expose worldliness for what it is, deal with certain practices among God's people and will expose the errors in certain teachings. Our rest will consist in the true word of God appearing again in our land.

Now we come to the third thing we mentioned in the last edition. That has to do with one of the phrases we find in Isaiah 28:13, 15, which are expressions of the spiritual decay of our day. Isaiah 28: 13-15

28:13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

When certain statements are made, people are alarmed. But the proper attitude of the Lord's people to any word that comes is to go and seek the face of the Lord whether the word is true. This, the Berean Christian did. The apostles were not too excited about the church in Thessalonica; these ones never took out time to prove the Lord's word. But the church in Berea knew the character of the people teaching and ministering to them. They knew they were servants of God. But they needed to prove the word. If we develop such an attitude, God will confirm to our hearts things that are according to His will. When a word is spoken and there is no care to prove it, there may be such sharp reactions as switching off the television but all of God's word cannot be spoken once. When you follow the teachings, God will establish in your heart, whether these things are so or not. Verse 14

28:14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

Verses 15, 16 and 17 are addressed first to the leadership. The reason is because God's servants are an expression of God's glory. When God swore by himself that he would do certain things, it is that he will give the supply that makes possible the realisation of those promises. Rightly seen, parts of the description of the glory of Christ are his servants in his right hand. And, when spiritual leadership fails, the effect is usually catastrophic. We only need to take out a little time to examine the testful experiences that visited the children of Israel as they Journeyed through the wilderness. We will be able to see how any mistake in spiritual leadership brought about destruction upon themselves (the leaders) and the people.

The spiritual leadership is first addressed. Verse 15 of Isaiah 28 begins this way "*Because ye have said*". Quite often, in spiritual parlance, certain things that are done are given to us as speeches. "*Actions speaks louder than voice*", the people would say. And some people may say, "*at what time did we say this?*" Nay but the way a man acts shows what he is saying. And the prophets here says,

28:15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

So, two things: the refuge of lies (doctrinal errors) and the hiding place of spiritual practices that are not in conformity with God's word. And, the first of these, which we will be focusing on, is the pattern of spiritual leadership in the visible church system. We call it spiritual masquerading because some thing is set up other than what God has in mind. In the last edition, we simply said that much of what we find in the practices of the visible church system is borrowing from the Old Testament. And, the authority for much of that is the Old

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Testament, as it relates to the Levitical priesthood. But, the Bible says, "*he taketh away the first that he might establish the second*". There is a new arrangement, a new covenant. The first could not bring to God what he looked for, but the second shall fulfil that purpose.

In order for our minds to be fruitful, we will be going into the other aspect of this meditation in an indirect manner. We will say what things are wrong practices and them go into the scriptures to strengthen our under standing.

The first is the Clergy-laity distinction: officialdom and hierarchy in ministry so that there is a sustained order of things that distance the people from the ministry. The clergy-laity distinction, which is practiced in almost every place, is alien to the spirit of the New Testament. That is the first observation. We take some scriptures to back it up and strengthen this position further.

Turn with me to Revelation 2. Remember Revelation 2 and 3 is a manifestation of a typical day of judgement, Christ coming among his people after 65 years of his resurrection and showing them how they have fared, giving them their score sheets, drawing attention to things that must be repented from. By the eternal characteristic of God's word, we know that those principles are still binding upon the church today. Those things the early churches were to repent of are still the same things the church today is to break loose from. Revelation 2:1-7 is a letter to the church in Ephesus. Many things were commended and one thing was rebuked. But in verse 6, a particular grace was commended in that- church, which is what we want to bring out, Rev 2:6 says

2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

Notice the strong emotion that the Lord expresses concerning this thing called the deeds of the Nicolaitans. What is it? It is introducing officialdom into spiritual ministry. Some are the official leaders, officially clothed, separately seated, and

operating in such a form as to undermine the integrity of the followership. He says he hates it. It should be one church, we sit together, and spiritual ministry can flow through any person. Those who have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry minister the word in teaching and preaching. But there should also be the ministry of the body to itself, building up itself in love. Here it is simply the deeds of the Nicolaitans. But when we go to the Lord's words to the church in Pergamos, we find this same element but in a form that tells us something important. Revelation 2: 15

2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

He is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows because he loves righteousness and hates wickedness. This clergy-laity division, officialdom in ministry set up through certain arrangement that glorifies the ministry over and above the congregation, is what is referred to here. We are not saying there should not be respect for the ministries that God has revealed among his people. But, we are saying that in God's house, the thin line between spiritual leadership and those who have not attained to that estate should be left as it is because men are always growing in grace. And, there are no fixed numbers of persons who can minister Christ to his people by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, what things constitute this masquerading? First, there is an understanding. In order to be a minister of God, you must go through the Bible school or through the seminary. Whereas, there have been few men of God who emerged through that means, in the main. Bible schools and seminaries never produce men of God. It is in the school of life (in our every day life), and in the environment of the local congregation that God raises up ministries. Bible school is an arrangement put in place with a view to securing an end. If you have a diploma from a Bible school, then you could open a church. Next is to carve out such an image for yourself: call yourself by some

name. The distinction having been made, the people who do not have this qualification will have to look to those having the qualification for spiritual help. And these say to the people, as it were, "*you be responsible for our care, because it is we that bring the word of life to you*".

Although the scriptures provide for some to break free from secular employment, and to serve him in "*full time*" capacity, these are to live by faith, and are not to set up any system of things, any arrangement that draws their pay or salary from the congregation. A man's gift makes room for him. If you are ministering life, people will identify with you. But, you have no business enforcing such an arrangement that ensures that your needs are met. There is no one engraced by God, ministering God's life that will not be recognised for the services rendered. In any case, it is God who feeds the sparrows, who caused the ravens to feed Elijah. And, the same God is still at work in feeding his ministers today. Let this understanding sink into our hearts, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a hiding place it is a masquerading.

Now, if you drive through the streets of Benin during what time is called the Christmas, and the new year period, you will find some parsons parading as some gods in disguise; covering up themselves as masquerades. And when they come, children run and adults also are scared. And under the guise of being other than men, they make demands and get money. Sometimes they carry whip, and some attending to them will be menacing the people, attempting to whip them. And, because "*they are other than men*", they have right to demand money from the people. When ministries make themselves other than the Lord's word recommend, it is with a view to doing mischief. That is why we have titled this message "*spiritual masquerading*" drawing our inspiration from the Hebrew meaning of the word translated hiding in Isaiah 28:15 and 17. May the Lord help our understanding in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having seen that which the Lord Jesus Christ hates in Revelation 2, we will read some passages in Hebrews, perhaps

closing with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Mathew 23, and that will be sufficient for the present purpose.

Turn with me then to Hebrews 7, we will just take one or two verse and go to Hebrews 10 to pick also some verses. In Hebrews 7, we are told the old arrangement, the old covenant, simply called the law, made nothing perfect.

The reason why we are going back to such things as who is the bishop? Who is the elder? What is the position of the five-fold ministries? The need for a humble carriage to be taken on by the servants of God is because of how far the church has veered off through entrenching erroneous principles, and, by the means of it, lording it over men.

Here, we are told that the law made nothing perfect, but, the bringing in of a better hope did by which all are encouraged to draw nigh unto God (Hebrews 7:28). Under the Old Testament, only few people could go in. They come to tell the people what God has said. There is an intermediary interposed between God and the people. Under, the New Testament, the only intermediary is the indwelling Christ. Christ in us, the hope of glory. And, that removes all the distinction; it is the priesthood of all believers, not of a tribe, not of Bible school or seminary products. Christ in us is the hope of glory, and as we yield ourselves in consecration, Christ who is no respecter of persons moves us onward in a greater appreciation of him. And, that is our qualification for spiritual ministry.

The Lord bless you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and do you good. The Lord make you to stand upright and respond to that which God is calling his people unto and be established in the principle of truth God is giving to his church in this last hour. Amen.

13
Part I

Giving, Tithes and Offerings

You are welcome to this edition of light in the evening time. We are continuing in our meditation on God's Pattern Church. We have come to a very vital subject in our discussion. There can be no way God's church and the ministry of the Local church is discussed without an appropriate consideration of "giving". In this edition, we will be talking about Giving, tithing and Offerings, and we will be doing so first by examining some Old Testament provisions. In another edition, we will be examining the New Testament teachings on the same subject. Perhaps, in a third edition, we will concentrate on an aspect of the discussion. The main thrust will consist in a consideration of 1 Corinthians 9, Galatians 6:6, 1Corinthians 16, II Corinthians 8 and II Corinthians 9.

Now, let us go straight into the discussion. Turn with me to Exodus 25. We will be taking verses 1, 2 and 8. We intend to show the relatedness between giving and building up the sanctuary of God (that is raising up a sanctuary unto God). We also intend to establish the relatedness between giving and the manifest presence of the Lord in the midst of his people. Have these two set goals in mind, as you follow the reading. Exodus 25:1,2,8.

25:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
25:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.
25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

The offerings are listed in verses 3 through 7. From verses 2 and 8 however, we see a close connection between the offerings of the Lord's people and the building up of the house of God. That is important and should be taken note of. Secondly, the purpose of building the sanctuary is that God's great presence, which is usually hidden from the carnal, might be revealed in the midst of his people.

Now, before we go into the mainstream of the meditation, let us take note of something in verse 2, at least in passing.
Exodus 25: 2

25:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

As we shall see, giving is a priestly responsibility. It is an act of worship, acknowledging his right in creation, saying "*all we are, and all we hope to be is and shall continue to be by his grace, and what we have and what we hope to have is and shall continue to be by his provisions*". It is a priestly responsibility, an act of worship. And it pre-supposes that the individual is in covenant relationship with God.

Now, let us go into the discussion taking the very first occurrence of the word offering in scriptures (Genesis 4). As you will discover, whenever a subject is mentioned in the first occasion, there are certain elements that are either very visible or implied, which governs the understanding that we should have as we meditate on the same subject, going through all scriptures.

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Now, in Genesis 4:3-5, we meet the two sons of Adam and Eve bringing offerings to the Lord. But, there is a phrase that closes verse 4 that is of interest. We will just read verses 4 and 5 and then come back to verse 4 to bring out the phrase of interest, Genesis 4: 4-5.

4:4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

4:5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect....

Now, the phrase of interest is what we find in verse 4: *and the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering*. Giving will always revolve round these two major elements: the person that gives the offering, and, the offering itself. The LORD hath respect unto Abel as a person, and again, unto his offering. In other scriptures we find that the offering is usually placed upon the altar. We shall soon prove that the altar and the individual are related. Also, the offering must be made after the prescribed manner. Let us keep these two elements in view as we move on. Abel and his offering were received of God, but unto Cain and his offering, God had no respect.

The second scriptural reference is Genesis 8. The first known world had been brought to a close through a process of judgement, in what is familiarly referred to as the "*waters of Noah*". After that judgement, Noah comes out, and the first thing he did is quite suggestive both as to the place of offerings in God's dealings with man, and the attitude his people should have in acknowledging God's rights in creation Genesis 8. It will be sufficient for our purpose to read just the last three verses, Genesis 8:20-22.

8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

There is the fact of the altar and then the man who raises the altar. The altar says "*God has right in all of his creation, he is God of all the earth, he must be acknowledged*". And then the kind of offering put upon the altar. Verse 21

8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savor; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Verse 21 brings two things to light. God had placed a curse upon the earth, "*Curse is the ground for thy sake*" God told Adam in Genesis 3:17. Then, he again judges all the earth with a flood. But here in Genesis 8:21, God is saying that Judgement shall no longer be sweeping covering the whole earth and removing everything. He interposes a restriction. He does not remove the curse placed upon the earth for man's sake. That curse remains but there is a selective deliverance that some are to come into. And he tells us in verse 22 how this selective deliverance, this glorious deliverance and preservation, is to be secured by man. Verse 22.

8:22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Now, in verse 21, God said, he shall no longer destroy everything living, Judgement shall be selective. So also, deliverance shall be selective. But, who may be delivered? And in verse 22, he says, while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest... through the process of giving (for an allusion is made to what Noah had just done. Of the things that he hath, he took one seventh of it and lays down on the altar as a burnt offering unto the Lord. Not of the unclean beasts, but of the ones the Lord has called clean) the one that is in covenant relationship with God can secure to himself divine blessings and deliverance from the curse and all of its effects.

In other words, giving is an instrument, which reveals a consecrated living in an individual that is in covenant relationship with God and secures to him divine blessings and divine deliverance. This is important and should be noted. As we continue in this series, this truth shall be further established.

Thus, while in Genesis 4, the gift and the giver are the two elements, the third element shown here in Genesis 8 is that “*giving*” is the means by which a man acknowledges God’s right over his life and over what he owns, and God responds by blessing him further.

Now, the next passage of interest is Genesis 14, verses 15-23 are important, but since the passage is averagely familiar, we will just give a little background and read some of the verses. Lot, Abraham’s nephew had followed him in the call of God. But at some point, Lot lost the vision and journeyed to Sodom and other kingdoms round about the same location. And, certain nations came to fight against the four nations round about the valley of Sodom. They took to captivity the people and riches of those kingdoms, including their kings. A word goes to Abraham; he comes to work a work of deliverance. Being in covenant relationship with God, God delivered the five kings into his hands. He set the people free and brings them home. Out of apparent gratitude, those kings, delivered from captivity were reaching out to Abraham with gifts, offerings of silver and gold. But, just before they do this, something happened. We read this in verses 18 through 20.

14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

This mysterious personage (Melchizedek) is a type of the Son of God, a divine personage in type. He comes as a priest ministering the bread and serving the wine to Abraham. Of course, Abraham’s spirit was able to recognise the personage before him, and there was a transaction. And, from the words of the blessing, Abraham knew that God was making himself

known in a way that will secure blessing unto him. Now, follow the reading

14:19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

The blesser invokes the name of the Lord of all creation, the possessor of heaven and earth, bless Abraham. And he said, "*Blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand*". And he (Abram) gave tithes of all he had to this divine personage (Melchizedek). Then, there is a return in the narration; to what those four kings were trying to do.

14:21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

14:22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

14:23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

Now, the following things are implied in the answer that Abram gave. One, he recognised that his source is the most High God. Two, he knew that he should not associate himself with any gift that could be possibly used to cause distraction in his walk with God. We are told that Abram said that he has entered into covenant with God that he would not take from the riches of Sodom. Sodom represents the flesh, the world and such practices that are abomination in the sight of God.

Here, a third element appears. Remember, the first element is the man of the offering, the second the offering itself, the offering upon the altar, and giving being God's means of acting in selective deliverance towards his people, saving them away from judgement and blessing them. The new element revealed in the above passage is that the Lord's people must be careful whom they receive offerings from.

Not just any offering will do. It is a priestly responsibility, and, there must first and foremost be an acknowledgement of God, and a commitment to the God upon whose altar the offering would be placed. Coming to the altar simply means saying to God: "*you have right over my life. I can only live my life the way it pleases you*". And Abram said, "*I cannot receive any thing from you, God is my source, God is my blesser*".

Now, it will appear that in the various church systems of our day, as is often visibly the case: "*the name of the game is money, go get it*". And, all kinds of launching are done. God's need for a sanctuary in the midst of his people, and the Lord's people's need to raise up a sanctuary unto the Lord, will always be met by divine provisions made available to those who acknowledge God in their lives and are willing to honour his son Jesus Christ through saving faith. This must be noted carefully.

Now, we come to the matter of tithing. We recommend two passages to you for close study. Numbers 18:20-32 and Deuteronomy 14:22-29. These two passages discuss two types of tithing, all of which were demanded of the children of Israel by divine commandment. We go to the first.

Numbers 18 discusses the first of the two tithes, which is a tenth of a man's several earnings. One-tenth of such earnings is taken and given to the priesthood. The priesthood receives this, gives a tenth of that tithes to the Lord in acknowledgement of the Lord's goodness to them, and live on the remaining nine-tenth of the tithes of the children of Israel. We can go ahead to see God's purpose in that provision. First, it is for maintenance of the priest. And, it has its root in this. The priesthood under the Old Testament was forbidden from having any inheritance among the children of Israel. When the children of Israel got the Promised Land and the land was to be divided, no portion was allocated to the tribe of Levi. They were not to have any inheritance. Since they were not to farm, they had no need of land. In Numbers 18, we are told the tribe of Levi shall have

no inheritance among the people, their inheritance was to be the tithe.

Now, reading a bit on, we will find that the reason for that provision was because of a question asked in the closing part of Numbers 17. So much death was taking place among the people, and, the people were asking, why all these destruction? Why the death? Should we all die, anybody that comes nigh the tabernacle dies? And, the Lord said yes, this provision is made to deliver you from death. Only the priest should come nigh to the tabernacle to do the service of the tabernacle. But all other Israelites are excluded. They could go do their secular work and come to be ministered to. Spiritual responsibilities will rest on the shoulders of the priesthood only. This is important.

Some were forbidden to do any secular work. These were priests. And the rest of the people were forbidden from taking on any spiritual duties or responsibilities. These were the rests of Israel. It is in that context that the first of the tithing is introduced, which is one-tenth of the earnings of the children of Israel. A little later (in another edition), we will be talking more concerning this. But let us move on to the second type of tithing.

Now, after the Israelites have tithe one-tenth of his earnings, he takes another one-tenth and accumulates it. We are told in Deuteronomy 14 that there is a year of tithing. It occurs every three years. The second type of tithe are gathered within the period of the first year and expended on certain occasions in the manner God has prescribed. We will touch on that. Now, in the second year, the second one-tenth is gathered throughout the course of the year and expended the same way the one of the first year was expended. (That means that it was only four-fifth of the Israelites earnings that was allowed him for his personal use. Of the remaining one-fifth, half: that is one tenth of the earnings; is to go to the priests while the remaining half is to be expended in a particular way). But in the third year, there is a difference. All these second categories of tithes gathered throughout that year (the year of tithing) were dispensed in a described manner.

To help our understanding, we will go into this second type of tithing in some little details. God said to the people, you are called to be mine. My purpose and goal in calling you to be mine, is that I may use you, as my means of reaching the ends of the earth, that you might know me increasingly. The three major conventions or conferences you have every year expend these accumulated tithes in a way that will make you come to spiritual increase. Eat it and increase in my fear.

These three major conventions called feasts in the Old Testament were the feast of Passover, the feast of Pentecost and the feast of tabernacles. All male children of Israel were required to go from wherever they were in the land of Palestine, to Jerusalem to celebrate these feasts. The money they were to use during these time periods, to buy the necessary things was to be accumulated over the intervening period. This is all they did in the first year with the first tithe. This is what they did in the second year with the second tithe. May the Lord help our understanding.

But, in the third year, the Israelite is told, the tithes you are gathering this year, both the first and second type of tithes, gather all of those tithes and use it within your home. But invite the fatherless, invite the widow, invite the orphans, invite the strangers, invite the poor. Let them come into your home, and let them eat of the abundance with which I have blessed you. This is quite important. These two divisions of tithes were given to the children of Israel as a commandment and, they used it all throughout their generations unto the close of the Old Testament age.

Let us take a little bit of recap. We said giving is an act of worship. It is an acknowledgement of God's rights over his creation. And secondly, it is saying to the Lord: "*what I am, what I ever hope to be is by your grace and will continue to be by your grace*". The man that gives the offerings is the first issue in the matter of giving. And, this is also revealed as such in the New Testament. Then, the second is the offering itself. Then, the third. We said that in a world plagued by the diverse

effects of the fall, some can know deliverance from poverty, sicknesses, diseases, insecurity of life and property, because of a covenant relationship with God made active through a process of giving. We found this in the life of Noah. And then this great law of Genesis 8:22, which says "*as long as the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease*".

The fourth element is that the Lord's church must be selective in receiving offerings from the people. Offering is a duty that is fulfilled by those who have known the Lord in covenant ties, or putting it in the language of the New Testament, who are born again and long after God.

Then, we looked at God's purpose in tithing, which we find in Numbers 18 and Deuteronomy 14. First, it is for the maintenance of the priesthood: a priesthood who did nothing secular to earn a living. All that they did was to serve the Lord. And even when they receive the tithe from the children of Israel, they were to regard those tithes as their own earnings and were to tithe a tenth of the tithes and live on the remaining nine-tenth. This was a provision to stop the great occurrences of death among the people (Numbers 17:12, 13). Only the Levitical priesthood was allowed to do the work of service. All others were excluded. They could go and do secular work, come back and sit down while the priest will minister to them.

Then, the second type of tithing which the Lord also established that the Israelite himself might know how to expend money for his own spiritual benefit and for the care of the poor. This second tithe the people gather and kept by themselves and expended it according to the will of God. First, they expended it for their own spiritual increase. Take note of the link between the gathering of the tithes and spending it on their own spiritual increase on the one side, and, the milk of human compassion flowing towards the poor and the underprivileged in the society, as a provision made by God to indicate his commitment to all of his creation.

The Lord bless you, the Lord cause his face to shine upon you. In Jesus name.

14 Part II

Giving, Tithes and Offerings

This edition of light in the evening time will be a continuation of our series of meditations on God's Pattern Church. We will like for you to always hold this in view, because these series derive from that reading that we took from Isaiah 28. If you will turn with me to Isaiah 28, we will read verses 16 and 17

28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

28:17 Judgment also will I 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.

You will recall that in discussing God's pattern church, we said that Christ is the pattern, and that, Christ, the church, is an expression of that pattern. And, because Christ is the pattern, whatever expression in life and ministry of the Lord's people, in the building up of the house of God (that is, in their spiritual development) must be measured against this pattern, against this foundation. And, that is what the prophet is saying here. God will measure our lives through the use of Christ as instrument. Two things he will do. He will sweep away the refuge of lies.

That is a reference to certain erroneous teachings that abound among God's people. God's work is to be done through the enabling graces of the Holy Spirit. But when man intrudes, into the things of God by using his carnal senses, certain things are set forth as doctrines (and teachings) which are contrary to God's word. In the passage of time, these erroneous teachings are institutionised, and men come to them and relate to them as though that is the very truth of God's word.

The refuge of lies consists of certain erroneous teachings, and, here, we are told that God's power in judgement shall sweep away the refuge of lies. We will be dealing with the sweeping away of the refuge of lies in future editions.

The second thing God does is to allow the waters of his word, the waters of judgement to overflow the hiding places. This refers to certain erroneous practices that abound among God's people. And we have been dealing with some of these erroneous practices. We have talked of the clergy-laity distinction: officialdom in the ministry, that arrangement in God's house, that makes some to consider themselves as priests and separate themselves from their brethren while the rest of the Lord's people are considered as laymen. And we have shown that that is erroneous. It is only in the Levitical priesthood that we find a particular family lineage brought into the priesthood and every other family was excluded. And, that we said, that order belonged to the Old Testament era.

Again, in the last edition, we talked about Giving, Offering, and Tithing. And, in our reading from Exodus 25, we found that these three things relate to building the house of God. And in dealing with the three, we made reference to some scriptures from Genesis down through Deuteronomy. We examined the Old Testament scriptures so that we can see this subject matter from the viewpoint of the Old Testament teachings.

In this edition, we shall be going into the New Testament. We have already seen that giving involves the offerer (the individual) first and foremost, and then, his offering. We also saw that even though God word has said, in that divine sentence that came upon man in the fall, "*cursed is the ground for thy*

sake” (and that answers to adverse circumstances, man labouring and not getting a good output for all his labour, the circumstances of man has been cursed). But in Genesis 8, we find that there is a selective deliverance for some class of people from the power of the curse. All of that is secured in the person of Noah and what he did after that great flood that swept away the first world.

We read that God said, as long as the earth remains, he will no longer wipe out all humanity; seed time and harvest shall not cease. And, consecration, whose active expression is giving, secures the blessings of God upon a man's life. Furthermore, in Genesis 14 we saw that receiving offering must be performed in a discriminatory manner; those who are not in covenant relationship with God are excluded. Abraham simply said *“I will take nothing from you. You may say you have made me rich. I have lifted up my hands to Jehovah El-Elyon, the possessor of the heaven and the earth that I will continually regard him as my source”*

Then, when we came to Numbers and Deuteronomy, we saw tithing in its two divisions. The first one-tenth the children of Israel gave to the priesthood. The priesthood itself was to give one tenth of that tithe unto the Lord. That is important, and a little later we shall be able to say what all of that means. Then, in the second type of tithing, the individual expended that tithe for his own spiritual benefit, in a way that conduce with his spiritual increase; increase; in the fear of God (Deuteronomy 14: 23).

Now, in coming to the New Testament consideration of this subject, we will first of all say what practices are not contained in the New Testament, then, we will go to the scriptures to lay a foundation as to what the practice should be in the New Testament. We will be using Malachi 3 (a very popular passage) to enter into this meditation. Turn then with me to Malachi 3:8-10, our emphasis will be on verse 10.

3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Here God says he is robbed of his glory in his house. The reason he gives is because the people did not bring tithes and offering. Now, let us go again to verse 10 to see God's exposition of these two-fold practices. In verse 10, God says "*bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house*". Then the next thing that follows is that God will move in blessing upon the people. The first thing we want to talk about is the tithe. Secondly, the house of God, and thirdly, the blessings that follows.

First of all, we have to understand that the purpose of the tithing in the Old Testament was for the maintenance of the priesthood. We have said several times over that only one family, out of the numerous families of the house of Israel, was entitled to the priesthood and hence the tithe of the people's earnings.

We said, in the New Testament, that laity-clergy division is collapsed, all are called to be priests. In IPeter 2:5, 9, we are shown that all of the Lord's people that have known the Lord Jesus Christ in redemption and are Spirit-filled are priests unto the most high God. Whereas under the Old Testament, all were excluded from moving into the three divisions of the tabernacle but had to stay without, waiting for the Levitical priests to come and teach them of the things of God, in the New arrangements, Hebrews 10: 19 assures us, all are to come into the presence of God and come to spiritual increase through the fellowship of prayers, praise and worship of the most high God. That is important because since the priesthood is no longer restricted to a particular class tribe, then the maintenance of a self instituted priesthood and the arrangement for that maintenance are invalid. The practice is removed, the purpose is retained, and in the next edition, we will be examining that. But, here, we

are noting that, that system of things that has to do with printing of tithe cards, writing names and receiving tithes weekly or monthly from fellow believers is alien to the spirit of the New Testament age, and is nowhere taught from the book of Mathew to the book of Revelation. It is one practice that makes possible the perpetuation of the clergy-laity distinction in the house of God.

Now, let us return to Malachi 3:10. He gave an instruction "*bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse*", and the purpose is that "*there may be meat in mine house*". Again we say, whereas under the Old Testament, the house of God was a physical structure made of brick or mortar or concrete in the New Testament, God's house is God's people. This is important. When the tithe is paid, there will be meat in God's house. Under the Old Testament, that refers to grain or fruits or whatever were the proceeds of the people's labour. But, under the New Testament, meat is a reference to the word of God.

Turn with me to Mathew 24, we will be reading from the forty-second verse. We are showing something very vital, that Gods glory might not be obscured from his house. When the tithe is paid, God's glory is seen in his house. We have talked about the house, and we said it is the Lord's people, individually and collectively. And, we said the meat is not money or fruit or whatever you may think of as it was in the Old Testament age. But the meat is to God's word, both the Spirit of the word and the word of the Spirit. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are the two agencies by which God builds his house and manifest his glory.

In Mathew 24:44-46, we read the following;

24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

24:46 Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing

Meat in due season is the equivalent of meat in the Old Testament. What is meat in due season? It is the teachings of Christ through an exposition of his word that has the capacity of keeping the Lord's people ready for more and more of the unveiling of Christ, and keeping them ready for his coming. This is of vital importance. The question is asked "*who is that faithful and wise servant whom the Lord has set over his household to give them meat in due season?*" So, the prophetic scriptures (and indeed all scriptures, for the spirit of prophecy is actuated as Christ is preached), all scriptures as they are ministered to us through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit so that in them we can see Christ, his person, his purposes and his kingdom and all such arrangements he has made for our perfection, constitute meat in due season. We are told that when we pay our tithes, there shall be meat in due season in the house of God.

What then, in this regard, is paying the tithe? We again say that wherever we see a shadow in the Old, the substance in the New is something larger and more glorious. For example, the children of Israel sacrificed physical animal; hundreds of them were offered for sacrifice in the whole burnt offering, the peace (or fellowship) offering, the trespasses and sin offerings. But, in the new, there is an elevation of the nature (character) of the sacrifice. It was no longer brute beast as it was in the old. But we are now told, "*behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

In the same vein, just as in the old tithing has to do with man's earnings which were physical things brought into the house of God, in the new, it speaks of the availability of man in seeking the face of God. That practice of seeking his face, the life of consecration, answers to the New Testament tithing. For, it is in the environment of our separating ourselves from other things to concentrate on the Lord that we receive through the Holy Spirit, the teachings of Christ.

Tithing in the New Testament relates to a man giving himself over unto God and his purpose. That is why all the New Testament scriptures that talk concerning giving emphasise first the giving over of the individual himself unto the Lord. If God's glory is to be seen in his house, if the people are to be built up in the image and likeness of Christ, if the church is to take on more and more of the beauty and power of Christ, if the church is to lead the nations into the pure worship, of God, then, men must create and sustain the habit of taking out time each day to seek the face of the Lord. This is important.

We are talking about tithing, and we are saying that under the New Testament, tithing is not taking one-tenth of our salary and bringing it into the house of God. We are God's tithes when we make ourselves available to know him, taking out time to study his word, to worship by his word, to pray by the light he gives us in his word, to yield ourselves to those moral cleanings which the word of God indicates. Through the quickened word, we see ourselves as we really are and see him as he is in his glory, and we desire to be like him. In the environment of all of these, there will always be meat in God's house. We (individually and collectively) are God's house, there will be meat in due season in God's house and the preparation of the Lord's people for the Lord's coming will be made effectual.

The visible church system is becoming more and more an entertaining organisation. But we know that God is putting all things straight, putting all things right in his church. And God shall sweep away all practices that make a mockery of the church. The average believer today is spiritually dull, and that is an indictment on the visible church systems. As we return to the true foundation, then, the emphasis is lifted from giving things to giving our own very selves. Ephesians 5:1-2 says,

5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Just take a reading of Leviticus 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, you will come across this phrase: sweet smelling savour again and again. Christ is said to be an offering unto God of a sweet smelling savour. Man in his availability to God, in living a life of consecration makes possible for Christ to reveal himself to him. Then, there is glory in that house of God and God is not robbed of the demonstration of his presence in the midst of his house.

We take the second reading, II Corinthians 4. We are talking about the house and meat in the house. Later we shall talk of the blessings that follow. Follow the reading from verse 5. It says

4:5 For we preach not ourselves... drawing no attention to ourselves, not advertising ourselves. We preach not ourselves as somebody, our focus was to proclaim Christ..., but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (Genesis 1:3), hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But how is the outshining of God's life and light into us, how is it obtained? It is by consecrated living? So, he says in verse 7.

4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels...

Our humanity, our physical frame, our person is here referred to as earthen vessel. He says we have this treasure... the ability to make Christ known to us and to one another... *in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.*

Christ does not make himself known to the believer that lives carelessly, but one who has cultivated the spiritual habit of waiting upon the Lord on daily basis, one, two, three hours, as long as other duties may allow us, especially when we put our duties towards God as first. It is in the environment of all of

these things that God makes himself known to us, and there will always be meat in God's house.

The faithful and wise servant does not tell mean stories to the congregation. The faithful and wise servant is one who discovers to the Lord's people what God has discovered to him in his closet, and it always has the direction of leading the Lord's people, to the perfection and glorification God wants to give to the church. This ought to be noted carefully.

We have seen that the house is not a concrete structure. We must have a place to worship, so that there should be a concrete structure is not what we are witnessing against. But that we are the Lord's people, and as the Lord's people, we are God's house. And that God's glory is side tracked in his house when there are not people who seek him, but when we yield our hearts to the Lord, there is made possible the display of God's character and glory in his house.

There is yet one more thought we want to take before closing. Now, in the last part of Malachi 3:10, he says blessings will abound; he will open up the windows of heaven and pour out much blessing. The understanding is that the principles we need to live successfully in life are ministered to us in the place of our one-to-God fellowship.

We have seen that in this New Testament age, the practice of printing tithe cards, giving it to very members to write their names and you put in money and pass on, is alien to the new covenant. We have said enough, for the time being it is hoped to commend this truth to you.

We will close with the passage we began with in the last edition, Exodus 25. For the present purpose, we will just draw attention to verses 3-7. There, we are shown that when the Lord's people give their offerings, the house of the Lord can be build. When the house of the Lord is built, God's glory is manifested. There is a close connection between giving our offering and the building of the house of the Lord and the expression of the glory of God in the earth.

But, the question is to be asked what did the people give? All of that is listed in verses 3-6 of Exodus 25. We ask again, what in the New Testament is God's house? We say again that the New Testament house of God is God's people. How then may God's house, which is God's people, be built in the image and likeness of God? When men consecrate themselves? What should men give for the building of this house of God? They must minister the word of God in its Spirit: the spirit of the Word and the word of the Spirit. For, the word of God and the Spirit of God are the two agencies by which God builds his house. It does not exclude giving of physical money. But it emphasises to us that when the Lord's people truly give themselves, it makes possible their being built up, and it makes possible for God's glory to be revealed in his house.

In the next edition, we will be concentrating on how the physical aspect of giving money is to be done in the house of God.

The Lord bless you, the Lord cause his face to shine upon you. The Lord make you know that you are morally responsible to God and his church, as much as I am morally responsible to God and his church, to make ourselves available to him that there may be meat in his house.

15 Part III

Giving, Tithes and Offerings

We will be continuing in our discussion on God's pattern Church.

If you will turn with me to Isaiah 28, we will look again at two verses that form the background scriptures in all of these meditations.

28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

28:17 Judgment also will I 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.

We are talking of God's church, which is the house of God, and here, we are shown that the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation. We are warranted to so consider this tried stone, this precious corner stone (this foundation), to be Jesus. Of course, direct New Testament scriptures confirm that the stone referred to here is Jesus.

Now, if the foundation is a person, and the whole house, made of lively stones, are persons, then we are talking about

building up the Lord's people to be a full expression of God's glory upon the earth. Here, we are shown that in the work of building of the house of God, certain things could be out of harmony with the divine will so, he that is the foundation is also the measuring line. He says in verse 17 "*judgement also will I lay to the line...*". The word Judgement here talks of doctrinal unveiling of the person, power and purpose of Christ. Then he says again, "*righteousness will I lay to the plummet*". This talks about our vertical relationship with Christ our standing in grace. With these two instruments, every local assembly of God's people will be measured. We are told of two things that will be measured when God examines all local assemblies that are called by his name.

In the seventeenth verse, we see that it is the hail that will sweep away the refuge of lies. This is also mentioned in verse 2. The hail is the ministry of the word of God, suitably empowered by the Spirit of God to shine light upon the word of God and bring sweeping judgement upon erroneous teachings. In the natural, hail is very tempestuous. God is saying that the ministry of the word of God will bring such an effect as hail produces in the natural. In later editions, we will be considering certain basic erroneous teachings that hinder the growth of the Lord's people. These are called in verse 17 "*the refuge of lies*". These erroneous teachings have to do with the hope of the believer, things that men take unto themselves as providing refuge for them. Certain erroneous teachings have tended to keep the church in childhood, and we shall be looking at these in future editions.

Secondly, we are told that the waters shall overflow the hiding place. Again, if we read verse 2, we find that it is a flood of water that is referred to. It is said that this flood shall overflow the hiding place. There is a hiding place. There is something that make possible certain erroneous practices which combine to give another look to the church other than God intends. We will just read verse 2;

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28:2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

We trust that in this last hour God shall make known unto the church a great company of people who shall come forth in the anointing of the Spirit to be involved in this work of sweeping away the refuge of lies and exposing the hiding places. These shall cast down error with the hand of true ministry. The five-fold ministry suitably anointed of God will be used of him to bring down to a collapse certain system of things that we find in the church today. The hiding place is a reference to erroneous practices. They are founded in some doctrinal errors. But we will separate the two so that we can take them one at a time.

Presently, we are concentrating on Giving, Tithes and Offerings, as a major doctrine perverted element in the hiding place. We have already seen that whereas tithing under the Old Testament was a form of taxation that required the children of Israel to bring one-tenth of their several earnings to the Levitical priesthood. The priests, who did no secular work, had no land, no inheritance in the land of promise. Both they and their spouses and their children did no secular work, they concentrated on the religious duties that had to do with the worship of the nation of Israel. The remaining twelve tribes did no spiritual work in the tabernacle. They left all of that to the priests. They did secular work and brought part of their earnings for the maintenance of the priesthood while the priesthood will look unto God to receive grace to minister to the people. That form of taxation and practice under the Old Testament is completely ruled out in the New Testament. To practice tithing as it was in the old is quite erroneous. This is one of the things that have brought much evil in the house of God.

Now, we cannot modify the laws of God with our carnal senses. If the Old Testament teachings were still to be relevant, then no one who collects tithes from people should do any secular work, both himself and all members of the family. In any case, even if this practice were to be adopted in this New Testament age, it would be alien to what God wants.

In addition, we saw that whereas in the Old Testament, tithes could refer to grains and the produce of animal husbandry etc, in the New Testament, there is an elevation. God's people become the tithe. One purpose of this, as we saw in Malachi 3, is that there might be meat in God's house. We are God's houses, and the meat is a reference to Christ unveiled in the midst of his people through the agency of God's word as it is taught in the midst of his people and God's Spirit as he anoints men to flow in supernatural ministry. All the graces of the Spirit and the teachings of God's word breathed upon by the Holy Spirit constitute meat in due season. And, it will always have a prophetic finger pointing to the event of the last hour associated with Christ's Second Coming.

A question however arises. If tithing is completely taken out of the way in the new testament, how will certain of the Lord's ministers who do no secular work, but because of the great demands of the kingdom upon their time, give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, be taken care of. We shall be answering this question soon. We believe that the provision that God has made is adequate for the care of his servants.

Now, we want to concentrate on how giving and offerings, the taking of money in the house of God, should be practised. We shall be led into this consideration by looking at II Corinthians 8 and 9. It is quite a long passage. We shall be making reference to a few of the verses.

In the context of these two chapters, Paul was requesting that offering should be taken of certain of the Lord's people to meet the needs of some others who were experiencing famine in their country. The context is that of ministering to the poor and needy. The welfare of the saints is one of the chief

considerations in the ministry of the local assembly. Let us take note of that carefully.

For example, when Paul began his ministry, at some point he had to go back to the rest of the apostles to compare notes. And the one thing emphasised is that they should take care of the poor (Gal. 2:10). Of course, he that giveth to the poor, lendeth to his Maker. This great work should be carried out both by the local congregation and by individuals within the local congregation.

Let us go to II Corinthians 8. The first thing of note is in verse 5. The first law of giving under the New Testament is that the individual must give himself to God and to the work of the ministry. That is the first requirement. Whatever we are going to give must be preceded by the giving of ourselves. In this connection, all individuals are supposed to enter into a transaction with God of giving themselves completely over to the Lord, saying "*Lord, you are my source, I give myself wholly to you. I will identify with anything that concerns your house and the ministry of the gospel*". In verse 5 Paul was writing to the Corinthian Christians admonishing them by showing the example set by the Christians in Macedonia, and he said.

8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

These believers first of all gave themselves unto the Lord. It was a heart committal of their entire lives to God, not only in salvation, but also in consecration. And then they gave themselves to the work of the ministry by identifying with Paul and his fellow ministers. Now, the principle remains that when we give ourselves to the work of the ministry, we will be identifying with the labours of his ministers with whom we are associated.

God responds to such yielded-ness by imparting grace. Giving, like all spiritual duties, requires grace. It is a priestly service, something solemn, and something to be done from the

heart towards the Lord, in appreciation of what God has done for us on the cross. With gratitude of hearts, men should give. But of man's own will, he cannot come to that form of life. He must receive an impartation from God. If faithful, God will assist him to grow in that grace. This is important. Being a priestly duty, Christ simply says, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Mathew 6:3). There must be some measure of decorum when it comes to this matter of giving.

Then, the second thing that should govern our understanding of giving and should inform how we perform this priestly service is found in verse 12.

8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

The second law of giving of which again we are here reminded is to be founded upon the first – a willing and cheerful attitude based on the appreciation of God's love and Sovereignty- says "*giving must be according to what a man has and not according to what he has not*". When we give, we are not to attempt to make vows that are not within our capacity. This is what I mean. Suppose an individual who is an applicant and presently unemployed vows to give ₦3000.00 and has no idea in the world how he will get it. It may look like an act of faith, but ought not to make that vow publicly. If he feels a stirring in the spirit, he should enter into a secret transaction with God, saying "Lord, with offerings being collected to minister to the poor in the house or for the work of the gospel, I feel like giving ₦3000, Lord provide for me that I may fulfil it. But, he must not vow publicly.

If all the vow that have been made publicly by Christians in a city were to be collected, the church in that city will stand in need of no offering for the next ten years. Men become presumptions when it comes to this matter. They just put some thing on paper and pass on. They stand publicly, and there is a

loud ovation. But, that is an evil it is a snare. And we trust that this teaching will assist those who are in such practices to desist from it. We are told here that giving is accepted, not according to what a man does not have, but according to what he has.

The third thing is that giving must be a reflection of what God has done for the individual. Verse 7 of II Corinthians 9 says, "*according to how the Lord has prospered you, so purpose in your heart*". For example, if an individual receives ten thousand naira in a month. And, for the month, he is minded to give ₦50, it is accepted of God unto him, but he does not appear to be a reflection of the grace of giving. For, he has given out of what he has but not according to what he has. But, if he gives two thousand, for example, then he is giving according to what he has.

We hope that the main principle is understood. Each believer is supposed to give according to what he has. If a millionaire give an individual one thousand naira, he has given out of his wealth. But if he gives to a laudable cause five hundred thousand or a million naira, then, he has given according to his riches. That is the third element. Giving is something that should express itself in liberality.

That brings us to II Corinthians 9. We will be looking at verses 5 through 7 in the first instance.

9:5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

The first thing we are to note here, is that giving ought to be regular: a weekly or monthly practice in our assemblies. Giving from the heart to the purse of the church if regular, there would be no "*fire brigade approach*" to things when a need arises. He says, "*it is necessary to exhort the brethren that they will go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty*". He says further that some set of brethren would be coming to take this bounty which has been gathered, together with others collected in the far east, to Jerusalem where there is a famine, to bring relief to the brethren there. Giving must be regular. It must be something one practices say, on a weekly basis, as we come together in fellowship week after week.

But, he goes on to say that this should be done "*not as a matter of covetousness, but as a matter of bounty*". That is, not due to some coercion. The atmosphere must be kept in a sanctified condition when offerings are collected. Many hearts are bruised when God's glory and honour are disregarded, when servants of God turn worship services to all kinds of money collection schemes.

I was in a service somewhere in the eastern part of this county, and, that servant of God simply bruised himself, bruised the Lord and bruised the Lord's people. He said "*I command you bring the offering and lay it at the apostles' feet*". And for about one and half-hours, he was bullying on the people, saying, "*I can't be a pastor of a poor church, if God sends one to a poor church, I will resign and go to another place*". That behaviour is certainly not a reflection of a man who has had the proper kind of disposition towards God's work. It is professionalism in ministry that attracted him there. But, in this last hour, God is going to bring his rod against all schemes, all practices that tend to sponsor professionalism in ministry.

In verses 6 and 7, we find a re-appearance of the third point we observed earlier, that is: we are supposed to give according to how the Lord has prospered us. There, we are told he, which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man

according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity...

An important thing to understand in the matter of giving is that when we give, we should expect to receive from God. The figure of the garden is used. It is said, when we give, we are sowing and we should expect a harvest. Accordingly, when a farmer tills a hectare of land, but sows just some bare twenty-grains, he will get an harvest, but that harvest will be scanty. But, if the farmer possessing indeed much grain were to sow the entire field, then he will have bountiful harvest. This is the fourth point we are to note.

When giving takes on a sacrificial nature, liberality is the word that is used to describe it. Remember, as long as the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease. It secures for you a more abundant blessing than you can imagine. Apart from the financial blessing that accrue; you will be kept from inward dangers such as sicknesses, and outward dangers such as insecurity of life and property. By this outward expression of a consecration that gives the whole heart to God, God undertakes to perform a miracle of showing you practically that the curse has been lifted. He encompasses us with His favour.

Before we go to the fifth point, we want to take note of how II Corinthians 9 closes. It says "*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift*". It is important that in discussing giving our attention is drawn to Christ who himself is a gift. There is a close connection between the yielding of our all unto God (what we are and what we hope to be, what we have and what we hope to have, everything in a sustained consecration unto God) and the increase of our appreciation of God's faithfulness to us in all things.

The fifth point we are pointing out about giving is that the grace of giving is a living thing; it grows. Whereas all of the Lord's people as they walk in faithfulness to God, shall find this promise fulfilled in their lives – "*I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul*

prospereth” apart from general situation of having your needs met and a little more to spare, there will be some persons in the church, who because of that grace of giving will come to a stewardship in the matter of giving. He says “*he that giveth let him do so with liberality*”. We are talking of men and women who shall be blessed with great substance and will among other things, administer their resources for the blessing of the Lord’s people and the furtherance of the gospel. This is the subject matter covered in II Corinthians 9:8-11.

In verse 8 it says;

9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

May the Lord bless you and me with such a grace. And may the Lord bless more and more persons with such a grace. There is a position with God in justification in which as we walk with God in gratitude of heart unto him, share with the underprivileged and identify with the work of the gospel, in which we are made sufficient in all things. We can thus abound unto every good work.

Then in verse 9 he says, “*Whoever commits himself to God, the event of his giving has blessed some and has abounded in blessing to himself, but the righteousness of that act remains forever*”. This means that it will attract more of the impartation of divine grace to the individual, exposing him to more of the unveiling of Christ, cleansing his heart from selfish attachments, and bringing him unto a greater commitment to the Lord. It is written in John 15: 2 if we are bearing fruit, he pruneth and purgeth us that we may bear much fruit.

In verse 10, he says what we sow is indeed seed. To the one who receives our giving it is bread, but to us that gave, it is a seed. We are told, he that ministereth seed to the sower (that is God who supplied the seed in the first instance) both minister bread for your food. (Bread for the food of the one who is blessed by the giving and the one who gave, for it is more

blessed to give than to receive. To receive is a blessing, but the one who gives will have an additional blessing). In the closing part of verse 10, he says in effect: "*I will multiply your seed sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness*". That means God will so bless the giver that he will have a greater and greater capacity to give. If he continues in that grace, there is no reason why he will not be a custodian of divine glory (spiritual riches) so long as he is walking in consecration, and will also be admitted into the stewardship of distributing God's resources that are made available to him for the blessing of the Lord's people and for the work of the ministry.

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Part IV

Giving, Tithes and Offerings

You are welcome to this edition of Light in the Evening time. We are taking the concluding aspect of our meditation on Tithing, Giving and Offerings. And all of these teachings have been part of the series on God's Pattern Church. We are concerning ourselves with certain teachings and practices in the visible church systems that hinder the growth of the church.

In a previous edition, we have shown that tithing, a form of taxation, imposed upon all the children of Israel under the Old Testament, is done away with in the New Testament. And whereas the purpose for that arrangement remains, that is, for the increase of His glory among His people, what answers to it in the New Testament is the whole hearted submission of all of the Lord's people unto Him. For in the New Testament the priesthood is of all believers, and, the operative word in serving the Lord as a priest is consecration. In 1 Peter 2:4, 5, 9 we are told that we are being built up unto a spiritual house and as a spiritual house, offering priestly services unto the Lord. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation. The call is upon all of God's people to serve Him in consecration. And whereas, as we all relate this way with the Lord, some are drawn to a closer walk with the Lord, nevertheless the responsibility is upon all.

The total consecration of one believer does not exclude any other from the call to consecration.

We are all called to serve the Lord, and in a previous edition, we had stated that one of the purposes of the tithing is that the priests who under the Old Testament were not permitted to do any secular work (they had no land, they had nothing of their own) but to totally give themselves to the work of the temple, might be catered for by the children of Israel. And we ask, *“if tithing is not in the New Testament order, what answers to the care of ministers in this age”*. This is the main burden that we will be looking at in this edition. There is a statement in the Old Testament that comes to mind now. God was speaking to the priests, and He said unto them, *“I am your inheritance. Thou shall have no inheritance among the people, but I am your inheritance”*. A consideration of what this means brings so much encouragement to true servants of God.

Let us go to 1 Timothy 1:16. There, we are shown that Paul is a pattern disciple. Jesus is the pattern son. What we are to be ultimately, is seen in Him. Jesus is the pattern as to where we are going. He is the goal; he is the end of the journey. We are to become like Jesus in his glory, power and other attributes of his majesty. Jesus is the pattern Son. But Paul is the pattern disciple. It is in him, by a consideration of his life and his teachings that we learn how to follow the Master, how to walk in his footsteps. 1 Timothy 1:16 reads this way

1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

We are going to follow Paul and in him see the two-fold provisions made in God's word as to serving Him. (Recall our main thrust is to see the provision God makes in the New Testament for the care of His servants).

The first provision is serving the Lord with all our lives, yet taking out time to work with our hands to minister to our own needs and to cater for our households. Secondly, not doing any secular work, but committing ourselves wholly unto the Lord, serving the Lord's people by preaching Christ to them in the power of Christ's continuous unveiling of Himself to His people. Paul walked in both of these two provisions.

Majority of the times, he laboured with his hands. But when a special season of ministry sets in, he is so busy with the work of the ministry to be able to do any secular. In this connection, he shows in his walk with God, that as he ministers the Gospel, God meets his needs through stirring up His people to flow in care towards His servant. This is important. Paul is a pattern disciple.

One of the things that enable us to understand the man Paul is seen first in the statements that he made in Romans 13:8; then next in the statement that he made in Romans 1:14-16. So let us take these two references as we go progressively into a consideration of I Corinthians 9 which discusses the two provisions mentioned earlier.

In Romans 13: 8, Paul simply says *owe no man anything*. Paul teaches against the Lord's people and indeed all men living in debt. A man owing something should always live in the light of his debt on a daily basis, seeing how much he can do to offset that debt. For, here is a law: owe no man anything.

Then he adds this: *but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*. So he says, we are to owe one another love. But, where does this debt of love that we have to pay? It is in appreciation of what God has done for us. God has committed Himself to our brother; God has committed Himself to our sister. God, who has loved us so much and shown us great compassion, has also committed Himself to our brother, to our sister, wanting to lift him/her up. God has us as His means of doing that.

Out of a feeling of indebtedness to God, borne out of a deep sense of gratitude for the things that Christ has done for us, we are to serve the brethren. We are motivated by love to serve the

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brethren. Paul puts it in this way in II Corinthians 4, “*Christ died so that I might not die*”. “*In that he died, he died for all, so that we who live may no longer live unto ourselves but unto him that died for us and was raised*”. The motivating factor in Paul’s service is love for God and a desire to pay a debt that can never be fully paid. Take this to heart.

Here, he says, “*owe no man anything but to love one another, for he that loveth another has fulfilled the law*”. Then we go to Romans 1. In the fourteenth verse, we are made to see what was behind all of Paul’s labours, why he laboured so much, tirelessly, all throughout the years of his life. In the fourteenth verse, he simply says

1:14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians;
both to the wise, and to the unwise.

Then, what is this debt that he has to pay? In verse 15 he says,

1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

God is committed to saving the world of mankind ... the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.... *For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but that everlasting life*. “By myself have I sworn saith the Lord that in blessing I will bless thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed”. We find that God in the outworking of His plans and purposes for all humanity lays His hands upon men to whom He makes Himself known. These men are thus empowered to serve His interests on earth.

Paul here is speaking from that realm and saying “*I am committed to serving you, as one who is indebted to you, out of*

a consideration of God's interest in your life". This is the kind of heart disposition that should be found in all true servants of God. They are motivated to serve as a result of a consideration of love for God and love for all humanity.

Now let us come to I Corinthians 9. We have said that there are two provisions and that Paul walked in both of these two provisions during his lifetime. We read from the first verse, Paul is speaking,

9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

Here he says his commission as a minister of the gospel is without any doubt, both by reason of the ministry of the word, and the lives that have been transformed by the powers of the gospel. He continues.

9:2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

9:3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

9:4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

9:5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

If you read verse 6 over and over again the reference is to the fact that Paul and Barnabas laboured with their hands. But they had an option not to work at all and yet be catered for. He adds in verse 7,

9:7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

9:8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

Then in verse 9, he quotes a law under the Old Testament.

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9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.

He closes that verse by saying when God gave that law in Deuteronomy 25:4, was He merely concerned for the animal kingdom? *Doth God take care of oxen?* There is a reason behind this statement made. God was showing that he was committed to the blessing of his ministers". So he says in verse 10,

9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this (Deuteronomy 25:4) is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things (as love offerings?)

The carnal things here refer to physical, material things. Paul was saying if we have laboured among you and sown to you things of eternal significance, it is not too much for us to receive of you material things. In verse 12, he continues.

9:12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

We will come to this beautiful way Paul ends verse 12, but continue, verse 13

9:13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

The next verse (verse 14) brings out the second provision very clearly. It says

9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

It is a provision in the new. In discussing this matter, Paul does not quote a law on tithing, because he knew that was done away with under the New covenant by the introduction of the priesthood of all believers. But he quotes a seemingly obscure scripture "*do not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn*". Having said that he goes on to show us the first provision in verse 15, 16, 17 and 18. Remember that the motivating factor in all of Christian service is love for God and love for our fellow men. So, here, we find Paul speaking.

9:15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

What he is saying here is that God has also provided that those who serve him in full capacity should minister to their own needs by working with their own hands. And Paul says he walked majorly in this provision. He says he will not allow anybody to make his glorying void. And this he does with a strong understanding of what great love God has shown him in saving him and calling him into ministry, and how that this calling to serve in the interest of God must be maintained in its sacred order. That nothing should appear before men as bringing reproach to the gospel of Christ. Verse 16 bears this out further.

9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me...

Just as necessity is laid upon the debtor to pay his debt, Paul here says necessity is laid upon him. And then he goes to something very revealing, he says; *yea woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!* Then he says in verse 17 *for if I do this thing willingly...* What does Paul call here doing the Lord's

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work willingly? That is serving the Lord and His people, with a heart full of love, not wanting to use his position to an advantage to exploit the people, but ever willing to keep moving, serving the Lord's people even in the face of personal inconveniences. If in the course of doing all that, there be a supply of his wants, he rejoices in it but if there is no supply, he knows how to abound and to abase (Philippians 4:11, 12). We read verses 16 and 17 again

9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

9:17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

God's hands are laid upon me. I cannot do without preaching the gospel. Whether I like it or not, the divine one, my master, has laid his hands upon me. So, he says in verse 18.

9:18 What is my reward then?, seeing that this work would and must be done by me, what is my reward then?... Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Paul laboured with his hands that he might make the gospel without charge to them whom he ministered to. In fact, in II Corinthians 12:15, he was bold to say, "*not only do I minister to my own needs by working with my own hands, I make both my life and my resources available to serving you. I will serve you by the life of Christ in me, I will also make my resources available, even if the more I do this, the less you love me*". This man of God, who laboured abundantly more than all other... For in I Corinthians 15, he himself said though he comes at some later point as an apostle, yet the grace of God upon him made him labour far more than all other apostles, yet

not him, but the grace of God in him. This man who was tirelessly serving God, had time to labour with his hands to cater for his needs. He is a pattern disciple. He says in verse 18, what is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Quite often, one is so much drawn in an appreciation of Paul's example to want to live in the same manner. Let us look at Paul. He says "*I don't want any thing that will bring a bad image to the work of the gospel*". Now, one of the things that God's heart is reacting against in the visible church systems is the way this money matter, the collection of money in the house of God, has given an impression that the churches are merely financial religions corporations who exist purely for profit making. That is, they run the religious corporation from the standpoint of making money, of making quick business out of the gospel.

Now, we know that quite a number of persons that are seemingly in this odd business love God deeply and are genuinely called of God. But, it all begins with a small deviation: when the call is looked upon as a profession. Next, men are hired to serve as pastors and pay them monthly. And there is officialdom in ministry: paid ministries, paid salaries, in the passage of time what we now see in the visible church systems results.

Note the Lord's teachings in John 10. The hired servant whose own the sheep is not when he sees the wolf coming, flees. There comes a time when because some salary is attached to the work of the gospel, men seek for greener pastures. They move from one ministry to the other, from one denomination to the other. You cannot say they are here because they re fully committed to the vision of that ministry. But they are there as long as their salaries are paid and what is paid seems to meet their needs. Otherwise they seek greener pastures. Another ministry emerges with fantastic offers seeking to draw a cream of God's servants unto their own set-up, and before you know it, there is infidelity.

Brethren, we speak with so much burdens in our spirit. We must break ourselves loose from this situation. Paul says "*I have power to take offering from the people, or expect to live by what the people give, committing myself to the Lord, but I have not used this provision so that I might not abuse my power in the gospel*". If I keep doing it, I will be so drawn to the matter of ensuring that my needs are met by the brethren that I loose the true spirit of a disciple of Jesus Christ. We see Paul labouring with his hands.

From other scriptures, we learn that Paul did not always walk in this matter of tent making. Whereas, the greater percentage of his ministry, the times he laboured serving God and serving God's people, it was clear that he made tents to pay his own expenses, nevertheless, there were times when the demand of the work of the ministry were so great that he practically gave up, even, tent making, in order to concentrate on the ministry. At such times, the way his needs were met informs us of the way those who use the second provision should expect their needs to be met.

One, he did not discuss the situation with any of the brethren. He simply gave up the work. He committed his situation into the hands of the Lord who is his source, saying, "*Lord, so much demand upon me, pay the bills as I do the work*". And the Lord by His spirit placed the burden upon others, either on individual basis as we can infer from Galatians 6:6, or whole local assemblies identifying themselves with this travelling apostle who keeps coming to lift men up to the ministry of Christ. So Paul committed himself to the Lord. The Lord responded by putting the thought of the care of him in the hearts of individuals and whole congregations.

We find in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, this thing also fulfilled. Because he gave himself to God and served the Father, his gifts made room for him. He gave himself wholly, he never did any secular work, but he gave himself wholly. God put the thought of the care of him into the hearts of persons he ministered to. We will like to read Luke 8:1-3 to underscore

this thing in the life of Jesus. In any case, there was no church congregation that met regularly from whose offering he was maintained. From what we see in the life of Jesus, we find an example for those who do no secular work today. Luke 8:1-3

8:1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

8:2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

8:3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

When a man gives himself to God, there will be men and women who will bind themselves to minister to his needs. It will not be out of any arrangement, not saying "*oh let me go into full time ministry, brethren, you will try to support me*", no God will place the care of this servant upon his people.

Now, let us go to Galatians 6:6. We said that the commitment should be unto the Lord. And such servants must have given evidence in their own lives that like Paul; they have had time to labour with their own hands. Many of the true servants of God even in our day time are persons who have shown by their lives that they had capacity to work and are fruitful in service, before the demands of ministry brought them to a sphere where they no longer labour with their hands. But the principal thing to note is that even when Paul walked in this dimension, as soon as the burden of ministry lessens, he returns back to his tent making. That is why self employment is recommended for men with hearts for God and the service of His kingdom, for the flexibility in their use of time will enable them fulfil their calling. Galatians 6: 6,

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

The thought here is clear. When a man commits himself to the Lord, he should expect that the Lord would also put the care of him in the hearts of the people he ministers to. Whether in a travelling or resident ministry, it is all the same. Paul here is saying to the believers, “*you that are taught, who benefit from the ministry of certain men or women of God, should know that it is your responsibility to communicate to them in all good things; material blessings*”. There is a charge upon the Lord’s people too. As consecration enables some to give themselves more fully to God, those who receive blessings should know that it is their responsibility to see to the maintenance of those whom God is using to bless them. That is the first thought on the human plane.

Then come with me to Philippians 4, as we round up this meditation. Here, we find that whole congregations, can of themselves, take a decision and say “*ah, this man is of great blessing to us, and he does no secular work, how does he feed himself, how does he take care of his family*”? And so decide to identify with that servant of God. We can read all of that from verse 14–18 of Philippians 4. We read,

4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Then in verse 19, he invokes a blessing upon the people

4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

But there was a time that it seems there was a measure of love lost between Paul and the church in Philippi. Verse 10 of Philippians 4 bears that out, a time in which they held back. But after some time their eyes were opened again to identify with Paul.

There was no apostolic arrangement. The people move of their own free will. But the truth in that Paul was maintained. I trust that He who feeds the ravens will feed His servants at this last hour. They say under the Old Testament, "*oh we are going to see this prophet, this man of God, what gift shall we take along with us*", for the prophet had no provision in God's word catering for his needs. He arose out of his love for God, not like the priest who received tithes. So, his maintenance was strictly speaking, by what he did with his hands or what God gave to him. The people say, "*we are going to see this man of God, what gift should we take along with us*". We expect that the Old Testament believers will not do better than the New Testament believers. The church, including all of God's servants, should not expect that this ruining of our testimony before the world through this money collecting business would continue to be. God is reacting against this and we trust that we will all come before God in deep repentance. The Lord bless you; the Lord cause his face to shine upon you, the Lord do you good, in Jesus name. Amen.



The Refuge of Lies

The Lord bless you. We are continuing with our general topic, God's Pattern Church. The last four editions centred on some erroneous practices, under the subject heading of Giving, Tithing and Offerings. In this edition, we will take another aspect of the general topic. The meditation is drawn from a consideration of the seventeenth verse of Isaiah 28. We will like to read the sixteenth and seventeenth verses. Come with me to Isaiah 28:16, 17. Notice, although this passage is in the Old Testament, several references to it in the new show that it has a New Testament application. Isaiah 28:16, 17,

28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

28:17 Judgment also will I 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.

In the meditation titled "*the hiding places*" we saw certain erroneous practices drawn from a false premise. By recourse to some strictly Old Testament scriptures, some men and women under the colour of religion, hide to do certain things, which are contrary to God's, will. We know that there is a close relationship between the building up of the house of God and

God's glory appearing to His people. The sixteenth verse is quite useful; Christ is the foundation, Christ is the Building, and when the foundation, Christ, is laid, the characteristic lines we see in the foundation influence all things that are built. That is what we see in the opening part of verse seventeen. It says, "*judgement also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet*". There is a measurement, there is a judgement, and there is an assessment of that which is coming up from the foundation to see whether it corresponds to what is found in the foundation.

We shall again strengthen our understanding of the fact that this passage has a New Testament application. Ephesians 2:19-21

2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners...

Paul was writing to non-Jewish, gentile Christians and he was showing them that they are no longer strangers and foreigners but have been drawn into something in Christ. We read verse 19 again;

2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,
but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of
God;

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

This (verse 20) agrees with what we find in Isaiah 28. It says, "*I lay in Zion....*" Zion is a prophetic word used to symbolise the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 20, says;

2:21 In whom (that is, in Christ, the chief corner stone, in
the foundation) all the building fitly framed together groweth
unto an holy temple in the Lord:

There is a close connection between God's church as it is supposed to be, coming up into more and more of the image of

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Jesus Christ, and the teachings that are given her weekly meetings.

Let us turn our minds back to Isaiah 28. There are two divisions of things that sponsor error in the visible church systems. We have touched upon one, which is "*the hiding place*". In this edition, we are considering the second, which is the refuge of lies. Now, in order to have a clear understanding of this, we will look at some Old Testament usage of the word refuge in relation to the welfare and warfare of the Lord's people. The first that comes to mind is Psalm 91. Once we see the positive usage of the word "*refuge*", then we may be able to understand clearly what is presented in Isaiah 28. Turn with me therefore to Psalm 91: a chapter in which the spirit of prophecy reaches the highest point concerning aspects of the total salvation that God has purchased for His people in Christ Jesus. Through Christ, is total salvation from sin, sickness and death. Death is not a friend, and a people shall come forth at this last hour that will have full victory over death.

Come with me to Psalm 91, we will be looking at the first five verses only and there we will find four main points that assist us to understand the use of the word refuge, God being the refuge of His people, and such associated things in this passage.

91:1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

91:2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

91:3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

91:4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

91:5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

There is one condition, four benefits, which we see in this passage. Psalm 91 actually contains sixteen verses, but the first

five verses sets in motion what is contained in the whole sixteen verses. Let us look at the one condition. It says, "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High*". We ask what is the secret place of the Most High? The reference is to setting forth certain spiritual truths in contrast to what we see in our present visible world. That is, there is a knowledge that is not commonly shared by the world of mankind but known to a special class of people called believers in Christ Jesus. Now, the secret place of the Most High God is the possession of the spirit of faith: total heart reliance upon God, His power, His plans, and His purposes. The possession of the spirit of faith is coming into the secret place of the Most High God. That is the one condition.

Now, when we dwell in secret place of the Most High God, we are told we shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty God. Now, there are two contrasting shadows taught in scriptures: the shadow of death and then the shadow of life. The shadow of death continues to minister death to those who are in its environment, while the shadow of the Almighty God ministers life. Now, the reference here (Psalm 91) is to what we see in the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness. You will recall that there was the pillar of cloud, which at night was like a pillar of fire. It is a column of light reaching up and spreading forming a dome shape to cover the children of Israel. And, in the presence of the immortal God (that cloud of His presence), the people were preserved in life; the Bible says there was none feeble. Again it says their garments did not wax old. Again, we are told that none of them was sick all through the forty years of their wilderness wanderings (Deuteronomy 8:4; Psalm 105:37). The same situation of the cloud of His presence exists today, and we come into it by faith, and are maintained and sustained in it by the spirit of faith, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty.

Next, we learn in verse 2 of Psalm 91 that the individual possessed of the spirit of faith, has faith – filled confessions. This draws our mind back to what we are considering: the word "*refuge*", and its usage in the Old Testament in relation to who

God is to His people. It says, *"I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust"*. These are no vain words. The writer says, "I will say of the Lord". That is what happens when an individual is possessed of the spirit of faith. It leads the individual to faith – filled words. In II Corinthians 4:13, Paul says, *"Because we have the spirit of faith, we say"*... and he draws his inspiration from Psalm 116:8... *"According as it is written, we believe therefore have we spoken"*. He who is possessed of the spirit of faith is able to testify to the realities, the spiritual realities within the shadow of the almighty. *"I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom will I trust"*.

This is the first characteristic of the one that is dwelling in the secret place of the Most High God. Secondly, in verse 3, we are told that the one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High God is delivered from the snare of the fowler. Verse 5 confirms unto us that the snare of the fowler is the spirit of fear. Fear torments, and all the expressions of the effects of the fall in our world today, flow from the spirit of fear. Verse 5 says *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day*. In this uncertain world, there is an assurance of preservation and deliverance that flows from the shadow of the Almighty. The second benefit is that the individual is delivered from the snare of the fowler. He is delivered from the noisome pestilence. Fear and death go together; faith and life go together. That is the second thing that is true of one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High.

We come to the third. The third, we can get from verse 4. Verse 4 simply tells us that the spirit of faith must be maintained in the dynamics of fellowship. It is in communion with the Lord that faith is fed. Faith is fed by the quickening power of God's word. God's spirit, who indwells us at the coming of Christ into our lives at the point of salvation, quickens us. He quickens us in harmony with the written word. When the word, by the spirit of God, is quickened to our understanding, it brings a great effect upon our spirits, souls

and bodies. Verse 4 says, *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler*. Notice the close connection between God being the Shield and Buckler of His people, and the truth of His word. It says, *“his truth shall be thy shield and thy buckler”*.

So, that is the third particular that we are drawing from this passage: that the word of God, the quickening power of God's word, will maintain us under the shadow of the Almighty. And finally, deliverance's from all kinds of physical and spiritual mishaps. That is the fourth. And, from verse 6 down to verse 16, it is abundantly testified that the Lord's people can be free from all the evil effects of living in a world that is perilous, that is full of danger.

The sense in which the Old Testament uses the word “*refuge*” when the thought is to what God is to His people. We will still take yet another reading that talks about the blessings of man living in Christ, both now and in the future. Psalm 46, there again, God is set forth as the refuge of His people. In Psalm 46, we read the first five verses in the following words,

46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

46:2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

These are prophetic words that speak of the calamities, great destruction that shall adorn the closing days, years of this age. All believers are aware of what is generally called the “*great tribulation*”. Make no mistake about it, the Lord's people shall be kept, preserved and protected in those terrible times, not by merely wishing for it, but by being prepared for it. One of our purposes in these ministrations is to, by the spirit of God's arouse the Lord's people to the things that belong to their preservation and peace, rather than build hope on mere falsehood. And the Lord shall help us in this regard. Verse 2 again, Psalm 46.

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46:2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

46:3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

46:4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

46:5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

There are a people, and they are increasing by the day, that the Lord is drawing to a peculiar fellowship with him. Christ's saving power shall not be philosophical, men and women shall walk who are attended to by the power of God, keeping and delivering them from all evils

In the second passage given to us above, we find that God being our refuge is something eminently practical. It has to do with deliverance, both now and in future. Like we saw, it also has to do with the life of God flowing into our lives to quicken us. God's power comes into our lives through the spoken or revealed word, as we hear and receive it by faith.

Now coming back to Isaiah 28:17. We may now be able to talk about "*the refuge of lies*". God is our refuge. He makes Himself our refuge by showing us principles of His word, which keep testifying about Christ and the redemption that is in Him. Anything that is contrary to the plans and purposes of God in Christ Jesus, but which men put their hearts, hope, and confidence into, can only be a refuge of lies. Erroneous teachings... (and we are not so much concerned about certain teachings that take place outside the church world, for, the majority of the believers know that these are empty of power). But, we are concerned with the erroneous teachings that go on in the midst of the Lord's people, even in the midst of spirit-filled believers, which creates false hopes and hold them under deception. We trust that the Lord, by His spirit, will awaken us all up, so that we might focus our hearts and attentions on the

Lord Jesus Christ and know the deliverance He brings at this last hour.

Now, you will recall that the starting passage we used when we began to discuss God's pattern church was Revelation 3. There, we will now go, trusting that we will be able to see how the word of God submitted to, makes God the refuge of His people, not in oral testimonies only, but by events of life experiences. So, come with me to Revelation 3, beginning from verse 7. We will read through to the promise of deliverance unto the Lord's people, from the hour of great tribulation that shall come upon the world of mankind. God's people should not go about blind. We cannot manifest what has not been worked into us. When we talk about safety, it is Christ in us, becoming clothing round about us. Make no mistake about it. When the proper appreciation of the provisions God has made for the deliverance of His people is clear to us, we will not be playing church, we will not be giving our time and attention to any of the trivialities and frivolities we see in today's visible church systems. May the Lord help our understanding. Revelation 3:7

3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;

Philadelphia is a type of the church growing up in the image and likeness of Christ. Whereas, the letters to the seven churches reveal that most of the church types are not living in line with God's will, in Philadelphia we find the type of the congregation of God's people living and operating according to God's mind. It is in this sense that we said that while the Lord Jesus Christ is the pattern church from the divine standpoint, from the human standpoint, the church in Philadelphia is God's pattern church, patterning herself according to what we see in the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 3:7-10;

3:7 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;

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3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

In spiritual parlance, what a person says may be set forth as what the person does. These people say they are Jews, but Christ says they are the synagogues of Satan. The evil indicated here is of trying to imitate the old covenant church order. We have dealt with that sufficiently in previous editions. These ones who say they are Jews are actually an opposition group. The word "*Satan*" here means adversary. They are of the synagogue or congregation of the adversary or opposer. That is, even though they claim to be Jews, they oppose God's work much in the same sense Satan opposes God's work. Jesus said to the people "*he that is not with me is against me, he that does not gather with me scattereth abroad*" (Matthew 12:30). The reference is to the fact that when those who publicly give witness that they are the Lord's people stand contrary to the provisions of God's word, they are antichristal; they are opposing Christ. May the Lord help us in Jesus name. Verse 10 is to be noted carefully. It says;

3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

There are grievous, momentous events that are coming, times of great distress, but a people shall be kept from it. Verse 10 says, "*because thou hast kept the word of my patience*". In verse 8, he says, "*thou hast kept my word*". We have previously shown that the Greek word translated word here is

“*Logos*” rather than “*Rhema*”. It is the full range of the Lord’s thoughts, plans and purposes, revealed for the building up of the church. *Rhema* is the principle of truth contained in the *Logos* quickened to our understanding for a specific blessing. But the *Logos* is about the full range of God’s word. In the visible church systems of today, men just concentrate on a few things, and they go on moving round and round in circles. But the full range of God’s word is in view in God’s saving purpose. “*In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God and the Logos was God*”. It is God made visible, God’s mind made visible in the pages of the written word quickened to our understanding by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. So, he says “*because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee also from the hour of temptation, the trialsome events that shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth*”.

The word “*Logos*” as we examined previously contains three principal elements: faith, hope and love, which are the three inheritances of the Lord’s, people both now and in future. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 brings these three elements in its full definitive form. We are told of the works of faith, the patience of hope and the labours of love. Of these three elements of our inheritances, the patience of hope is associated with the blessed hope, the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being changed into the same glory with him (Titus 2:13; Philippians 3:20, 21). When we see him, we shall be like him, the Bible says. And, here in Revelation 3:10, we read of “*the word of his patience*”. In the next edition, we will be talking about this thing the Lord calls “*the word of my patience*”.

For the remaining part, we want to go to the scriptures that show the close connection between hope and refuge. We will simply do the reading, trusting that in the next edition, we will be able to look at them expositively. Let’s take Hebrews 6; with this we will close our meditation. Hebrews 6:17–20;

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6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul...

When this true biblical hope enters into man's spirit, it anchors him. It does not make him waver to and fro like men without vision. So Paul says,

6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Jesus the forerunner, the one that went ahead of us into that glory, the captain of our salvation, who is also bringing and leading his people into the same glory.

The refuge, the hope and the deliverance from the trialsome events that are to come, are not things that we merely wish for. They are things that we must look unto God steadfastly for, believing that He will teach us, and lead us into those aspects of the work of faith by means of which we will fully overcome and be accounted worthy of these things. The Lord bless you and cause His face to shine upon you. Amen.

A FINAL WORD

The Church as a living entity brought about by divine creation, shown to possess a definite spiritual form and committed to fulfilling the great commission had its beginning from the day of Pentecost.

The Lord Jesus Christ had begun in earnest to build His Church according to His solemn declaration in Mathew 16: 18.

This being so, a close study of the book of Acts is bound to yield tremendous light on how God intends for the church to function. We are led into having insights as to how the church and her ministries handled diverse issues that cropped up in the course of time.

We know the events recorded in the "Acts of the Apostles" spanned so many years during which period much of the epistles were written. It is to be expected then that the latter books complemented the former in giving a very clear picture of the course God has charted for the church.

The Spirit of prophecy has a third witness as to how exactly God will have the church run her affairs all through the period of her redemptive history. The book of Revelation is a strong witness of prophecy. Prophecy highlights and confirms principles already clearly taught. It does this in a most forceful way.

Notice for example, the letters to the churches. They leave no one in doubt about the great importance Christ attaches to the proper functioning of the church. The corrective ministry touched on church structure, mixed worship, which is idolatry, ministerial conduct, erroneous practices and vain formalism. Some issues are repeated, for example, the clergy-laity separation (Nicolaitan), which is an importation of the Levitical Priesthood into the church.

Now let's get to our subject. Every spiritual movement that God raises would always go through great pressures at some stage. The emerging church in this nation as in several nations in which a similar work of restoration is to be seen, faces a present challenge. In no distant time it would be all the more obvious.

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One question that will surface has to do with how to cope with the challenge of handling numerical growth of astronomic proportions vis-à-vis such things as ministry demands and maintaining the purity of the work. Would re-structuring be necessary?

The Bible reveals three distinct stages of growth of the work, with each of these, whilst having its own-peculiarity nevertheless retaining the same basic structure.

Much space has already been assigned to the leadership structure of the New Testament Church. We hardly need to go over that again.

Our object in this final word is to point out that the wisdom of God, *God's word*, counsels that there is no need to attempt a more elaborate organisational structure than what He has already made known to us.

Real growth in grace of a local assembly of God's people and their continually increasing number of ministering brethren will witness a corresponding increase in the prophetic spirit guiding and guarding the work.

More times of aloneness with God in prayers, worship and in partaking of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will enable the leading ministries in each congregation to birth ministries.

Travelling ministries, if more faithful and more given to the government of the Holy Spirit, will witness two great results. First, God will reveal and direct His servants to specific fields in which they are to labour. Secondly, great help would always come to the congregation they visit. The resident ministries in these places will experience rapid growth. This in turn will positively affect the work.

Then there is the principal issue of knowing that the faithful God will continually supply His church with all that is needed from time to time. This is implied in 1 Corinthians 12: 28. Recall the angel's reply to Mary's perplexity. When she asked "How Shall these things be", it was unveiled to her what may be seen as a summary answer for all times, all seasons, no

matter the tide. "The power of the Most High shall overshadow" His own. Out of it will come the ability to fully utilize the Lord's authority to accomplish the Lord's will.

Our basic collective purpose is to seek Him, maintain a spirit of consecration and fully enjoy divine support. As someone has said, we must learn to do God's work properly by always ensuring that we light God's candle only.

What the early church did and taught would prove to sufficiently throw light on all matters pertaining to the work. May the Lord cause us to so maintain a humble disposition before Him.

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