

# A CASE STUDY OF THE APOSTOLIC CYCLE

## THE GENESIS OF CHURCH PLANTING

The church has an origin; it is from the mind of God. It also has a genesis; that is in the book of Acts. It is in the Acts that we find the highest expression of God's will. Conditions in the present-day church cannot be and never should be our model, example, or authoritative guide. Only what God has set forth as an example in the beginning can possibly be the blueprint for the methods and ways which are prescriptive for our day. One of the greatest mistakes we could possibly make is to ignore the manner and ways in which groups of Christians were birthed and established in the first century. If it is not planted in Christ, rooted in Christ, where all vitality and energy are drawn from Christ – it is inadequate.

## THE APOSTOLIC

The first ingredient we find in New Testament Church planting is the Worker. The Scriptural gifting for planting and establishing new Christian communities is apostleship ("apostle" meaning "sent one"). The Worker is a "sent messenger", but his work is defined by a few other names: church planter, master builder, foundation layer. 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, gives the outlined description of the work of apostleship. The work of apostleship can be summed up in two words: planting and establishing.

Foundations are paramount; upon the foundation sits everything else that will ever come thereafter.

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The very word "establish" comes from the word "foundation". It is the first thing new believers must have; therefore, the foundation builder is the one who must be on site from the very beginning. Every newly established congregation (except a few) was begun by those operating in apostleship. Those that did not begin by apostleship directly

invited apostleship in for establishing and setting up foundations soon after the church was born.

1 Corinthians 12:28 gives us the order; "And God hath set some in the church, **first** apostles, **secondarily** prophets..."

By tracing the lives of those who functioned in apostleship very carefully throughout the New Testament we can conclude, without exception, the one thing apostles did was to plant and establish new congregations.

## THREE PARTS IN THE FOUNDATION OF EVERY CHURCH PLANT

Ephesians 2:19-22 lays out a very clear picture of the foundation of every new work. "... the household of God, **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,**"

The beginning point: Jesus Christ the Chief Cornerstone Then apostleship which establishes. Next, the prophetic which equips for the deeper life in the Spirit of Christ.

We must conclude then by Scripture that it was the work of apostleship that both planted new believers by evangelizing and established new churches. Jesus Christ himself was the very genesis being the

Cornerstone. After they were planted IN CHRIST and established IN CHRIST, then the prophetic would be the final stage of the foundation work.

### **THE PROPHETIC**

The prophetic, being the third element of a believer's new life in Christ was a very important dimension. The prophetic is "the mind of God". After new believers were planted IN CHRIST and established IN CHRIST they must learn to fellowship CHRIST and engage their spiritual senses (spiritual eyes, spiritual ears, etc.).

*The prophetic is "the mind of God"*

It was prophesied by Joel in the Old Testament that when God would fill mankind with his Spirit that "your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." John the Revelator declared that "the testimony of Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy". In fact, the Apostle Paul, used the word "prophecy" or "prophesy" 13 times and the term "all prophesy" twice when describing the order of the gathering of the believers in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14). The prophetic dimension is used in this chapter more than in any other chapter in the entire Bible.

### **TRUSTING IN THE APOSTLE PAUL: The Masterbuilder**

Let's look at the life of the Apostle Paul. He was a Jew of the Jews and a pharisee of the pharisees. He was Roman by citizenship but also Jewish by race. He was more studied in the Old Testament Scriptures than any man that had ever lived; and this, by divine design. Learning at the feet of Gamaliel, the Apostle Paul was a master of the Old Testament as a Jew and a master of the law as a Pharisee. He was, in fact, a lawyer. His understanding of the Scriptures was rich and deep and his heart to defend the Scriptures manifested such zeal that he would put anyone to death who appeared to blaspheme the Old Testament Scriptures. This was the commitment to the Scriptures God actually needed. Why?

Jesus looked at the Pharisees in John 5:39 (AMP) and told them, "You search and investigate and pore over the Scriptures diligently, because you suppose and trust that you have eternal life through them. And these [very Scriptures] testify about Me!" In Galatians 3:24 the Word says, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ..." Paul declared in Colossians 2:17(AMP) about the Old Testament Scriptures, "Such [things] are only the shadow of things that are to come, and they have only a symbolic value. But the reality (the substance, the solid fact of what is forshadowed, the body of it) belongs to Christ."

Little did Paul know that he was born for such a time as this. He had joined in with the Pharisees to make a religion out of a shadow. He had mastered the shadow. No one knew the testimony about Jesus like Paul, but Paul didn't yet know it. The man, the greatest master of the Old Testament Scriptures who had ever lived, did not actually understand at all the purpose of his mastery. He was looking the shadow of Jesus Christ and sitting in the classroom of Jesus Christ. Every hour he spent at the feet of Gamaliel and every moment he spent memorizing, quoting, investigating, studying and pouring over the Old Testament Scriptures was actually an investment in a revelation that he had not yet had: JESUS.

When Paul was converted on the Road to Damascus he did not search out the apostles in Jerusalem. This Roman born citizen followed the pattern of Elijah, and he went off into the desert of Arabia. He was there for three years. It was in this desert that the Lord Jesus Christ unfolded every word, chapter, and paragraph of the Old Testament Scriptures, unveiling himself, Jesus Christ, in every line and page. Three years of constant awesome unveiling of the mysteries of the very Christ that was in Paul. The master of the shadow became the master of the substance; the religion and ritual fell as ash as The Might God Jesus Christ emerged from the parchment of a dead text come to life! It was revealed to Paul that he was actually sent to the earth for this very purpose and for this very time.

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him for fifteen days.” (Galatians 1:15-18)

Paul, after receiving the revelation of Jesus Christ, his Kingdom, His mission, His purpose, His plan, His wisdom and His ways declared his identity from Christ.

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise MASTERBUILDER, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay that that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:9-11)

If Paul was a master builder then he must have known the master plan. If there is a way to build there is a plan and a method to build. There is a divine design and blueprint to expand the kingdom of God on the earth.

Acts 13:2 says Paul and Barnabas were set aside for “**the work to which I have called them.**” These two apostles knew what their work was; they knew what they were sent to do. Acts 14:26 says, “From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God **for the work they had now completed.**”

The Apostle Paul was armed with the overwhelming and all-encompassing gospel of Jesus Christ. Such a vision and mystery of the Lord is the only foundation on which one can build the church. He had a matchless revelation of Jesus Christ and he was called to declare – to preach – the message of Christ and his Kingdom wherever he was sent; Paul called it the consuming revelation of God’s eternal purpose in Christ that burns in the heart of every one that has genuinely been sent by God. He declared that God had given him the “stewardship of the mystery” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

## THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Paul warned that many would rise to preach “another gospel”, “another Jesus”, and “another spirit” (2 Corinthians 10:16; 11:4). Some do not change the entire gospel, but they do as Paul explained, “pervert the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:7). We must be very careful that the gospel preached in the first century doesn’t become extinct in our day.

John was the first one to preach the gospel of the Kingdom; it was beyond radical. This was his message: ***The world and Israel is not being ruled by God but is in the hand of Satan; and the people have given their allegiance to the world, Israel, and all of it’s religious, economic, educational, entertainment, political, and material pursuits. John declared that an axe was about to fall and God was the one swinging that axe; the divine blade was going to sever to the very root of all of these systems, and God would be swinging hard, with power, and it would happen very soon! He preached that when God lowered his axe on this world it would be the beginning of the great fall of these systems -and they will eventually crash powerlessly to the ground. You are entangled in these systems and the ruler of these them is your source; and he is a liar and a deceiver – those who are locked into these systems will come crashing down with them! Then John would declare the Good News!... God is about to bring a new nation to this earth; it is from heaven! It is nothing like the systems of this present world! This new nation will be nothing like this world; in fact, it will supersede and crush your religion, politics,***

***social order, educational and material pursuits! It is an eternal Kingdom with an eternal purpose! Soon, this Kingdom is going to touch this earth! It will flow and grow from the One who is its source: A New King and Lord of both Heaven and Earth! His nation will grow and increase as the prophets declared, and it will never end. And eventually, it will overthrow all other kingdoms, nations, cultures, and systems of this world, and they will all be under His feet! The King of this Kingdom is the Almighty Himself, in the flesh! Then John would add... You cannot have both kingdoms. Sever your allegiance and loyalty to this world and untangle your heart from them. Leave them all behind. Leave the present empire for a New Empire! Step away from all empty religion and drop your political parties! Leave the slavery and bondage of this world's ideas and turn to the New Lord who is coming soon, very soon! Cut off your earthly attachments! This King is coming, and he will right the wrongs, he will level the ground, he will purge the earth of its evil, and he will call all things as they are! Turn to Him, now! Step into this water, let me baptize you – you will be buried and all your ties to this world and its systems demolished; you will come out of this water and wait here with me until we see his face!***

***I may baptize you with water, but He is going to baptize you with his living Spirit and he will dwell in you, himself! This new Kingdom will not operate by human power, human reasoning, or human methods; it will operate by His very own Spirit!***

***Stay here in the desert with me and let's wait for Him together! We will see Him soon – an when we do we will be looking the Kingdom in the face. If you cannot stay here with me, then go and do your business, but remain unattached from this world and wait for this promise! I am the one chosen to announce Him in this hour, so we will no doubt see him soon! He is coming with power to invade this world and declare war on all other kingdoms. There is still time, make him Lord!***

This was the message of the Kingdom of God. It was an unbelievable and heart-stopping message. Yet, it was a message that pulled only at the hearts who were truly so hungry for God that they would renounce everything in their lives to believe it. For those who refused it and rejected it the message was outrageous, scandalous, and disruptive.

The result of John's message was that many repented for a Kingdom that was not yet, but was coming. However, they emptied themselves of everything in order to hold the Kingdom, just as John told them. Among them was found Peter and Andrew.

When Jesus came and chose his disciples; he chose from among those whom John had already baptized. They were, in fact, emptied of this world. For this reason, when Jesus said new wine could not be contained in old wineskins, He was referring to the very fact that His disciples had become new, empty wineskins under John's preaching and influence. Now, as empty vessels, they could receive the new wine that Jesus was pouring into them while others despised, rejected, and even became violent at his teachings on the new Kingdom.

Jesus preached the same gospel of the Kingdom with one slight addition; Jesus declared the Kingdom had indeed come, it was not coming, and he added, "Come follow Me", in other words, "Get in My presence." Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Kingdom of God: He is God's rule and He is God's presence.

**"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15 ESV)**

The kingdom of God is the rule of heaven come to earth, and it was here. It is the Kingdom of God; the Lord Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. It was his message. It was his dominant thought. He called it the "Good News" - it is the only thing He called the "gospel".

"He went out preaching the gospel of the kingdom." (Matthew 4:23) The King declares his Kingdom. He is the Ruler of both realms. He preached the same message over and over again all throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.

The Mighty God had come in the flesh being the Son of God. The King himself had come to declare his own Kingdom. His message: ***This world is in the hands of the enemy, Satan. He rules by lust and pride, and you have been ruled by him. My Kingdom is breaking forth now and it will grow and increase! Like a mustard seed it, I will be planted in the ground, and you will watch me be buried; but I will spring up like that seed and I will cover the whole world! Leave everything behind; forsake all you have, and follow me, your new King and Lord, and you will be part of this Kingdom. I am the I AM, the Kingdom of God among you - I rule heaven and I will now bring my rule to this earth.***

***The change begins now. The earth has groaned for this hour! You have heard it said to "do this and do that" but I am changing that. I am going deeper than ever before in the hearts of those who I call my own. I am the new Moses and I am the Truth, the new Law. I am the Way. I, myself, am the Life. Right now I am walking with you, but I am going to be in You; and you will not be as my nation was, but you will be in Me, and I will be in you, and I will usher you into a new way of living and being.***

***I am the son of Man, the New Adam, and I will die, be buried, and rise again to be a life-giving Spirit. Anyone that thirsts and longs for me, I will fill him with my very life, and from his belly will flow rivers of my life. I am here to do what Adam failed to do. I will bear the Father's image and have dominion over the earth. I will walk in power. I will walk by the indwelling life of the Father. Those that believe on me they will live by my life as I live by the life of my Father.***

***I am a son of Abraham, the one to whom I promised to bless and inherit the whole earth. I am also the son of David, the rightful heir to God's very throne. Not only will I rule earth through Abraham's seed, but I will rule the heaven through David's seed. They that are in me will rule with me!***

***I am exactly who the prophets declared me to be! I am calling a people to follow me, and as I am the ruling presence of God on this earth, so you will also be the Kingdom on this planet. My original purpose to expand Eden throughout the earth is finally here. All nations of the world will be claimed by me and for me. Now is the time! Come and follow Me!***

The Kingdom was his first message in Mark 1. It was his last message in Acts 1. He spoke on the Kingdom over one hundred times. Two different places it says he went "everywhere preaching the Kingdom". Then, he sent his disciples to preach the Kingdom everywhere. The new Kingdom had come even as the old kingdoms continued; and the preaching of His Kingdom would call for a decision, a turning to Him, a repentance.

**"And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom." (Matthew 9:35 ESV)**

He spent forty days with his disciples after his resurrection on a retreat in the mountain teaching them "things pertaining to the Kingdom".

The Book of Acts begins with a message on the Kingdom; it ends with a message on the Kingdom.

On the Day of Pentecost Peter stood up and preached the gospel of the kingdom to the Jews who gathered around to see the demonstration of the Spirit on the 120 gathered in the Upper Room. Peter did not preach Acts 2:38 as the full gospel of the kingdom. Acts 2:38 was the answer to a question asked by those who were “pricked in their hearts” after hearing the message of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ which Peter preached in Acts 2:14-36.

Paul could preach nothing less than the gospel preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter and the other eleven apostles: except that it included the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus, the grace of God, and salvation.

“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly...about the kingdom of God.” (Acts 19:8)

Paul said, “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom...” (Acts 20:25 NIV)

“He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God...” (Acts 28:23 NIV)

Philip, the evangelist, preached “the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12 BSB)

The gospel that John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Peter, and the rest of the apostles, evangelists, and teachers unleashed on the world was so incredibly titanic, overwhelming, radical, and incredibly uncompromising that it stunned the strongest of men.

The gospel got John be-headed and it got Jesus beaten and nailed to a cross. It landed Peter in a prison and took Paul to the chopping block. The gospel of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ caused riots, conflict, battles, division, strife and separation among friends, family, and countrymen. Those who preached the gospel of the Kingdom met persecution, hatred, and threats.

This gospel was so powerful that the Apostle Paul could walk into a Gentile city filled with idol worshippers and blood-drinking heathens, preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and see dozens of heathens turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, leaving behind their immorality and devoting their complete allegiance to a New Lord, and by evening he was writhing in pain at the whipping post.

It is imperative that this kingdom message is in fact the gospel which we preach today. It must be clear, emphatic, and without dilution. The gospel which is preached produces a certain convert which is a product of that gospel; lack of the original gospel as the message produces something other than an individual who is solely committed to the person of Jesus Christ, his kingdom, and all it encompasses. One gospel will produce only church members while another gospel produces converts who believe God for prosperity and blessing. Another gospel allows people to get saved because they simply don't want to go to hell and they become converts bent on performing for selfish reasons. Believing the true gospel of Jesus Christ produces followers who forsake all for HIM, are committed to knowing Him and allowing his history to become their biography; they take up their cross, deny themselves, and lay down their life for his purpose, mission, agenda, ways, while they pursue a deeper life by his indwelling Spirit.

The goal of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not to get us out of hell and into heaven; rather, to get God out of heaven and into us so that He can manifest his nature, power, love, and dominion in full display among his creation. We must reclaim the gospel of the Kingdom and Jesus Christ.

### **THE FIRST FOUR CHURCHES PAUL STARTED: A Case Study**

After spending two years in Antioch being trained by Barnabas, Paul takes the lead as they journey with John Mark on their first church planting journey. They arrive in South Galatia. John Mark exits due to hardship, but Paul and Barnabas arrive in the city of Antioch Pisidia.

### **DIVIDE AND CONQUER**

The work of Christ on Calvary opened the door for the Gentile nations to be reconciled back to God. Christ walked the earth demonstrating both sonship and the ministry of reconciliation. However, a promised land must be taken. We are sent out into the world as Ambassadors for this Kingdom.

Just as God gave the earth to Adam and Eve for them to take dominion, go forth, multiply and subdue it. Equally as God told Abraham he must go forth and everywhere he put his feet God would give to him. In the same way that Joshua led the conquest of the Promise Land one parcel at a time; this is how the church moves into the earth with the ministry of reconciliation. We take our dominion, we go forth, and we preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, harvesting the nations back to God one parcel at a time.

Our mission is his; to go forth, sow seed, reach the hearts of men, and bring them back to relationship with Him.

On Paul's first church-planting journey he began in Antioch of Pisidia and established a group of believers. Then, he moved on to Iconium, then to Lystra, and finally to Derby. Four areas in less than 18 months.

New territory was always his focus.(Romans 15:20-21)

### **EVANGELISM OF THE RELIGIOUS AND THE IMMORAL**

While in Antioch of Pisidia Paul will evangelize both the Jew and the Gentile. The Jews are gathered in the synagogue and the Gentiles are found outside of the synagogue. Paul's approach to preaching Jesus each of these is different; both were miracles.

### **THE POWER OF THE WORD: Evangelizing the Jews**

Paul reached those who had a knowledge of the Word with the Word. The order of service in a synagogue was such that the Old Testament Scriptures were read in front of everyone. Thereafter, the females would be dismissed, and the men would gather to discuss the reading for the day. Paul, being a master of the Old Testament Scriptures and the revelation of Jesus Christ in those Scriptures, would begin to preach Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God to the Jews. Most often he would eventually be forced out of the synagogue, but almost never without a remnant of Jews who had believed the message of the Kingdom and were baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Spirit of Christ.

### **THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT: Evangelizing the Gentiles**

After exiting the synagogue, Paul's approach would change. The Gentiles would have had no knowledge of an Old Testament or of a Messiah; something would have to accompany this unbelievable message about a stone mason in Nazareth who was God come in the flesh to establish his Kingdom on earth. Paul would begin to demonstrate the power of Jesus Christ by signs, miracles and wonders. These signs miracles and wonders would open the door the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom. Paul would return from the streets, the marketplace, and the houses of the community with a remnant of Gentiles who had believed the gospel message and turned to Jesus Christ, being baptized in Jesus' name, and filled with the Spirit of Christ. There were more Gentiles reached in these four churches in Galatia than Jews.

## THE PURPOSE OF SIGNS MIRACLES AND WONDERS IN THE APOSTOLIC METHOD

When God's power collides with earth the Kingdom is manifested in signs, miracles, and wonders.

Moses left Egypt and developed a relationship with the Almighty on the back side of the desert. The Lord revealed himself in a wonder: A burning bush. Moses then went back into Egypt as an evangelist; he had a message to do with the Kingdom of God and the people's deliverance from Egypt. To open the door for this message the Lord gave him the ability to do signs, miracles, and wonders in Egypt. From the demonstrations of God's power with his rod and the leprous hand to the water turning to blood and the darkened skies, Egypt opened her ears to the message and the messenger of God. Signs, miracles and wonders are for Egypt. The same is true in the Book of Acts. Signs, miracles, and wonders are for the unbeliever.

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In Jesus' own ministry he went everywhere preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. John 2:23 says, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did."

In Acts 2, the door was opened to preach the gospel to the Jews because of the flames of fire upon the heads of those filled with the Spirit in the Upper Room. Also, Jews from 16 nations and regions heard the 120 speaking with their native tongues "[and telling of] the mighty works of God!" (Acts 2:11 AMP) This caused the Jews to ask, "What can this mean?" as they watched in amazement. This opened the door for Peter to preach to them the gospel in Acts 2:14-36. Three thousand souls were added to the church that day.

In Acts 3 the lame man at Gate Beautiful is healed, and as a result, Peter was able to preach the gospel of the Kingdom to multitudes there at the Jewish temple. Acts 4:4 give us the final result, "many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."

In Acts 8, Phillip "preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. and there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:5-8). Many were added to the church because of these signs, miracles, and wonders. In the reaching of every people group and region mentioned in the New Testament, miracles, signs, and wonders were a part of Kingdom expansion.

Time after time the Lord confirmed the preaching of the gospel with signs, miracles, and wonders. Not a single miracle was done in a church building; God desires to manifest his love and power among those who do not yet know Him.

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Paul told the church in Rome, "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Jesus Christ." The Apostle Paul did not only depend on the message of the Kingdom of God to convert the unbeliever but he depended on the power of God and the manifestation of the Spirit.

We should expect the same as Jesus said that these signs will follow believers as they go out and minister Jesus to people. (Mark 16:16)



## **RIGHT HAND / LEFT HAND**

God sent his workers into the world to work together; seldom do you see them working individually. We are made comfortable by our similarities, but we become powerful because of our differences. Kingdom progress hangs squarely on the unity that comes from understanding one another.

God set Moses over Israel; however, to both function as a nation and advance in the taking of the Canaan land, there were two dominant areas established: The priesthood and the military; Aaron and Joshua. Each of these is powerful in their own right; however, maximum effectiveness would find it's axis in the unity, understanding, and function of both.

Aaron represented the law, worship, character, intimacy, Truth, the root system of Israel: Loving God. Joshua represented military might, strength, power, demonstration of the Spirit, the taking of new territory: Loving your neighbor. Aaron had to appreciate and value Joshua, and vice versa; however, they were not the same. The Kingdom can only advance on collaboration, not competition.

The Right hand represents power and strength. The left hand represents order and character. Joshua was the right hand, like an arrow! Aaron is like a bow, steady and allowing the arrow to launch further and be precise. An arrow by itself is very limited; likewise, a bow by itself has not slain thousands! Together, the bow and the arrow can make war.

*Our ego must be annihilated by  
the cross of Jesus Christ.*

If we have only the Law we become judgmental and rigid with no demonstration of the Spirit. When we have only the demonstration of the Spirit we have no intimacy, worship, and love for Truth.

Neither the demonstration of the Spirit (right hand) nor the law (left hand) is the key to Kingdom expansion. The key allowing these two to function together is THE LOVE OF GOD: self-denial and death to selfish ambitions. Our ego must be annihilated by the cross of Jesus Christ. If we, as imperfect humans, can embrace JESUS, recognize our own imperfections and inadequacies outside of God's help, mercy, and grace, we can walk in God's wisdom by rejecting self-sufficiency; this is called BROKENNESS. When God thinks of ministry training he thinks of a broken vessel. We need Christ and we need one another, his body.

## **THE EKKLESIA**

Paul would then bring the newly saved Jews together with the newly saved Gentiles and, in a declaration that would reach back in time, he would dissolve the longest standing racial divide known in human

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history. "You are no longer Jews or Gentiles but you are a NEW SPECIES: "Ekklesia". They were the planting of the Lord! Water baptism had put them into Jesus Christ, and Spirit baptism had put Christ in them. Christ is all! The church is the people of God, the very bride of Jesus Christ. The English rendering of the word "ekklesia" is either "parliament" or "senate". The ekklesia is defined in the Greek as "the executive branch of an existing government". In this case, that government is the Kingdom of God. The ekklesia is the executive branch of the Kingdom of God with authority and

responsibility in a given area.

### **ESTABLISHING BEGINS: A New Species, A New Creation, The Third Race**

Paul now had his work cut out for Him. These people who had left behind all physical, cultural, and social attachments and ideologies of their present world were now the Sons of God. They must have the foundation of the JESUS CHRIST laid out clearly. This would be their footing on which they could stand. Paul would unveil Jesus Christ as the center and the circumference of the universe. He was their life, their bread, their water, their power, their strength, their joy, their peace, their everything. They were created by him, for him, and he was going to work in them and through them. Paul would reveal Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone!

### **INGREDIENTS IN THE FOUNDATION**

Jesus quotes an Old Testament scripture referring to himself, "And have ye not read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner." (Mark 12:10) The cornerstone is the first and primary stone which sets the quality, standard, and function of the entire building which will sit upon the foundation. It is the reference point for all other stones laid subsequent to it. Everything finds its definition in this one piece. The only way to find if all other stones are straight and true is by measuring them against the cornerstone. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the foundation laid in the life of every single believer. Every believer is called a "lively stone" made from the same substance and measured by the cornerstone and in the building for the same eternal purpose.

"Ye also, as lively stones, are bilt up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 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." (1 Peer 2:5-6)

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1).

Together, all believers make up the "household of God" or "God's own household" (AMP). This household sits upon the foundation that is sure.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 3:19-22)

Paul declares that the prophets, writers, Kings, and servants of God from all other ages spoke of things they did not understand or comprehend, but that in this age he has given us prophets and apostles that have a revelation of the "mystery" of Jesus Christ never before seen until the age of the church. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Ephesians 3:4-5).

God, by his wisdom is building his house. His wisdom, from the beginning, has declared the method, the ingredients, and the order by which is will be built. Anything else minimizes his work.

"Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute." (Luke 11:49)

By God's wisdom he chose to make himself the cornerstone of the foundation upon which the ekklesia sits. Flowing from him, of his same substance and measure he chose apostles and prophets to make up the remainder of the foundation.

Both the Scripture and the literal order revealed in the Word show that apostleship is needed first for the planting and establishing of believers and then the prophetic.

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets..." (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Paul established 13 congregations. He had a revelation of Jesus Christ by personal revelation just as the original 12 had a revelation of Jesus by walking with him for 3.5 years. Each Christian community begins with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the revelation of Him. Then, the those who believe in the gospel of Christ and are saved must have this foundation laid upon which they can build. This laying of foundation or "establishing" is part of the calling of apostleship as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 3.

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest:" (1 Corinthians 3:9-13)

This is the work of apostleship, preaching the gospel of Christ, laying the foundation of Christ. This leaves the new believer with unshakeable revelation and magnificent dependence on the preeminence, priority, and supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

After the Cornerstone is laid, and the foundation of Christ himself, then the work of the prophetic comes into play. Before the new believer was dead to God and alive to sin; now, in Christ, they are a new creature and have come alive to God. Just as they previously lived by their physical sense of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling in this world system; now, they must learn to use their spiritual sense to see Christ, hear Christ, touch Christ, feel after Christ, taste the Lord, and smell the fragrance of the wisdom of Christ. The prophetic is "the mind of God". For those who are in Christ, Christ is all!

The foundation: Jesus Christ, Apostleship, and the Prophetic.

## **THE LOVE OF GOD, SONSHIP, THE NATURE OF GOD**

### **THE LOVE OF GOD**

God doesn't have love. God is love. We can gloss over the subject of love; but we should not. The love of God, revealed in his work for us on Calvary, has the power to awaken, heal, and lead our hearts into dynamic transformation. Love is the foundation for our identity, function, and transformation. When you see yourself the way God sees you it brings a total reset to your self-portrait and worth. Your identity is effected deeply and you become rooted and grounded in a way that settles your mind, body, and soul. As you walk in God's unconditional love and experience his validation and approval, not based on your works or performance, but based on who He is and what He says, your identity will be affirmed and your confidence in Him and in life will rise.

### **SONSHIP**

Who and how we see ourselves to be determines what we do and how we will live in this life. Jesus exemplified for us the life of a son. He lived an overcoming life by the indwelling life, voice, and

affirmation of the Father. Jesus was fully convinced of who he was and how much he was loved. In the Kingdom of God, approval is given from the very beginning. The Father gives his approval over us as His children immediately upon the New Birth. He gives it when we are born again so that we do not spend our time and energy trying to earn his approval or to seek it from everyone else we meet. The word “abba” means father, but it’s deeper meaning is the word “source”. The Father becomes the source of all things to us; even the fruit of the Spirit cannot flow freely from us unless they first flow to us. We do not have to be vulnerable to the opinions, approval, and demands of people because we stand on the foundation of the Father’s approval. In this dispensation, the frequency on which God communicates and functions is “Father to son”.

#### LEARNING TO BE LOVED BY THE FATHER

When I mention the word “dad” everyone has an immediate picture in their mind that surfaces; if not a picture, there are words and descriptions that outline and define the dad they had in their life. Your father may have been harsh, an addict, performance based, passive, absent, or abusive. Maybe your dad was never around, abandoned the family, was focused more on work and not you, had an anger problem, was silent and passive, was not there when you needed him, always focused on your errors, didn’t show you who you were, never said “I love you”, or just didn’t pay attention to you. Why is any of this important? Because it is our earthly fathers with whom God himself shares his title “Father”, and it is the job of our earthly fathers to demonstrate to us what our heavenly Father is supposed to be; however, all too often, those references are blurry and very dark because the example left for us looks nothing like the Lord. God wants you to know “That is not how I am!” God wants to heal the “Father Lens” you have so that you can experience freedom and transformation as a child of God. This healing is a process. As you grow in your knowledge of Him and in what he says and thinks about you, your relationship with Him will cause all others to pale.

#### FROM SLAVERY TO SONSHIP

Paul told the church in Galatia, “And because you are sons, God has sent for the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father”. Now, you can live from an identity you already have rather than living for an identity you feel you must earn. Paul goes on to say that we were all under slavery; bondage to performance, religion, and lack of true identity. Now, we can think like sons and partner with Him as sons, living out our sonship rather than having a message of freedom but continuing to live under bondage.

Slaves feel like an outsider, an orphan. Those who are in Christ know they are beloved children of God, they come back to the heart of what God says about them, they run everything they think or say about themselves through the Word of their Father, and then they progress and grown into that identity for the rest of their lives.

#### AN IDENTITY MAKEOVER

As you begin to engage the Lord you will not only begin to see through His word (both written and spoken) that you are loved but you will hear him say it. You will be affirmed in your identity as he calls you son and you call him father. You will experience his approval, his protection, and his security.

#### **SPIRITUAL SENSES: The Prophetic**

This crucified, resurrected, ascended, limitless, incarnated, glorified, triumphant, matchless, victorious Christ dwells inside of you! He is not calling us to imitate him, but he is calling on us to allow Him to live through us in real time. He is ever-present, constantly speaking, working in you and through you, as his child. He desires to reveal himself, his love, his power, his knowledge, his wisdom, and person in unsearchable and innumerable ways. It is never-ending!

When you lived in the world, all that is in the world is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It was with your physical senses that you were pulled to and from, engaged, felt after, pleased, and interacted with the world. Sadly, you were dead to God. However, now, you are made alive to Christ! You have a new life; and there is an entirely new world available to you. The only way you can engage this world is with your spiritual senses: spiritual eyes, spiritual ears, spiritual touch, spiritual taste, and spiritual smell. You are now alive in the Spirit! You have to learn to engage the Spirit and come away knowing Him greater by revelation and knowledge of Him!

The cost of the presence of Jesus Christ is time in it. The value of taking the time to see, hear, taste, touch, smell him is invaluable. It is God's desire to unveil Jesus Christ to us. The unsearchable riches of Christ are immeasurable and never-ending.

### **GATHERING AROUND JESUS**

Paul would equip the new believers to gather. The gathering of believers has a specific purpose and intent in the mind of God. He never calls us to something without a way and a method in order to produce an outcome. Destination determines conduct. The destination of the gathering is two-fold. First, that Jesus Christ would be made the Head of the body. Secondly, that the body would be built up, encouraged, and comforted.

We only find the order of the biblical gathering unveiled once in all of Scripture; in the church at Corinth. Apparently it had come to Paul's attention that there was a drift from the original guidance, order, and purpose of the gathering. It was this disorder and misuse of the gathering that provoked Paul to bring understanding again to the Corinthians.

The gathering itself is found outlined in 1 Corinthians 14; however, in order to build the case for the gathering Paul would begin several chapters before, addressing individual components of the gathering, in order to land in chapter 14 where everything would be woven together. So, in order to address the gathering of 1 Corinthians 14, we must go before that chapter and uncover key components he addresses. The analogy I would like to employ here is the gathering itself is like a door; in order for that door to function there are three hinges that hold the gathering in place and allow it swing properly.

#### **HINGE ONE: THE LORD'S SUPPER – Chapters 10-11 (Unity and True Spiritual Fellowship)**

The communion we know in the modern church is far removed from the original communion. We do not find a small cup of juice and a bite-size cracker as communion in Scripture; nor do we find that communion was a somber event of self-analysis. The Lord's Supper was a complete meal and it had a purpose and intent; both which were being lost among the Corinthian believers.

Paul talks to them about the "cup of blessing" which brings us into spiritual participation with the blood of Christ and is symbolic of our fellowship with him. So also, we are one body because we partake of one bread. Jesus said "this is my body which is for you"; the body of Christ is about serving one another in our service to him. The drink and the bread represented the whole meal, called the Lord's supper. This was a meal of fellowship like no other. It was a meal eaten together as the household of God, and it was to be entered into with the understanding of our unity with Jesus and his body, other believers. We are one. We are equal. We are in him, he is in us. We are responsible for one another. We are participants in the ministry of his blood and his work. This is our common fellowship. We are baptized into Christ by his blood and Christ is in us, by his Spirit, making us his body. The intimacy and deep revelation that encompasses this meal was paramount.

In verses 18-20 Paul even compares this meal with the Old Testament sacrifices, saying that the priesthood would eat part of the sacrifice laid upon the altar. By doing this they personally became part of the sacrificial system and worship of God. He tells the Corinthians that even the pagans sacrifice to their gods, which are demons, and eat of their sacrifices; and that they cannot eat from both tables (places upon which those sacrifices are offered). He then refers to the "Lord's table"; the place of worship and fellowship of Jesus Christ. Paul then launches into chapter 11 where he calls them all to unity, "become imitators of me".

Paul then addresses three major issues with their approach to the Lord's Supper: First, they were allowing divisions to separate them rather than the meal re-centering them on unity in Christ. The food was not being divided equally and some were being allowed to eat first because of social status, others were eating without allowing all those in attendance to actually arrive. Second, they were using the meal as a common meal rather than a point of fellowship with the Lord and one another; literally getting drunk and pleasing the flesh rather than discerning the Lord's body. Thirdly, their approach to the Lord's Supper in such an unthoughtful and irreverent way was a sin against the ministry of Christ and the body of Christ. Paul calls them to examine themselves in this area; to search their hearts and their outward conduct and re-center themselves on the nature and purpose of the Lord's Supper. They should come to the Lord's table prepared in their hearts. If they do this they will arrive at the gathering with a respect for the spiritual and physical needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ. The hinge of unity and true spiritual fellowship would be firmly set in place.

#### HINGE TWO: SPIRITUAL GIFTS - Chapter 12

Paul expresses his desire for the Corinthians to not be ignorant about the intention and purpose of the spiritual gifts. He tells them that they used to serve idols that were dumb and did not speak. This has changed; they are no longer heathens with a voiceless deity; they now belong to Jesus Christ, and THIS GOD SPEAKS. He is always speaking and demonstrating himself to his people. He is unveiling his identity, power, ways, and works to his body; constantly reminding them that he is LORD. Paul tells them that anyone that speaks by the Spirit (spiritual gifts) will, in fact, be declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord, or Head over the body.

He then tells the believers that every single one of them have gifts by the Spirit of Christ in them. Each of them should be speaking by Christ and revealing his work. These gifts would be God's way of strengthening, teaching, encouraging, building up, and comforting his body, the church. The gifts are an absolute necessity if Jesus is to remain the Head and the body is to be built up. Spiritual gifts through many members of the body is a hinge upon which the gathering of believers would swing.

#### HINGE THREE: CHARITY/LOVE - Chapter 13

Paul reveals the third hinge. He said if you operate in all of the gifts of the Spirit but do not have love, then you are nothing. He then begins to unveil the power of the love of God in the life of the believer and the necessity of this dimension of love in order to experience true unbroken community and fellowship among believers who carry the brokenness of humanity. Love is the greatest ingredient, motive, and nature that must be present in the gathering.

#### NOW THE DOOR OF THE GATHERING IS SECURE

With unity and true spiritual fellowship in place, the individual members hearing and receiving from the Lord by the Spirit, and unending love prevailing in the hearts of the believers, the gathering is ready. Paul asks the question, "How then shall it be, brethren, when we gather?". All of the components come together in this chapter (14). He reveals that every member should be functioning, each one bringing his gift to reveal Christ. He refers to the operation of the gifts as "prophecy"; the words "prophecy" or "prophesy" are mentioned 13 times in this chapter. The term "all prophesy" is mentioned twice. Paul

says that if all prophesy, then all will be edified, encouraged, and comforted; and Jesus would be Lord, the Head, over the body.

### **THE OLD TESTAMENT SHADOW OF GATHERING**

We know that the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are in fact Old Testament books. Jesus was born of a woman under the law. The new covenant was not enacted until after the resurrection of Jesus. Having said that, we know that everything in the Old Testament is a “shadow” of things to come and it served as a “schoolmaster” to bring us to Christ and the fullness of his ministry and purpose.

The church itself is birthed in the book of Acts; and so before it was birthed it was “carried”. The embryonic stage before the birth was in the gospels.

When Jesus chose his 12 they spent 3.5 years gathering around Him. They gathered around him in the mountain, by the sea, in a field, in a boat, in houses, and on a hillside. Every time they gathered around him they received revelation, teaching, understanding, prophecy, commands, direction, encouragement, instruction, and sometimes correction and rebuke. This example is our schoolmaster for the believers gathering around Jesus Christ in our day.

### **AN ESTABLISHED GROUP OF BELIEVERS**

They have been evangelized, baptized into Christ and Christ is in them. They have been established in His identity and theirs. They have an all-encompassing vision of Jesus, his kingdom, his purpose, and their part in his eternal plan. Apostleship has ensured that Jesus is their Cornerstone and foundation. As new creatures in Christ their spiritual senses have come alive and they are now unified, functioning in love, and living under the Lordship of Jesus. They are hearing him, seeing him, fellowshiping him, and gathering with other believers around his preeminence and headship. Every member is functioning and the eternal purpose of God is set in restored.