

ESTABLISHING THE NEW BELIEVER

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 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.

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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 Peter 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.