

THE CHURCH OF THE PROPHETIC FUTURE

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“The Church of the future
is irreversibly tied to its historic origins yet
inevitably bound to the everlasting future.

Therefore, it must always be
effectively relevant to it’s time.”

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Introduction:

We know that the Church has a glorious eternal future but most Christians do not seem to know what it might look like in the prophetic future. I believe that one thing is certain and that is that it will not remain the same as it is today. In the days that lie immediately ahead it will undergo many remarkable and dramatic changes. God has forecast an amazing future for His redeemed community, but as we look into that future as portrayed in the Bible, we can clearly see the amazing transformation that will happen to the Church. I personally believe that the Church of the prophetic future will be transformed almost beyond recognition. It will be so glorious, powerful and authoritative that it will truly astound the whole world. It will be comprised of an amazing army of Messianic Jews and Gentiles who will unite to proclaim the glorious Kingdom of God.

Sadly most Christians seem to believe that the Church of the future will be in heaven, living in glorious mansions and spending eternity playing golden harps and continuously singing songs of worship. These Christians seem to give little credence to the prophecies that clearly indicate that the Messiah will be crowned king of kings and will rule over the nations on earth from His place on the throne of David in Jerusalem. In Ephesians we are given a glimpse of this glorious Church of the last days.

Ephesians 5:27

27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. NLT

When we compare the present Church with this picture of its ultimate future state, we must surely wonder how it can be so dramatically transformed in order to assume this predicted image. Surely there must be a powerful catalyst to bring to the Church such an amazing transformation. Could that circumstance occur in the period following the astounding outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel (Zechariah 12: 9, 10) and the subsequent further outpouring upon all flesh? (Joel 2:28).

The Church universal is presently standing on the very edge of a dramatic new prophetic era. To meet the challenges and reap the harvest of that era, there must be many substantial changes in the Church. Such a transformation was predicted in Acts 3:21.

Acts 3:21 Whom heaven must receive (retain) until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

God predicted for the last days, a restoration of all those things spoken by the mouths of His holy prophets.

Good News Bible: Acts 3:21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for all things to be made new, as God announced through his holy prophets of long ago.

Jesus must remain in heaven and not return again to this earth until through the promised restoration, God makes all things new.

Until - This word confirms that He will then return to the earth.

The times of the restoration of all things - The noun restoration translated *apokatastaseos*, does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The verb from which it is derived occurs eight times. It means “to restore a thing to its former situation,” as for example restoring a “strained” or “dislocated” limb to its former soundness. Hence, it is used to restore, or to heal, in the New Testament: Mat 12:13, “*And it (the hand) was restored whole as the other*” Mark 3:5; Luke 6:10.

Acts 3:21 says, “whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”

This is most probably a reference to the future period when God will restore the earth to its original condition which existed before the fall of Adam and Eve. We see this reflected in Paul’s comments as well.

Rom. 8:20-21, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Another possibility, though less likely, is that it refers to restoration of the Kingdom of Israel mentioned by Paul in Rom. 11:25-26.

Rom. 11:25-26, “For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in;

26 and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Three Things The Church Must Be Restored To:

- 1 The New Testament pattern including signs, wonders and miracles.
- 2 Its Hebraic roots and origins.
- 3 Its urgent expectation of the Lord's return. "*Maranatha*"

The changes will restore the Church to its New Testament pattern, but there will also be some other powerful differences. The Church of the prophetic future will be as different from the early church, as Tabernacles is from Pentecost. As we stand at the early stages of the 21st Century, facing huge issues of future uncertainty, there is one question that should supersede all others for all true Christians, "What should be the nature, characteristics and activities of the church of the future?"

1. What will it look like?
2. What will its message be?
3. What will it be doing?
4. How will it differ from the church of present era?

The Church has always been notoriously slow to change anything. The hymn writer said "Like a mighty army moves the church of God." But actually the Church has been moving more like a lazy tortoise. However, the greatest changes in world history are scheduled to happen in the near future and everything will change whether we like it or not when the dispensation changes from the Church Age to the Kingdom Age.

We need to be among those who through correct understanding of the Word of God and acute spiritual perception and anticipation are prematurely experiencing the essence of the world that is yet to come.

Hebrews 6:1-5

6:1 So let us stop going over the basics of Christianity again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start all over again with the importance of turning away from evil deeds and placing our faith in God.

2 You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

3 And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

4 For it is impossible to restore to repentance those who were once enlightened — those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit,

5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come. NLT

In order to taste (experience) the power of the Age to come we must

- 1 Proceed past the elementary basics of our Faith (Heb 6:1-2).
- 2 Grow up into spiritual maturity (Heb 6:3).
- 3 Turn away from evil deeds through faith in God.
- 4 Move forward into deeper understanding of God and His purposes.
- 5 Taste (experience) the good things of God's Word (Heb 6:5).
- 6 Experience by faith the power of the Age to come (Heb 6:5).
- 7 The Holy Spirit within us can give us a foretaste of future glory.

Romans 8:23

...we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, NLT

What elements of the Age to come can the Holy Spirit produce in our lives? (Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Romans 14:17). In the age to come, miracles will not be unusual they will be normal. The supernatural will become natural. Holy Spirit manifestations will be happening continuously as a regular feature of our lives. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) will be experienced and evidenced continuously.

1 Corinthians 10:11

*11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom **the ends of the ages have come.** NKJV*

Paul speaks of those on whom the "ends of the ages" will come. This intimates the overlapping of the ages. One age does not suddenly and abruptly end, and the next suddenly commence. There is obviously a period of time when one age is concluding and the next one is emerging. The ages will overlap at their perimeters. Thus some people may live with one foot in the passing age and the other in the emerging age. This possibility exists right now. The Church of this present age should be so prophetically aware of the soon coming new age that it begins to live prematurely in the power of the newly emerging age. The Church age will soon give way to the Kingdom age. What kind of signs distinguish the new Kingdom age?

1. Spiritual unity: not just between believers in different denominations but also with Messianic Jewish believers.

2. Submission to Kingly authority.
3. Divinely administered Authority.
4. Biblically authentic signs, wonders and miracles.
5. The universal focal point in Jerusalem where Messiah is enthroned.

What changes must happen to make the Church God's instrument for the prophetic future? If we can find this answer and fulfil it, God will take care of the rest. If we can truly be His prophetic people for our day, and if we can serve Him as He specifically desires in this crucial time, this is what we are required to do. His sovereign purposes will undertake the remainder.

What will transform the present carnal insipid Church into the glorious Church without spot, wrinkle, blemish or any such thing? (Eph 5:27) It will not happen gradually like an evolutionary process. It will happen quickly, a miraculous transformation. I believe the catalyst of change will be the glorious new revelation of Jehovah Sabaoth and the Angel of the LORD as realised in Zech 12:10).

The manifest Kingdom age is almost upon us. We must seriously prepare for its emergence. Our vision must urgently transition from Church to Kingdom. A brand new day is about to dawn (Isaiah 60:1) and it will be very different from any previous time. God is going to shake off the old and bring in the new. We will certainly need that "renewed mind" in order to comprehend and adjust to the startling changes that will ensue. The redeemed community, its perceptions and culture will be manifestly different. The old perception of the Church will be radically changed. The exciting future is about to become the present.

Many sincere Christians have longed to see the Church restored to its original New Testament pattern in which signs, wonders and miracles continually occurred. However, we must also remember that the New Covenant Church of the first century was almost totally Jewish. It was very closely linked to its Hebraic origins and was originally viewed as one of the many sects of Judaism. Therefore a restoration to the original pattern must also include a closer identification with Israel who is the "first born son" of the Holy One of Israel (Exodus 4:22). The Kingdom company of the future, will supersede and surpass the Church of the first century.

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Chapter One

The Most Important Question

Amongst all the potential uncertainties of the future there is really only one issue with which we Christians **MUST** be concerned and that relates to God's will for the church. Whatever lies before us in the near or distant future, our being in the direct Will and purpose of God should be our first and major concern. What therefore is God's desire and expectation concerning His church in the near future? What has He purposed that it should achieve? What is the specific role He desires it to play? Are we, His people, in a position to fulfil God's purpose? If not, are we willing to change whatever needs changing in order to enable us to truly be His prophetic people and to accomplish His plans? What characteristics might qualify us to play some role in God's future Kingdom?

The Importance Of Our Historic Past

The Church is eternally linked to its historic roots because, within that history occurred the death and resurrection of its founder, which is the pivotal fulcrum of its existence. Without the redemptive power of Christ's Atonement, the Church is nothing. Apart from Christ's redemption, the Church is just a mystically oriented humanistic social club. However, the Church of the future will not only be linked to its New Testament covenant pattern. It will also be essentially linked to its Abrahamic origins. (Genesis 12:1-3). It will ultimately be restored to an Edenic age on the new earth that God has promised. (Rev 21:21).

The everlasting purpose of the Church is inextricably tied to the great redeeming moment when Jesus paid salvation's price for every human being. Without this the Church has no story to tell. No message to proclaim. No reason to exist. However, Christ did not die solely to purchase salvation for every individual on earth. He died and rose again to redeem the whole world from its sinful past and to restore it to its glorious prophetic future. He did not die in order to evacuate a small minority of mankind to their heavenly mansions. He died to restore the rule of God to planet earth under the reign of Jesus Christ the Son of David who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Church is not only inextricably linked to the past it is also an integral, indispensable feature of the prophetic future. The imperative requirement for those who are part of its present existence is to build a strong, safe bridge between those extremities. We dare not lose the

imperatives of our historic past. Neither do we want to forfeit the tremendous blessings of our prophetic future.

In the Church around the world today, there is a great vision and desire to plant new churches. **Thousands of pastors are eager to see their churches reproduce. However, an urgent question arises, “What kind of churches should we be planting at this critical moment in time?”**

How deeply does the fact that we are now entering a new millennium, the 21st Century, and a new (Kingdom) age, affect the kind of churches we should be planting? Is this an important factor to consider? How much should it influence our thinking and planning? Even more important how greatly should the fact that Jesus is going to place the rule of His Kingdom under the authority of His redeemed community!

Luke 12:32 Have no fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

There is only one truly authentic source to which we should address such questions, - the Bible! We dare not pattern the Church of the future on humanistic concepts. We should not try to clone it from any part of church history, except the part that is specifically recorded in the New Testament. The Acts of Apostles is the only authoritative pattern for Church design. Here we have not only a divinely authenticated history, but the essence of a prophetic blueprint for all ages.

The last thing that we should pattern the Church of the future on is the model of the Church in the Middle Ages. The Church of that era fell far short of God's purpose. It was deliberately cut off from its roots and the life that would have flown from those roots. It was invaded by paganism and formed its practises under the direct influences of pagan models. The reformation did begin to bring the Church out of its humanistic principles, but it still fell far short of its original Biblical model. The transition of the historic church back into its Biblical format will be finally achieved in the Kingdom Age.

I believe that God is endeavouring to bring His Church today into new dimensions of prophetic fulfilment. A New day is dawning in God's prophetic purpose in which His Church is to be a crucial instrument. May we fully understand the implications and BE that Church. May we also help to reproduce that glorious church all over our world.

Chapter Two

The Early Church Model

The Biblical account of the early Apostolic church begins in the Acts of Apostles. It then continues throughout the Epistles as we catch glimpses of its various activities and the life of the early believers. However, the account in the Acts of Apostles is the most direct and concentrated. The entire book is a somewhat simple diary of the ministry of some of the Apostles and some of the early churches.

However, it is more than a history of the earliest years of the Church. It is also a blueprint for the Church throughout the ages. It is a model or paradigm of what God desired and intended His Church to be in the world throughout the ages. As we read the book of Acts we do not merely see an historical account, we also see a prophetic picture of what the Church will be once again before the return of Christ to rule over the earth.

Let's Look At Some Of The Features Of The Early Church

*Luke 24:49 And I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the **power from above** comes down upon you."*

Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the power (*dunamis*) of the Holy Spirit came upon them. Much of the contemporary Church has made the Holy Spirit a doctrine instead of a dynamic power. The Holy Spirit has become a theological subject rather than a powerful person who comes to live in us. The Church today needs to wait again upon God in prayer until the true, dynamic power of the Spirit fills and emanates from every believer. This will be an essential, indispensable feature of the Church of the future.

1. The Indispensable Initiating Factor Was The Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. NKJV

These verses describe the emergence of the New Testament Church. The Bible word for “spirit” including the Holy Spirit is “air, wind, spirit, breath”. (In Hebrew it is *ruach*, in Greek, *pneuma*). The disciples were engaged in expectant passionate prayer. They were waiting in earnest expectation of one thing only - the promise of the Father! (Luke 24:49, Acts 2:39) The arrival of another comforter like Christ, - the Holy Spirit.

The disciples did not merely accept and believe a doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. They were actually invaded and possessed by the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. Such an experience can be quite a scary thing and many people have conscious or sub conscious resistance and reservations to the experience. Unless those early disciples had willingly submitted to and eagerly embraced the life, energy and power of the Spirit, the early church would have been stillborn, dead in the womb. The sound of the mighty rushing wind from heaven was the noise created by the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the redeemed community, to establish them as the Church of the Living God.

The Holy Spirit is the essential, indispensable breath and life of the Church without which it is a lifeless corpse and NOT a true Church! On the Day of Pentecost, God breathed His Spirit (life) into the Church and it became the LIFE of the church. Having a Pentecostal theology and doctrine will never suffice. The raw power of the Spirit is absolutely essential.

A prophetic prediction of this is seen in the “life-ing” of Adam.

“And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living being.” (Gen 2:7)

Before God breathed into him, Adam was a lifeless form, created from the dust of the earth. After God breathed into him he became a living soul. So it is with the Church. Before Pentecost, the followers of Jesus were spiritually lifeless. He had commanded them to “*wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father.*” (Lk 24:49).

The Breath of God:

Jesus also “*breathed upon His disciples and said receive the Holy Ghost.*” (John 20:22)

N.B. His breath “infused into them” the Holy Spirit. This was a prophetic picture of what would happen in Jerusalem when they received the promise of the Father.

The Holy Spirit was the initiator of the New Covenant Church. Before His coming, the believers were not truly the Church. After His arrival they became the Church. He was the “first cause.” He is therefore an indispensable factor in the Church. Without His continuing presence as Lord, (2 Cor 3:17,18) a Church is not a true Church.

Without the Holy Spirit, the Church is a lifeless form, for His presence is actually the breath and life of it. Sadly, many professing Christians and their churches today, are just that, lifeless forms. They are like the people of whom Timothy spoke,

2 Tim 3:5. “having a form, (outward appearance, resemblance, likeness) of Godliness, but denying (disapproving, rejecting) the power (life, force, energy) thereof.”

Many churches today operate by programs, personalities and human administration, instead of the power of the Spirit. They have produced a religious doctrinal mould and encouraged believers to accept it intellectually and conform to it idealistically. **However, the Holy Spirit is the true life of the church without which it is clinically dead.**

Romans 8:9

You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) NLT

So it must be said of any church, “If a church, does not have the Spirit of God in it, it does not belong to Him.”

The presence and power of the Spirit may be expressed in many ways. He is a person of great varieties 1 Cor 12:4-7. His presence within a church may therefore be evidenced in many different ways. We ought not to narrow, limit or restrict His manifestations as long as they are Biblically authenticated and therefore legitimate.

Too many modern pastors are like the “foolish Galatians” (Gal 3:3) believing that something birthed by the Spirit can be continued and perfected in the flesh.

Galatians 3:2-3

2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? NKJV

The Holy Spirit, who initiated the church, is *absolutely indispensable* to its continuance. The true Church which was birthed by the arrival of the Holy Spirit cannot possibly be continued through human efforts. Every local church must realise and acknowledge that unless the Holy Spirit is given His proper place and authority, that Church can never grow up into the full purposes of God. The changes, indispensable to true spiritual growth, can never occur unless the Holy Spirit is acknowledged as the true Lord of the Church.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is (Lord) there is liberty. But we all, with open face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:17,18).

Several times in Acts, the disciples were said to be “filled” (Gk. *Pletho*) filled to a point of overflowing with the Holy Ghost. We are not completely filled unless we are overflowing. It is this overflow of the Spirit that energises ministry. When we minister “in the power of the Spirit” it is the overflow of the anointing by which we minister. Jesus said (John 7:37) that “rivers of living water would FLOW OUT from our bellies. (the area in which The Spirit resides, within our spirit) Preachers should always ensure they are filled with and anointed by the Holy Spirit to the point of overflow.

Without the LIFE of The Spirit, a church is simply a lifeless corpse.

The following inscription was found on the grave of a preacher in New England USA.

“Go tell the church that I am dead
But they should shed no tears.
For though I am dead, I am no more dead
Than they have been for years!”

The leadership of every church needs to ask itself honestly:-

Is the Holy Spirit truly present in our church, its programs and activities?

Is He truly Lord of all that is transpiring?

Does His life infuse and energise all its activities?

Are we truly more dependent on Him than anything or anyone else?

How may we truly know that He is Lord of our local church?

What can we do to ensure that He is truly Lord?

If the answers are not a resounding, unequivocal YES! We need to do some serious searching and repenting. If any power other than the Holy Spirit is the energising factor in the church, we need a change of attitude and direction.

2. The Church Was Birthed In A Prayer Meeting, Not A Board Meeting

“They all continued with one accord in fervent prayer.” (Acts 1:14a).

ALL the disciples were involved.

They CONTINUED (kept at it consistently) in prayer.

They were of ONE ACCORD. Acts 2:1; 4:32.

Their prayers were FERVENT. (earnest, fiery, passionate, glowing)

Earnest, fervent prayer is the finest way in which to declare our absolute dependence on God. Every time we stop to pray, we virtually say, “Lord, we need you, we are dependant on you, we can do nothing without you!” It is this acknowledgement, made in humility that keeps us meek enough for God to meet us and answer our prayers. Earnest prayer is prayed with passion, faith and expectation. It comes from the very depth of one’s being. It is not merely words that in themselves are weak and unproductive.

Following Christ’s ascension, the 120 disciples continued daily in prayer until the Feast of Pentecost. Their unity, expressed as one accord, was their united focus on seeking God and waiting for the promise of the Father, as predicted by Jesus. The room in which they gathered became saturated in anticipatory prayer. It was to this atmosphere that the Holy Spirit was drawn. First He filled all the room. Then He filled all the disciples.

Fervent, genuine, honest, united prayer will always attract the Holy Spirit, particularly if we are truly praying for a visitation of the Spirit. The

pathway to a fresh move of the Spirit begins not in the Board room, but in the prayer room.

Prayer for revival almost always precedes revival. It is very rare that the Holy Spirit is poured out on a people who are not seeking God in prayer with a desperate hunger for a fresh move of God's Spirit. We should always be praying, with David the Psalmist:-

*“Oh, revive us! Then your people can rejoice in you again.
Pour out your love and kindness on us, Lord, and grant us your
salvation.” Psalms 85:7 (Living Bible)*

Whilst the planning and strategising that typifies a Godly Board meeting is good and necessary, it can never take priority over or diminish the need for prayer. The spiritual growth of a church and the planting of new churches must always be born in and saturated with prayer. Fervent prayer is an absolutely indispensable feature of spiritual life and growth.

3. The Company Was Male And Female In Gender

“With the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers.” (Acts 1:14b)

In respect of the End Time outpouring, Joel specifically refers to “God's sons **and** daughters, His servants **and** handmaidens. Joel 2:28,29. Acts 2:17-21.

God obviously has a very specific place for women in His plan for the End Time harvest. The women were there in the upper room when the Spirit descended. They were amongst those who were filled with the Spirit. They were an integral part of the corporate company of those who became the universal church. As we have travelled around the world in recent years, we have been constantly impressed with the role that God has given to women, His handmaidens, in this great visitation and harvest. As God fulfils His Word and pours out the Former and the Latter Rain, both men **and** women are essential to the harvest of the Ages.

The type of male chauvinism that dominates much religious thinking is not scriptural but rather religious tradition. The kind of pride that accompanies it is injurious to and a hindrance to spiritual health, growth and progress.

*“For, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither is there slave nor free, there is **neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**” (Gal 3:28).*

4. The Church Was People, Not “Building Oriented.”

The early, New Testament church is symbolised by crowds of people, not by religious buildings or consecrated sites. Jesus had predicted:-

John 4:23-24

23 But the time is coming and is already here when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for anyone who will worship him that way.

24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” NLT

He also clearly foretold that in that hour (times) they would no longer go to a particular mountain (religious site) nor even to Jerusalem, (the Temple) but they would worship God in spirit and truth wherever they happened to be. For the Church is people, not buildings or “sacred” places.

The Church today, in much of the world, has become very building oriented. Many people even believe that “church” = a religious building. But the earliest church did not possess any buildings. Neither did their activities revolve around such.

The Early Church Was Clearly:-

Christ centred. Matt 18:20.

People oriented. Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15.

The public activities of the Church were evangelistic efforts to reach non-believers. Even the Temple had become a venue for evangelism for the new message concerning Jesus, His death and resurrection. Their houses became the venues in which they fellowshiped and disciplined the new believers in small groups.

During the reign of Emperor Constantine, in the fourth Century, Christianity was made the established religion of his empire. Under Constantine’s authority and influence, numerous pagan temples were appropriated for church use. This was the beginning of the Church’s obsession with buildings that later became known as “churches.” State funds were also used to erect huge, ornate buildings and to support the ecclesiastical hierarchy. At this time, the church began to become

building and clergy oriented but this was more due to the influence of Constantine than the instigation of the Holy Spirit.

God never intended the church to become so building bound. The true Church is NOT a building. It is a redeemed people. It was never intended that its activities should be hidden behind “sanctuary” walls. Christ died in a public place and God intended His death to be proclaimed in public places to the general population. The Gospel can only be said to be truly preached when it is proclaimed to the non-converted.

Sadly much of the Church today is still styled on the medieval Church model with its classic sanctuary style buildings. Almost all the “ministry” of this model takes place within the four walls of the sanctuary instead of amongst the population in the highways and bi ways. The Church has almost become a secret society. The early church functioned largely in the “market place.” Out where the people were. It confronted the public with the life and message of Jesus in a positive, altruistic manner. In the modern Church the gospel is preached largely to its own members and becomes a form of entertainment. The platform and pulpit “minister” to a captive, already convinced audience. Many Christians have become sermon critics while sitting idly in the pew.

6. A Multi - Member Ministry Team

*“But Peter, standing up **together with the eleven**, raised his voice and said to them, Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and listen to my words.” (Acts 2:14).*

The record is quite specific and the inference is clear. Peter was not a “one man band”. He was part of a ministry team. When he stood to preach, the whole team stood with him clearly signifying that this was not simply Peter’s view, it was the conviction of all the Apostles. They were an Apostolic team comprised of several different ministries and a variety of skills. God did not intend that Christianity be presented via a one man ministry for whom all the believers were to be an inactive audience.

The Church is represented as a body, consisting of many members, all varying in purpose yet all essential to the effectiveness of that body.

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so is Christ.” (1 Cor 12:12.)

No member of that body can say “I have no need of you.” (1 Cor 12:12-31).

Every member of Christ's Body (The Church) has a specific role and part to play. This is particularly true in respect of the healthy growth and development of the Body. Eph 4:16.

The modern style of church ministry is largely "clergy dominated." Frequently one person, named "the minister", assumes all responsibility for leadership. But this is not the biblical pattern. The original intention was for teams of ministries to work together and for whole congregations to become ministering bodies. The early Apostles functioned in "Apostolic bands" - teams of ministers working together.

7. Anointed, Prophetic And Inspirational Preaching

Although Peter's message was Bible based and theologically accurate it was preached in the anointing and power of the Spirit. He did not present a dry exposition, but a living, creative word. The effective dynamic of Peter's message may be assessed by the obvious, powerful impact it had on his listeners. Before he had opportunity to conclude his message the audience came under heavy conviction. They cried out to each other, "What shall we do?" Peter's sensitivity to the Spirit and to the situation the Spirit had created enabled him to bring the meeting to a profitable conclusion. Three thousand souls were saved in one meeting.

A Genuine, Anointed Message Will Always Move People To Action!

Consider some of the factors in the situation. Peter was freshly anointed, filled with the Holy Spirit and the power of God. Prior to this moment, he had actually denied Jesus three times. He had been obviously reticent to acknowledge his relationship to Christ. Now, filled with the Spirit, he boldly confronts a multitude with the Gospel and the claims of Christ. The Holy Spirit transformed and empowered him, filling him with boldness and authority. He "raised his voice" and boldly addressed the crowd. His preaching was obviously with great unction. He addressed the crowd in a challenging manner, clearly revealing exactly where they stood.

He preached straight from the scriptures, using them as the foundation of his message. The content of his sermon was strongly biblical. His approach was straight to the point, confrontational and challenging. The message had a prophetic content, revealing the implications of the words spoken by the prophets of God. He clearly established a rapport with his listeners that enabled him to persuade and convince them. His message, preached in the power of the Spirit, brought powerful conviction to the hearts of his audience. He included clear instructions with regard to

repentance. Repentance was the first word of the Gospel as proclaimed by Jesus. It is still undoubtedly the most important, indispensable word of an effective Gospel presentation.

Without true repentance no real foundation can be laid. He concluded with a clear and powerful appeal to which the crowd responded positively. In complete contrast the modern Church rarely issues a call to repentance. The respondents to Peter's message were followed up and properly cared for. They were integrated into a regular fellowship of house groups in which they received sound biblical teaching.

Indications:

1. Preachers should always prepare with adequate prayer.
2. They should always depend on the anointing of the Spirit more than anything else.
3. They should speak passionately forcefully and boldly in the Spirit.
4. They must address people clearly and simply.
5. Always give opportunity for people to make a response.

Peter presented a message containing plenty of solid, scriptural content but he obviously delivered it under a powerful anointing of the Spirit upon whom he clearly depended. Paul too, though obviously an intellectual, well educated person, clearly confessed his dependence on the power of the Spirit.

“And my speech and my preaching with not with persuasive words of men's wisdom, (intellectual argument) but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Cor 2:4.)

8. Conversional Obedience

*“What shall be the end of those who do not **OBEY** the Gospel of God?” (1 Pet 4:17).*

Genuine repentance is the first essential step in a process of salvation for the individual. The second step is complete submission and obedience to God and His Word. The Gospel is not only to be believed it is to be absolutely obeyed. This process is known as “conversional obedience,” a process, achieved over time, by which one is brought into alignment with the perfect Will of God for one's life and service through obedience to His will.

Personal salvation may begin at a precise and specific moment but the whole work of personal redemption is not wholly achieved at that moment. It usually requires persevering faith and total commitment to God to ultimately live the life that God desires. It may realistically be said that salvation is a process, initiated and continued by God.

“For it is God who works within you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Phil 3:13).

“He that has begun a good work in you will complete it until the Day of Christ.” (Phil 1:6).

1 Peter 2:2-3

2 You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk,

3 now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness. NLT

A person is “saved” the moment they repent, believe the Gospel and completely yield their life to God. But the full impact of that salvation is yet to be worked out in them. The process of being transformed into the image of Christ has commenced, but it is as we continually and consistently submit to His dealings and purposes in our lives that the process and desired result of full salvation is achieved. Obedience and submission are the keys to seeing God’s purposes fulfilled.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do (start and conclude) His good pleasure.” (Phil 2:12,13).

The Indispensible Importance Of Obedience

The original word means compliance, submission, attentive hearkening.

Romans 1:5-6

*5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for **obedience to the faith among all nations** for His name,*

6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; KJV

Romans 16:19-20

*19 **For your obedience has become known to all.** Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple*

concerning evil.

20 And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. NKJV

Romans 16:26

*26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **for obedience to the faith** NKJV*

2 Corinthians 7:15-16

*15 And his affections are greater for you as **he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.***

*16 **Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.** NKJV*

2 Corinthians 9:13

*13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for **the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,** NKJV*

2 Corinthians 10:5-6

*5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,***

6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. NKJV

Philemon 21-22

*21 **Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.** NKJV*

9. Real Life Transformations

“Repent, be baptised (in water) for the remission of your sins, and receive the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38)

The basic, foundational instruction that Peter gave was three fold.

REPENT. Turn completely around. Radically Change your thinking towards and about God.

BE BAPTISED. Bury your old life. Be done with it. Forget it! Move on into new life.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. Get your brand new life from God. Be a new creation.

True Christians are NEW CREATIONS

“If anyone be in Christ Jesus, they are a brand new creature. Old things pass away and behold all things become new.”

(2 Cor 5:17)

One of the true indications of a real visitation of the Spirit is the transformation of lives by the grace and power of God. Many lives in Jerusalem at that time were powerfully transformed, including those of the Apostles themselves. Peter was certainly powerfully changed. At a somewhat later date, Paul too became a symbol of a life radically transformed by the power of the risen Christ. His conversion would become a prophetic indication of the millions of lives that would later be changed and recreated by the Gospel.

When the message was later taken to the nations, it would bring freedom, redemption and transformation to all who believed and embraced it. When the Gospel is proclaimed, in the power of the Spirit, it will invariably bring people into God’s Kingdom. Even to this day, the Gospel’s trail has been followed by millions of people, from all nations and races, whose lives have been amazingly transformed.

10. Hunger For God And His Word. Acts 2:41.

An important feature of a new creature is an insatiable hunger after God. To know Him, be with Him, learn from Him and grow into His likeness. The redeemed person yearns for and hungers after God, His presence and His fellowship. Man was originally created with a heart for God.

Through the fall mankind was disconnected and separated from God but redemption restores his closeness and relationship. A further product of personal salvation is a hunger to hear God’s voice, including a strong desire for His Word. One obvious way to satisfy this is by reading and hearing God’s Words through the Bible and prayer. However, we must do more than merely read or even study them. Intellectual study of the Bible is not a substitute for a personal meeting with God. We must “eat and devour” His words. In so doing the Word literally becomes part of us. It is not merely intellectual, head knowledge. Its wisdom and power actually become part of our life force.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” (Matt 4:4).

It is God's Word within us, quickened by the Holy Spirit that increases our capacity and desire for God. The Bible is not God. It is a stepping stone by which we may reach God. Simply reading the Bible is not sufficient we must meet consistently with the author of the book.

The new believers continued steadfastly each day in the Word of God. Their hunger had been kindled by their new relationship to God through faith in the Messiah Jesus.

11. Contemporary Relevance

One of the important things we should recognise and remember about the Early church is that it was contemporary, i.e. "up to date" abreast of its times. Contemporary means, "co-existing harmoniously with its times." To be contemporary is to be abreast of and equal to the current times. Therefore, to be a New Testament church in the 21st Century, is to be a church that relates effectively to the 21st Century.

Too many churches have the idea that to be a New Testament church we must be antiquated and old fashioned. They believe that the old is more holy than the new. They cling to the culture of past generations, presuming that the old days were more holy and that old fashioned life styles are more spiritual than are contemporary ones. This may be true to some degree in that our modern world has largely forsaken the righteous standards of God. But it does NOT mean that we must cling on to the old fashioned culture of bygone generations because the people of those days were more moral and righteous.

It is abundantly possible to please God and truly walk in harmony with Him, yet be a modern minded, contemporary person or church. Many sincere Christians have a subconscious idea that God is an old fashioned, antiquated gentleman who lives in a manner befitting centuries past. They also believe that they too should be quaintly old fashioned in order to be like Him. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Godly persons do not have to be antiquated, old fashioned, and out of date, in order to be righteous and spiritual. Nor do churches. Churches need to be contemporary in their outreach in order to adequately and effectively communicate with their peers and their generation. One of the things that God appreciated about King David was his ability to relate, not only to His God, but to his own generation. God said of David, whom He called, "A man after my own heart"

“He served his (own) generation, according to the Will of God.” (Acts 13:36).

David knew God and understood His Will, but he also knew, understood and was thus able to serve, his own generation.

It was also said, of the sons of Issachar,
“They had an understanding (awareness, comprehension) of their times and of what Israel ought to do in the light of those specific times.” (1 Chronicles 12:32).

When Israel marched as a nation in the purposes of God, Issachar marched just behind Judah, the leading tribe other than Levi. The tribe of Issachar won God’s commendation because they marched in time with God AND with their generation. They marched, towards the head of the national column because they understood the Will of God for their time.

They marched in step with God and they kept pace with their generation. The church today should have one hand in God’s hand and the other in the hand of their generation. It must be contemporary in its perceptions and in its activities.

12. Cultural Authenticity

Although the crowds in Jerusalem were all Jews, and devout men, (Acts 2:5) they were also said to be “from every nation under heaven.” (i.e. from many parts of the world) They had returned to Jerusalem from every nation to which they had originally been scattered in the Dispersion. Obviously they had now been living in those nations for some time and would undoubtedly have adopted to some degree, various aspects of the culture of the lands in which they now lived. In many ways they were a cosmopolitan crowd, representing numerous cultures, yet the Gospel appealed to all of them.

Concerning the phrase, “having favour with all the people.” Acts 2:42, one translator renders it, “And the people liked what they saw!” There was something about the early church that appealed to and attracted persons from many varied cultures. Thus we learn that the church should have a multi-cultural appeal. It should not only appeal to one race, culture or people type. The grace of God manifested in and through the church should allow the church to appeal to more than one culture group. God is a God of variety. He created all the races. He redeemed all the races. His Gospel is for all nations. It must therefore be multi cultural in perception,

nature and appeal. The church can be multi-cultural because the Kingdom of God is supra cultural. It embraces and supersedes all human cultures.

13. Supra Cultural Life Style

Although the church should be multi-cultural, it must also be supra-cultural inasmuch as the Kingdom of God confronts and challenges the principles and standards of every other culture. As citizens of God's Kingdom, we adopt the culture of our new citizenship. We relate to God's laws and principles above and before the culture of our human ethnicity. Our Kingdom loyalties must be prioritised above and always supersede our ethnic identities. For example, I am not an "Australian Christian", but rather a "Christian Australian". My Christian loyalty should supersede national, cultural and ethnic identity. I should be more easily recognised as a Christian, than as an Australian.

In Acts 2:40, Peter labelled the world culture as a perverse (crooked) generation and exhorted the new believers to separate (distance) themselves from it. Those who are Christ's should be delivered from the mind set and ways of the perverse generations of which they were part and join themselves to Christ, His likeness and His Kingdom. As someone has wisely said, "We are in this world, but not OF this world." As citizens of God's Kingdom our lifestyles and behaviour should daily demonstrate the reality of His rule and the superiority of His life.

14. Discipleship Making. Acts 2:42

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

This verse describes a process of discipleship making.

The new believers were :-

Repentant.

Water baptised.

Spirit filled.

Hungry for the Word of life which they "received gladly."

Associated with the Apostles.

Sought to emulate their life style.

Became partners in the Koinionia. (Fellowship)

Ate covenant meals together.

Prayed together in one accord.

Held all things in common.

Sacrificed to share with needier saints.

Attended daily house gatherings.

Continually Praised God.

15. Enjoyed Favour With God And Local Population.

This regular, daily routine to which the believers gave themselves, under the guidance and authority of the Apostles, was a formula for reproducing disciples. It was part of the regular practise of the Early Church and should be established in every church today. It was one of the reasons why, when the believers were later scattered by persecution, all of them were able to share the Word of God and spread the revival. Acts 8:4. They had all been discipled, trained, and prepared to share the Gospel wherever they might be.

The New Testament dynamic of the early church did not isolate or insulate the church from its local community. Jesus had favour with God and man (Luke 2:52) and the church should too. It was also the reason why men like Phillip and Stephen qualified to become deacons, Acts 6:5, and still later become preachers and evangelists.

Every local church should be a training centre where believers are prepared for the works of the ministry.

16. Genuine Respect And Reverence For God. Acts 2:43.

“Then fear (of God) came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles.”

Fear is mentioned five times in Acts in connection with the church. In each case the same Greek word “*phobos*” (G4501) is used. It means “to be fearfully afraid” “to hold in reverent awe.”

On three occasions it is said of the Christians. 2:43; 5:11; 9:31.

On two occasions it refers to the surrounding population. 5:5; 19:17.

From This We May Deduce:-

When the Church (Christians) truly fear the Lord, their community will begin to fear Him too.

If the church does not have a fear of God, how can we ever expect the surrounding community to fear Him?

It was when the believers “feared the Lord” that MANY signs and wonders were done by the Apostles. Acts 2:43.

The fear of the Lord does not mean to be afraid of Him. It means to stand in awe of Him with proper respect and reverence. The fear of the Lord is not a popular theme today. It is rarely ever preached on or taught. However is still a very valid and scriptural requirement. It may be

precisely because some churches do not have it that many signs and wonders do not occur among them.

The Bible has much to say on this subject, all of it is relevant and required. For the sake of time and space let us just leave one verse:-

“The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom. And the Knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” Proverbs 9:10.

If the Fear of the Lord is only the beginning of wisdom, how much true wisdom does a person possess who has no fear of God? There is a great difference between being afraid of God, and respecting Him.

Exodus 20:20

“Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." (NIV)

God had no desire to frighten His people. He did not want them to be afraid of Him but He definitely wanted them to revere and respect him. Fear of God is for our good.

17. Communal Concern And Sharing. Acts 2:44, 45.

“Now all who believed were together and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need.”

The new believers quickly developed a benevolent attitude. They no longer considered anything they owned as their own personal, private possession but as belonging to their Lord and His kingdom. They developed a selfless, compassionate and generous attitude towards all other believers.

Many of the members of that early church were not natives of Jerusalem. They had come there for a brief visit to keep the Feast of Pentecost. Most had undoubtedly budgeted for only a short stay. However, once they became involved in the church they remained in Jerusalem to receive as much teaching and grounding as possible. Obviously this created many unexpected financial needs for food and accommodation etc. Their fellow believers quickly rallied to help them with those needs. They liberally shared their homes and goods, distributing to every family as they had need.

18. Social And Economic Concern

Their generous liberality did not apply only to those within their local community. They also began to send funds to help in crises such as famines, in various other places. (Acts 11:27-30)

It was partly this benevolent, altruistic economic attitude in the church that caused the people to say, “These men are turning the world upside down.”

The usual attitude of mankind is “every man for himself” but the church cared for the needs of others too. The compassionate concern and economic generosity practised by the early church astounded the world who had never witnessed such love and care for others. Such selflessness, compassion and generosity were without precedent. It was a characteristic that attracted and impressed everyone who saw it.

19. Kingdom Life Style

The Greek word, Koinonia, that is translated “Fellowship” is also the word for partnership and may be used for either marriage or business partnerships. The example of a marriage partnership is a very succinct one because a true marriage partnership affects every aspect of the whole lives of the partners. Marriage and family life are matters that demand our whole care and attention throughout our lifetime. Marriage is not a past time or a hobby, it is a whole way of life. The true Church is both a community and a culture. Christianity is not just something we do on Sundays. The early church functioned daily. It was a seven day a week, full time occupation.

One of the tragedies of modern Christianity, particularly in the West, is that Christianity has often been slotted in to a convenient corner of one’s life. It is almost like a religious hobby rather than an all absorbing life style. This is in complete contrast to many religions, e.g. Islam, Hinduism etc which are not merely religious persuasions but whole ways of life. Consequently converts to Christianity often find it extremely difficult to relate to a Faith that does not totally absorb them into a complete lifestyle. This becomes particularly difficult when a convert is forced out of their former community, renounced by family, friends and associates, and find themselves without a similar community in their new found Faith.

20. Community Outreaches. Acts 2:46; 3:1-10 - A Church Without Walls

The church did not hide itself away from the world. It did not practise its activities within a “sanctuary” protected from the gaze and awareness of the general population. The disciples regularly went out into the wider community and brought the Good News of Jesus to the poor, dispossessed and needy. Modern church buildings are extremely convenient in many ways but they can tend to isolate Christians from their communities. Many people feel uncomfortable to enter a church building but will enter a place that is more accessible and public. Churches need to arrange more activities in mutually accessible and acceptable venues.

Taking The Middle Ground

There are numerous places that are neutral ground inasmuch as both Christians and non-Christians feel comfortable to frequent them. Some examples might be public parks, shopping centres, beaches etc. These constitute a middle ground between Christians and the world of non-believers. The church should take advantage of such places, taking the middle ground for the Kingdom of God. Using neutral venues to meet and befriend people and present Christ in a non threatening and winsome manner.

21. Regular House Meetings And Communal Meals

“Breaking bread (sharing hospitality and fellowship) from house to house and eating their food with gladness and sincerity of heart.” (Acts 2:46).

Many of the church’s activities were conducted in house meetings. These locations were spread throughout Jerusalem, penetrating the population areas of the city and radiating the influence of the church more widely. Such smaller gatherings are ideal for the growth of new believers and for attracting many new people. The atmosphere is much less formal than that of a traditional church. The ethos is usually much friendlier. The average person will feel much more relaxed in such circumstances.

In addition, they were able to develop in their relationships more readily. In the Middle East sharing meals was much more significant than in the West. Meals were a point of social contact and commitment. Inviting someone to your home for a meal constituted an offer of relationship. Certain communal meals were central to making a social covenant with a person or family. Thus, through house meetings and communal meals, the greater body of believers were able to get to know each other better and

enter into responsible commitment one with another. In this manner the believers were knit together in mutual respect and trust.

Communal meals were also an important aspect of making and celebrating covenant. The early believers were not only in covenant with God, they were in covenant with each other. The fellowship into which they were joined was a true partnership, (Koinonia) into which every party was accepted by covenant commitment. Through regular communal meals they confirmed and strengthened their mutual loyalty.

22. Wide Spread Public Approval. Acts 2:47.

“They worshiped together regularly at the Temple each day, and met in small groups in homes for Communion, and shared their meals with great joy and thankfulness, praising God. The whole city was favorable to them, and each day God added to them all who were being saved.”
(Acts 2:47 Living)

The members of the early church, individually and corporately, conducted their lives and affairs in such a manner that non-believers became envious of them. One translator says of Acts 2:47, “The people liked what they saw.” They appreciated and admired the life style of the Christians. The members lived in such a way that their life patterns intrigued and attracted the outsiders and won wide spread approval. It is a mistake to think that if the church is functioning righteously it will **always** attract opposition. Jesus Himself experienced wide spread approval during much of His ministry. It is recorded, of his earlier years, that an aspect of his growth included “social favour.”

“And Jesus grew in wisdom (mental) and stature, (physical) in favour with God (spiritual) and with man.” (social) (Luke 2:52).

We also read of Jesus that,

“...the common people heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37.).

The Greek word used for common, “*polus*” conveys the idea that the people were common because they were more numerous, i.e. in the majority. Thus the scripture could read, “the majority of the people heard Him gladly.”

If Jesus won such approval from the majority of people, and His life, grace and power is evidenced in His redeemed people, then they should also win the approval of many people. Their lives, lived in integrity and compassion, should prove attractive and win people to Christ and His

Kingdom. Non-Christians today may find many faults with the church, but Jesus Himself remains without fault. The unspoken attitude of many today is, “Church? - No! Jesus? - Yes! The more Christ-like a local church becomes, the more likely it is to receive the favour and approval of the local populace.

23. Persecution

It is also true that the church has often known opposition and persecution. This is true through most of its history. Jesus frequently predicted that, “In the world you will have tribulation.” John 16:33. The Bible also says,

*“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
(2 Tim 3:12 KJV)*

Much of church history is stained with the blood of martyrs. In fact someone has said that “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” Many of God’s finest saints have finally become martyrs for their faith. Nor is this a historic phenomena for this twentieth century has witnessed literally millions of martyrdoms even to this present day. The church of the twentieth Century has suffered more martyrdoms than at any previous part of church history.

The natural mind would tend to think that the prospect of martyrdom would be a huge deterrent to conversion. In fact the opposite has often been true. The greater the pressure and persecution, the greater has been the growth of the church. In those areas of our world where the church has been heavily persecuted including harassment, imprisonment, torture and death, the church has been healthier, more committed and more effective. The church appears to thrive in situations of opposition and persecution.

However, there were also times when the church enjoyed great favour from the local community as in Acts 2:47. This is something the church should pray and believe for. Pray that the local church will be so Christ-like in its attitudes and activities that the surrounding community will “hear them gladly.”

24. Powerful Praise And Worship. Acts 2:47

Praise was an outstanding feature of the early church. They were a praising community. Their hearts and voices were constantly filled with the high praises of the Lord.

Praise undoubtedly releases positive energy and power into the atmosphere and ethos of a place. King David actually said that the high praises of the saints “binds kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron.” (Psalm 149:8) He also said that high praise is as a two edged sword. (Psalm 150:6,8.) There is obviously tremendous power in praise.

But Praise to God is not only spoken words, it is a lifestyle. Our very lives and the manner in which we conduct ourselves should speak volumes of praise to God to the people who observe us day by day. Praise is the way we conduct ourselves in our places of employment. It is the honesty and integrity we display in our every day activities. We bring praise to God when we help our neighbour in their time of trouble.

Much of the praise and worship in which we engage is done behind closed doors, hidden from the view of men. But the early church praised God in the market place, causing bystanders to say that they heard the first disciples “speaking the wonderful works of God” into the ears of the public.

Please understand that congregational praise and worship is extremely valid, precious to God and powerful in its results. It is also an extremely vital part of our love and service to God. Engaging in such worship actually impacts powerfully upon our spiritual enemies. It also releases dynamic spiritual energy to greatly damage the strongholds of Satan.

25. Holy Spirit Prayer Meetings. Acts 3:31.

It was in a prayer meeting that the church was birthed. Acts 1:14, and it was in prayer meetings that the blessing and power increased and multiplied. Holy Spirit inspired prayer is essential to the continuing move of God’s Spirit.

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken: and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31).

It Was In Such Prayer Meetings That Believers Were

Filled (again) with the Holy Spirit.

Received boldness to speak the Word of God.

Saw things shaken by the power of God.

Fervent corporate prayer with one accord, fans the flames of revival and keeps it blazing.

Prayer is to revival as fuel is to a fire. Unless we constantly replenish the fuel the fire will eventually expire. So with a move of God's Spirit, we should constantly replenish it with fervent, earnest, genuine prayer.

26. Daily Additions To The Church. Acts 2:47.

To this remarkable, first century church, God added daily those who were being saved. If we would wish Him to do the same to our church, we need to fully emulate that church that He established in Jerusalem. We must conduct our church in complete harmony with the pattern of the early church.

We must pray as they did. Acts 1:14; 4:31.

We must live in one accord. Acts 2:1; 4:32.

We must be constantly filled with the Spirit. Acts 4:31.

We must evidence the fruit of Christ's Spirit. Acts 2:40-47.

We must go public with the proclamation of the Gospel. Acts 2:14.

We must pull in the Gospel net. Acts 2:38,39.

We must care for and disciple the converts. Acts 2:42.

We must be a praising people. Acts 2:47.

24. Multitudes believed. Acts 4:32.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Lord added to the church.(Acts 2:47) More believers were added later. Acts 5:14; 11:24.

But a further mathematical factor was introduced when He began to multiply the number of disciples. Acts 6:1,7. This caused an accelerated growth in the churches through which multitudes of believers were added. (Acts 5:14)

The Gospel was meant to reach the multitudes of mankind. It was never intended to be a small, isolated sect hidden behind the walls of some church sanctuary. The early Apostles and their disciples went public. They went to the masses and fearlessly proclaimed a Gospel that was attested by God through mighty signs and (supernatural) miracles.

The early church was not hidden in a corner, it was out on main street, announcing salvation through faith in Jesus to the multitudes and multitudes were convinced, believed and were added to the church. Unfortunately, after some years, the evangelistic fervour and mighty impact began to diminish. At times the voice of the church was almost silenced, yet God retained a witness in the earth. He also predicted a tremendous revival in the Last Days that would occasion a tremendous harvest when once again, great multitudes of believers would be added to the church.

Chapter Three

The Dark Ages

Sadly, the fire and fervour of the early church began to wane and decline during the 3rd Century. Before that time it had spread rapidly throughout the then known world creating a powerful beneficial influence that would never be erased. Numerous factors were responsible for this diminishment. Those same factors still affect many aspects of our contemporary church. It is imperative for us to face, acknowledge and address these issues if we seriously want to return to the true New Testament pattern.

1. Severance From Its Root System

Initially, the church was wholly comprised of Jews. Its initiation in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, a Jewish Feast, constituted the grafting in of the church as a wild olive branch into the root and fatness of Israel. (Rom 11:17,18)

“But some of these branches from Abraham's tree, some of the Jews, have been broken off. And you Gentiles who were branches from, we might say, a wild olive tree, were grafted in. So now you, too, receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in God's rich nourishment of his own special olive tree.”

(Romans 11:17 Living Bible)

It is surely sobering for Christians to realize that God refers to the Gentiles as a “wild olive branch” grafted into Israel’s cultivated root and trunk. Ten chapters of church history pass before the major grafting began to be initiated. It was not until Acts 15 that the Jerusalem council met to discuss how to assimilate the new Gentile believers into the still predominantly Jewish church. In the years that followed, history was reversed, as the increasingly dominated Gentile church began to erase its Jewish roots.

The New Testament is not meant to be a denial or substitute of the Old. It is the completion of it! Everything we have as Christians has come to us through Christ and His Jewish brethren. Israel is the root and trunk into which the Gentile branches were grafted. It was through that root and trunk system that the vital nourishment flowed.

*“Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the priesthood service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers **and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.**”*
(Rom 9:4,5).

An important factor of the church’s diminishing was the conscious, deliberate alienation of Christianity from its Jewish roots through the change in the membership of the church that took place by the end of the 2nd century. At that point, Christians with Gentile backgrounds began to outnumber Jewish Christians.

Sadly, the church gradually began to move away from, and later to deny their Jewish origins. The deliberate abandonment of Jewish roots and traditions, which for the most part were Biblically based, created a huge vacuum in church life that demanded to be filled with something. The vacuum thus created left room for the adoption of many new innovations, many of which were actually pagan in origin. Christmas and Easter, both originally pagan festivals, are two of the more obvious examples of this. Unfortunately many other influences were accepted too, most of which were Hellenistic (Greek) in origin. These included the prominence of intellectualism and Greek philosophy and culture.

Just as a plant, severed from its root system, will soon wither and die, so the church, when separated from its true roots began to wither up. Throughout ensuing church history a theological position has been held by many that relegates “the natural branches” to an irrelevant status. To them, the church is the new Israel and the original (true) Israel is only a fact of history.

2. Intellectualism And Philosophy

At its origin, Christianity was a heart experience and an oral tradition. The Good News of Christ’s resurrection spread from mouth to ear. Ironically, the early New Testament church did not possess a written copy of the New Testament. Obviously the Apostles began to substantiate their claims by showing that the Jewish Scriptures had foretold the events of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. They substantiated and authenticated the Gospel by the writings of the prophets. Succeeding generations of Christian leaders also began to interpret the Faith by the writings and thoughts of others.

Since only the scholars were truly literate in those days the tasks fell largely to the intellectuals among them many of whom were strongly

Hellenistic in their views. The growing influence of these scholars emphasized the importance of intellectual scholarship. They became the authoritative voice, the theologians of their day. Through their influence the Gospel moved away from its original simplicity and its experiential nature, assuming the posture of a philosophy instead.

When differing interpretations of the Christian message arose, official church councils during the 300s and 400s produced definitive formulations of basic doctrines, which are still accepted by most Christians. Unfortunately many of these decisions were powerfully influenced by the Hellenistic views held by many of the theologians.

The prominence of the Septuagint, (Greek Bible) and the influence of many scholars in Hellenistic Alexandria, pulled the church even further into the influence of Greek thought and philosophy.

These influences transferred dependence on the Holy Spirit, to a dependence upon the natural, intellectual skills of human acumen. It also introduced a new value placed on education and learning although the early Apostles were mainly unlettered and ignorant men who relied on the Holy Spirit:-

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realised that these men had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13).

If anyone in the early Church was capable of speaking with the with *“persuasive words of human wisdom”* it was Paul, who having received the finest education of all the disciples, chose not to exercise his human knowledge and wisdom but rather to rely wholly on the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the sad facts about the Church today is that many who call themselves ministers, rely upon their intellectual and academic training and ability rather than on the power of God. The inevitable result is that the faith of those to whom they preach is founded on the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God. Their teachers may be proud of their academic degrees but their people are often dying by degrees.

The authority and effectiveness of the early Apostles came not from human wisdom or higher learning, but from the fact that they had so evidently been with Christ imbibing His Spirit. Today the priority of the Church is often on academic learning and achievement rather than spiritual maturity and anointing. There is nothing inherently wrong with education and learning as long as one does not depend on it for the

effectiveness of one's ministry. To replace natural knowledge and skills for the anointing of the Spirit is a futile exercise and an insult to the Holy Spirit.

Many Christians today have accepted a philosophy or doctrine rather than receiving a powerful indwelling person. They have become like the people that Paul described, who had an outward appearance of godliness while denying the true power of it.

2 Timothy 3:4-5

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. NKJV

It is not an intellectual knowledge about Christ that saves us nor a correct doctrine. It is the experiential reception of Him that sets us free from our own sinful nature and enables us to live a victorious life through the power of Christ within.

One great difference between Jesus and many modern preachers was that Jesus took the most profound subjects and made them simple and easy to understand, while modern preachers take the simplest subjects and make them so complicated that nobody understands them!

3. A Clergy/Laity System

It was at this time that new systems of hierarchy were introduced into the church including ordination of clergy as distinct from and superior to the laity. This concept was further refined in ensuing years until a great gulf existed between the "priesthood and the people."

Ordination was required for the performance of all aspects of ministry, relegating the lay people to a passive role of virtual non-involvement. This system has robbed the church of the massive potential that lies in the body of the church, the Body of Christ.

It was these very "lay" people who actually spread the Gospel so widely in its earliest days. Only the Apostles remained in Jerusalem, the remainder of the church was scattered abroad.

"Therefore, those (the laos) who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." (Acts 8:4).

4. Political Compromise

The Emperor Constantine the Great decided to officially endorse the new religion. His favour assured the church a privileged place in society. In 330 Constantine moved the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, which he renamed Constantinople. The emperor at Constantinople held a special place in the life of the church. It was he, for example, who presided over the general councils of the church.

This new relationship afforded the church a legal protection and sense of security but was it was not without cost. True allegiance to both Constantine and Christ were impossible. No man can serve two masters! Conforming to the requirements and expectations of Constantine made it impossible to fully obey Christ too.

Many devout Christians began to feel that standards of Christian conduct were being lowered and that the only way to obey the moral imperatives of Christ was to flee the world.

5. Liaison Of Church And State

In the era of the Early Church it clashed repeatedly with various State bodies over the delineation of their respective spheres of authority. However, after the advent of Emperor Constantine, the church adopted a new attitude towards political authorities. It welcomed its overtures of reconciliation but compromised its standards in order to do so. The church became subservient in many ways to the dictates of the State.

6. Monasticism, Contemplation And Isolation

One result of this was the rise of Christian monasticism which began in the Egyptian desert and spread to many parts of the Christian empire during the 300s and 400s. Christianity was never intended to be practised in isolation. Monasticism made the practise of Christianity distinctly introvert and insular. It was driven into itself instead of launching out into the wider world. This resulted in a severe slowing down of the evangelistic program as launched by Jesus and the early church. It also robbed the church of initiative and influence.

Monastic contemplation isolated the church from the real world. The ecclesiastical leaders became “other worldly” and unrealistic. They lived in a dream world, completely separated from the reality and trials of the real world. The monks lived out their days in religious isolation fashioning a lifestyle inherently unsuited to the rigors and problems of the masses.

Many of the innovations that were embraced during this isolation were obviously adopted as replacements of earlier spiritual activities. For example monastic chants probably replaced “singing in the Spirit” or the “spiritual songs” mentioned by Paul. Eph 5:18,19. Various liturgies replaced the more spontaneous worship evidenced in the Corinthian church. The church became more sacramental in its orientation adopting colourful forms and ceremonies to replace “the glory” that was departing.

7. Religious Ritual And Symbolism

The simple spirituality of the early church soon become overlaid with religious ritual. Unfortunately, much of that ritual was imported from pagan religions complete with various icons and symbols. Many of the simple ordinances that Christ commanded became complicated with the addition of sacramental adornments. This was particularly true in the Eastern world where the plain truth of the Gospel was over embellished with pageantry and imagery including icons.

8. Institutionalism

Unfortunately the numerical growth and spread of the church, plus many other humanistic influences, led to the adoption of institutionalism. The need for organisation often does this and it is not necessarily a problem or a bad thing in respect of businesses and secular organisations. However, the church is not an organisation, it is an organism. Institutionalism represents human organisation that becomes centralised, humanly governed, regimented and legalised. It tends to rule by popular vote and the will of the people. The church of Laodicea is a sad image of what this can produce.

Whereas, in contrast, the early church was simplistic, virile, mobile, flexible and adaptable.

9. Moral Laxity Instead Of Holiness

The changed practises of Christianity from aggressive evangelism to monastic type introversion, plus the institutionalisation of the church and the exaltation of so called “princes” within the church, led to sensual excesses that in turn gave rise to carnal and licentious living. The priesthood which was a law unto itself, engaged in every kind of selfish indulgence, introducing grave moral laxity into the church

The Dark Ages

The increasingly carnal nature of the church produced spiritual darkness instead of light, and plunged the whole world into a period of gross darkness, depression and unenlightenment that became known

historically as The Dark Ages. Throughout this entire period the light of the church glowed very dimly, failing to illuminate the world. Creativity and progress was almost non-existent and the world became a sad example of a people without the light of God.

The decreasing light of the church for many years brought a darkness to humanity that was unprecedented. It affected every area of life throughout the Western world. The worst period lasted from approximately 450AD to 1,000 AD. This was a sad period of profound spiritual and moral darkness. As a result, many people became hungry to re-discover God. This spiritual unrest resulted in the 16-century Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation

Fourteenth-century English reformer John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English to make it available to common people. He also preached in English, rather than Latin making the Gospel available and understandable to the common masses. John Wycliffe's influence in birthing the Reformation is without comparison.

He was variously known as the "Morning Star of the Reformation" and the "Father of the English Reformation." His followers, known as "Bible men" were the forerunners of the non-conformist, protestant churches. Wycliffe's influence was greatly increased through these men. His methods, powerfully instrumental in birthing the Reformation of his time should be carefully noted for their use could also precipitate a new reformation in our day.

Obviously many other powerful figures became influential in the process of reformation. However, John Wycliffe is generally perceived as the "Father of the Reformation" and his life and ministry undoubtedly laid the foundation and established the direction of it.

John Wycliffe was undoubtedly a man of powerful personal conviction founded upon the truths of the Bible.

The Birth Of Lutheranism

The greatest contribution that Luther made to the Reformation was undoubtedly due to the powerful revelation he received of "Justification by Faith." This revelation is foundational to the restoration to the church of the true Gospel. It is also a sad fact that although Luther became a pillar of the Protestant Church, he also became a vehement critic of all Jews. Initially, he had sought to win Jews to faith in Jesus but when they

began to resist his overtures he turned against them and became a fierce and aggressive opponent of them. It was actually his ostracism and libelous hatred of the Jews that encouraged Adolf Hitler to order the deaths of six million Jews in the concentration camps of Europe. This particular aspect of Luther's life must be shunned and denounced by every Christian. The true Church is actually a succession of Judaism.

The Dawn of Protestantism

Protestantism was welcomed in the Netherlands and Scotland, where the movement was used as a vehicle for national self-determination and independence. In Scotland, as in other countries, the Reformation originated among elements of the population already hostile to the Roman Catholic Church. Scottish reformer John Knox led the actual revolution and established Calvinism as the national religion of Scotland. In England, many people did not consider the Church of England sufficiently reformed. They eventually formed Calvinist sects such as the Presbyterians, Puritans, Separatists, and Quakers.

Some Results Of The Reformation

In the 1600s and 1700s it became evident that Christianity would be obliged to define and to defend itself in response to the rise of modern science and philosophy. The increasing secularization of society removed the control of the church from areas of life, especially education, over which it had once been dominant. The gradual separation of church and state represented a departure from a system that had held sway since the conversion of Constantine the Great.

The Reformation was but one step in God's program to restore His church. Following this came numerous other times of restoration including the great Wesleyan Revival (18th Century) that culminated eventually in the Pentecostal Revival of the early 1900's and later the world wide Charismatic Revival that began in the early 1950's.

Just as God did not intend His people to stop at the revelation He gave to Martin Luther, or Wesley, neither does he desire His church to remain at the wells of Pentecost. He wants His people to keep moving forward in revival increments until we experience the Former and Latter rain together as He predicted in Joel 2. The greatest transformation of the Church will occur when the prophecies of Joel are fulfilled. Particularly the prophecy in Joel 2.

Joel 2:23-24

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you — The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month.

24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. NKJV

God is going to pour out His Spirit upon ALL FLESH. This will initiate a world wide harvest of greater proportion than ever before.

Joel 2:28-29

28 "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. NKJV

The outpouring that occurred on the Day of Pentecost came upon 120 disciples as they waiting obediently for the fulfilment of Christ's promise. Three thousand people entered the Kingdom of that day and many thousands more in the ensuing months. However, when the next promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit happens as predicted in Zechariah 12:10, a whole nation will be transformed. This great event will initiate the greatest harvest ever bringing multitudes into the Kingdom.

Revelation 7:14-17

Then he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white.

15 That is why they are standing in front of the throne of God, serving him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will live among them and shelter them.

16 They will never again be hungry or thirsty, and they will be fully protected from the scorching noontime heat.

17 For the Lamb who stands in front of the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away all their tears." NLT

Chapter Four

The Church Of The Future

In this study, we are briefly considering the church as existing in three time periods.

- 1 The Early church of the New Testament. (Early 1st Century)
- 2 The Middle Ages church of the dark ages.
- 3 The present church. (Late 20th and early 21st Century)

The church of the Middle Ages can **NEVER** be a model for the church of the future! It was not fashioned “according to the Biblical pattern.”

The Bible predicts that in the last days, prior to the return of Christ, there will be a glorious restoration to the church of all that the prophets foretold. The prophets also predicted a joining of Jew and Gentile believers.

Acts 3:19-21

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you-- even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.”(NIV)

Ephesians 2:14-16

*For He (Christ) Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,
15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, **so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,**
16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. NKJV*

A Return To Our Roots

Acts 3:21, predicts a Last Day return to our spiritual origins. Returning to one's roots usually infers going back to one's origins. In this respect, the Church actually has no roots. Rather it is portrayed as a branch that is grafted on to an already existing tree and its root system. The promise of the universal Church was originally made to Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-3)

Romans 11:17

17 But some of these branches from Abraham's tree, some of the Jews, have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, were grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in God's rich nourishment of his special olive tree. NLT

We are further told that that if God was able to successively graft Gentiles on to a tree that was not their own, surely He is able to re-graft the Jewish branches He had removed back on to their own tree and this He will ultimately do.

Romans 11:24

24 For if God was willing to take you who were, by nature, branches from a wild olive tree and graft you into his own good tree — a very unusual thing to do — he will be far more eager to graft the Jews back into the tree where they belong. NLT

The roots and origin of the Church is obviously Hebraic and when the promised restoration of the Church occurs it will be a restoration to Hebraic roots.

The Messiah's Commission To Messiah

Isaiah 49:6

6 He says, "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." NLT

The initial phase of Messiah's commission was to bring the people of Israel back to God. This was also the initial commission to the disciples, to take His message to the house of Israel. (Matthew 10:6, 15:24) Surely this is also the commission of the Church!

The scriptures foretell a time, in the last days, when the attention of the whole world will be focussed upon Jerusalem and Israel. Zech 12:2,3. There will be a world wide antipathy towards Israel culminating in a huge military attack on her.

"All nations of earth are gathered against it." (Jerusalem) (Zech 12:3).

At that time every Christian and every church will be forced to declare their position regarding relationship to Israel. The situation will be so critical that no one on earth will be able to remain neutral. The political,

religious, military and economic might of the nations will be ranged against Israel. No one will be exempt from making a firm decision on the future of Israel. The true church will then take an uncompromising stand with Israel. This will undoubtedly divide Christendom, separating the true church from the false. To stand against Israel at this time will be to stand against God for He will be fighting in their behalf.

True Christians, brethren of Jesus, will not be able to ignore or neglect His brethren "after the flesh." Rom 9:5. This period of world tension and crisis will not end until God personally intervenes on Israel's behalf and in the process reveals Himself as the crucified Messiah. Zech 12:8 -10.

The Repentance Of Israel

Zechariah 12:7-10

8 In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.

9 It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. NKJV

Several Powerful Things Are Predicted Here

1. Jerusalem will be attacked by all her near neighbours.
2. God will fight against and destroy the nations that attack Israel.
3. He will pour out, on the Israelites, the spirit of grace and supplication.
4. Their national spiritual blindness will be healed.
5. They will recognise Messiah as a first born and only son.
6. Israel will mourn for Him as for a firstborn son.

He will then, (Zech 13: 1,2)

Open a fountain in the House of David, for sin and uncleanness.

Cleanse the land of idols and unclean spirits.

Principles Of Restoration

Acts 3:19-21

"Repent therefore and be converted,(changed) that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all

things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” (NKJ)

These verses in Peter’s second sermon are clearly prophetic and eschatological (referring to the End Times). They predict a “Restoration of all things spoken by the prophets” associated with the return of Christ. Peter clearly states that the heavens must retain Jesus Christ, until those “times of restoration”.

Restoration will then precede, accompany and follow Christ’s return. Christ’s return will occur in the midst of a time of refreshing and revival. It will also be a time rife with satanic deception and antagonism. The refreshing restoration will be happening prior to His return. His actual return will augment and accelerate the revival. Once He comes, He will instigate a lot more change.

Prophetic Church contrasted with the modern Church. It will be:-

Church Of The Future	Church Of The Present
Simple Structure	Sophisticated Organization
Spiritually Experiential	Intellectual Emphasis
Kingdom of Priests	Clergy/Laity
Operational Training Centre	Audience based
Into the community	Hidden in the sanctuary
Supernatural activities	Humanistic programs
Kingdom oriented	Church oriented

First Century Power, Twenty First Century Relevance

The times of restoration will restore the Church to its original power and glory in order to accomplish the work of gathering in the End Time harvest. The restoration will be to a Church comparative to the first century Church, but it will be a 21st Century Church. Its purity, power and effectiveness will be as the early church, but its relevance and appeal will be to the 21st century world. It will be a “Tabernacles Church”, compared to the “Pentecost church” of the Acts of Apostles.

It will have the power dynamic of the 1st century church but a contemporary relevance to the 21st century. It will bridge the gulf between the centuries of church history. The early church was a contemporary (up-to-date) model relevant to its day. The 21st century church must be contemporary and relevant to it’s day.

As a necessary preparation for this restoration, the contemporary church must return to certain principles that were an integral part of the early church.

The path to that restoration follows a certain direction. (Acts 3:19-21)

1. Repentance: “metenoia”, A dynamic change of mind, and perspective.
2. Conversion: A transforming change of direction and purpose.
3. Release from the past. “sins blotted out”. Phil 3:15. “*Forgetting those things that are behind*”.
4. “Times of refreshing” from the face (*prosopon*) of the Lord.
5. A fresh move of the Spirit.
6. “Times of restoration” of all things spoken by the prophets.
7. The return of Christ from heaven.

This scripture presents five sources of transforming power for the Christian.

1. Repentance Means Change Your Mental Attitude

Repentance has assumed very religious connotations such as Weeping, Crying out, Begging forgiveness, Sackcloth and ashes, Self humiliation, Self condemnation, Seriousness, Sombreness, Downcast, Sad, Legalism.

But *Metanoia*: (The Greek word for repentance) has many, other than religious connotations and applications. It means to reconsider. Think and act differently afterwards. Change your mental attitude. Undergo a Radical change of mind. Embrace a brand new perspective. To make an “About turn”. (To turn 180 degrees).

2. Conversion Means Change

Greek: *Epistrepho* ' "To revert (to God's ways) figuratively, morally, literally. About turn! To change or adapt into another form, character or function. True conversion has a very radical connotation. (Synonyms. Alteration, transformation, regeneration, metamorphosis)

“If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; all things have become new”. (2 Cor 5:17)

The new convert does not simply become religious, reading the bible and attending some church. There is an actual personal transformation. They truly become a new person. The changes are not merely peripheral. They are not simply changes in outward appearance. The new creation is meant

to be a pliable person in the hands of the Lord. Conversion begins in the deepest part of ones being and utterly transforms the whole life as it works its way out in every day life and relationships. There will be dramatic changes in the Church as it enters a new era – the manifest Kingdom era. Unfortunately many people may not be able to accomplish the necessary transition which is why we need appropriate teaching on this important subject.

Conversional transformation does not all happen at once. It is an ongoing process. Its effectiveness surfaces in the crises experiences of life, when God causes all things to work together for good, to those that love Him and are called according to His divine purposes. (Rom 8:28) The “good” that is predicted is our transformation by the Holy Spirit into the image and likeness of Christ. That process is accomplished by the Spirit as we journey through the circumstances of our lives. Conversion is not only an initial radical change and transformation. It is meant to be a continuing process whereby we are changed from (one) glory to the next by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18

16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, then the veil is taken away.

17 Now, the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, he gives freedom.

18 And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more. NLT

The Apostles discovered this truth in some of their greatest extremities. For example, Peter experienced it at a time that Satan’s attack on him was at its strongest.

Luke 22:31-32

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen (Sterizo: turn them resolutely in another direction) thy brethren.”

Jesus surrounded Peter with His prayer at that time, that his faith should not fail or prove inadequate. He confidently forecast, “When you are converted (changed, strengthened, transformed) you will then be able also to help your peers to go in the right direction too. Jesus knew that in the

midst of this deep trial, when Satan planned to sift Peter through his fingers like wheat, Peter would be transformed into a stronger believer and be better able to encourage and instruct his fellow believers in the life of faith and victory.

3. Blotting Out Sins Means Forgetting The Past

Exhaleipho. Erased, Obliterated, Wiped away. (by Christ's Blood)

The atonement of Christ does not merely "cover over" our sins. It eradicates and obliterates them completely. They are destroyed. They exist no more. Unfortunately, many Christians are like Lazarus, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. They have committed their lives to Christ and accepted His forgiveness but they have not understood how totally God has wiped out their transgressions. Consequently the enemy is constantly referring them to the awareness of their memory. He taunts them with sins of the past. He seeks to destroy their confidence and authority. But, as with Lazarus, Jesus commands, "Loose him and let him go!" God has cast the record of our past sins into an ocean of forgetfulness. He remembers them no more. We must do the same. Let the past be buried and forgotten so that we can inherit our new future.

The word for sins in this verse is *Hamartia* meaning To fall short of. i.e. short comings, character blemishes, inherited weaknesses. Not only have we forgiveness for the sins of the past, we also have redemption and release from potential sins of the present.

There are sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. The sins of the flesh are usually very obvious, but those of the spirit are covert and hidden. They are spiritual pride, self righteousness, self sufficiency, resistance against God, kicking against the pricks. (Acts 9:5) God is more grieved by the sins of **His** children than those of the devil's children.

Christians are not meant to live in the past. They are meant to keep moving on into the future which is their ultimate meeting face to face with their Lord. Our eyes, therefore, should not be on the past but on the glorious future.

Philippians 3:13-14

*13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing : **Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,***

14 I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven. NLT

4. Times Of Refreshing Transform The Soul

“Times of refreshing” means to recover your breath with a breath of fresh air. It is a life transforming experience that totally refreshes the limpid soul. It releases the fainting soul into a fresh dimension of life, liberty, joy and rejoicing. It is an oasis in the wilderness to the thirsty soul that has almost expired, exhausted by the heat of the day. It is a new lease of life to the weary soul that has almost expired.

The word for “presence”, i.e. *prosopon*, = **face** of the Lord. Just as God breathed into Adam the breath of lives and man became a living soul, (Gen 2:7). Here we see Adam face to face with his Creator imbibing His Spiritual life. Moses saw God face to face at Sinai and in the burning bush. David met God face to face through repentance. Paul saw God face to face on the Damascus road. So the breath of God’s presence restores and transforms our fainting souls. Pentecost came as a mighty, rushing wind from heaven. (Acts 2:2.) The wind of God’s Spirit today comes as a strong breeze, breathing fresh life into everything it touches. The breath of refreshing is like spiritual “mouth to mouth” resuscitation from the face of the Lord. It also comes like a mighty river from beneath the throne. Everywhere the river flows it brings new life.

Likewise, as we behold God, face to face, in spiritual communion, we are changed, transformed, altered, mutated, into His image. As we gaze on Him face to face, we are literally changed into His image.

“But we all with open face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being changed into that same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

5. The Blue Print Was Compromised

The early church commenced as a pattern of what the church was to be. Unfortunately, before too long, it yielded to carnal influences and deteriorated into a pale copy of what God intended it to be. By the Middle ages, it had become corrupted to a frightening degree that necessitated a great reformation to begin restoring it to its former pattern.

The reformation began through the instrumentality of Martin Luther, an ordained priest of the corrupted version, to whom God gave fresh revelation. The emphasis of Justification by faith became the foundation of the reformed church. Subsequently God followed through with further revelations and visitations that eventually took the form of the great Pentecostal revival of the 20th century. This has found expression more

recently in the Charismatic renewal of the 1980's onwards. God is now preparing to introduce another great phase of restoration which will herald an End Time revival before the return of Christ.

The pathway to that revival will eventuate from radical changes. The church has fallen from its original, God ordained calling to a lesser purpose. God is now determined to bring about its restoration.

Throughout most of church history the church drifted into compromise. It's downward steps can be clearly traced.

External Religious Respectability To Internal Heart Repentance

Repentance, -is the first word of the Gospel. It is the foundation stone of our Faith. Repentance demands a total change in attitude, perspective and life style. Not an outward change of external conformity, but an inner transformation of the heart and mind. The command, "Repent" means "About turn." March in the opposite direction to what you were previously facing. True spiritual life cannot be accessed without genuine repentance.

It was the first word that Jesus proclaimed in His public ministry

Mark 1:14-15

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

*The time has come," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God is near. **Repent and believe the good news!"** (NIV)*

It was the first word that Peter spoke at the inauguration of the church.

Acts 2:38

*"Then Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "* (NKJ)

It is the dominant word that Christ spoke to the Laodicean church of the last days.

Rev 3:19

*"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, **and repent.** "* (NIV)

In Acts 2:38, Peter lays the foundation of the Christian Faith. Christ had given him the "keys of the Kingdom"(Matt 16:19) now he uses those keys to open to gates of the Kingdom. The password into that Kingdom was "Repent".

Repentance. Means “About turn”. Change your direction completely.
Baptism means burying the old life
Receive the Holy Spirit. Move on into the new life in the Spirit.

It Should Still Be The Indispensible Emphasis Of The Church

The word repent has many religious overtones, but its basic root meaning is to “Change radically”. The emphasis on *change* is therefore introduced at the very inception of Christianity. Peter’s reply to the question, “What shall we do?” was Change...Change...Change.

From Inception The Church Experienced Major Changes.

From the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

From Judaism to Christianity.

From worship in Jerusalem to “Worshipping in Spirit and in truth”. John 4:23,24.

From the Temple to house churches.

From Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth. Acts 1:8.

Following the spiritual decline in the Middle Ages, God commenced a series of phases of restoration, beginning with Luther’s revelation “The just shall live by faith”, right through to the Charismatic renewal of the 1980’s.

2. From Religion To Redemption

The emphasis of the early church was clearly on the redemption purchased by Christ’s death and resurrection. In the course of its history the church its emphasis has passed from Redemption to Religion.

Redemption is the dramatic transformation that takes place when the full extent of Christ’s redemptive work is understood and totally accepted. It is apprehended by faith alone in the complete work of Calvary.

Religion is man’s attempt to tie himself back to God. (re-ligare) This is sought through the performance of good (dead) works, respectable living, church attendance etc. Religion is also composed of rites, ceremonies and rituals.

Unfortunately, repentance and redemption are no longer emphasised in many churches. The requirement for entrance has become religion and respectability rather than redemption. There is a sure measure by which one can distinguish religion from redemption.

Religion represses, but Redemption releases.

3. From Temporal Buildings To Spiritual Temples

Acts 17:24

*"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and **does not live in temples built by hands.** (NIV)*

1 Cor 3:16

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (NIV)

The emphasis of the early church was on the believers as the temples of God. For the first three hundred years of church history, the church did not have consecrated buildings. Most of the world wide Body of Christ met in house churches. Larger gatherings were held in public places. The church did not own or consecrate any buildings as places of worship. It was a church on the move. In later years this changed from Functional convenience to religious consecration.

The influence towards dedicated religious buildings, came into the church from pagan religious sources. Temples dedicated to various deities was all part of heathen worship. Many traditional church buildings seem totally incongruous to their surroundings. Their architectural style frequently links them to bygone eras and their Western image appears incompatible with the non Western world. Their antiquated designs speak of the past instead of the present and future. They are often incongruous to their surroundings.

4. From Intellectually Constructed "Sermons" To Anointed Messages

1 Peter 4:11

"If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. (NIV)

The preaching and teaching of the early church **was not** with "enticing words of human wisdom", but in the power and demonstration of the Spirit. (1 Cor 2:4) They spoke words inspired by the Holy Spirit, rather than platitudes of human learning and wisdom. Their messages were inspired, anointed, practical and relevant. In this, as in many other things, they followed the example of Jesus. His public addresses were such that the average (greatest number) of people responded with great interest to His talks.

Mark 12:37

"Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" And the common people heard Him gladly. (NKJ)

Mark 12:37

"David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with delight. (NIV)

The talks that Jesus gave appealed enormously to:-

The common (average) people. They listened to him gladly.

Unconverted people. The average people of His day were not "Christian" believers.

The masses of common, average persons. (Not an elite few)

His messages were topical, contemporary, positive, practical, and helpful.

He often took a most profound subject and made it so simple and understandable that the masses gladly listened to Him.

5. From Religious Formality To Spiritual Reality

Church services in New Testament times were largely spontaneous in nature. The churches did not yet have a liturgy or fixed form of service. New Testament gatherings were spontaneous, spiritual and informal. Today the order of service in many churches leaves little room for the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Such services have become predictable, formal and boring. The fresh move of God's Spirit throughout the earth will be distinguished by spiritual reality rather than religious formality.

When King Jehoram needed a word from God, Elisha instructed him to get a musician and while he played the Spirit of the Lord came upon the prophet.

2 Kings 3:15 But now, get me a player of music, and it will come about that while the man is playing, the hand of the Lord will come on me and I will give you the word of the Lord: and they got a player of music, and while the man was playing, the hand of the Lord was on him. (BBE)

Someone Suggested This Intriguing Definition:

"A worship service should create an atmosphere conducive to the occurrence of miracles."

What constitutes atmosphere? Many modern pastors strive to create a certain atmosphere in the church.

How much does "atmosphere" contribute to genuine spiritual activity?

How is atmosphere created? Ambience, feel, impression.

What are contributing factors? Venue, music, spiritual, emotional factors. Preaching to produce atmosphere of faith, co-operation, decision.

However the only atmosphere that is truly conducive to miracles etc is that which is created by the Holy Spirit.

6. From Club Membership To Body Members

Acts 2:41

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (NIV)

Acts 2:47

“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (NIV)

In the Bible the Church of Jesus Christ is represented as a body of which every person is a body part, an organ or a limb.

1 Cor 12:12-14

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.” (NIV)

Every new believer is merged into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, to become a particular member, i.e. a specific part, limb, or organ with specific functions to perform.

The emphasis of churches today has made membership more like a club affiliation. One joins the club, pays the required fees, attends official meetings, votes for the minister and fulfills all the requirements of membership in a club.

7. From Ordained Clergy To Anointed Warriors

The leadership of the early church were anointed laymen. They came from many different callings and professions. The Apostles were trained by Christ Himself as they accompanied Him for three years. They were trained in an “on the job” training mode. After Pentecost, they became the trainers, discipling and preparing the new converts who became, for the most part, lay leaders of the churches. None of the Apostles had theological training except Paul who was previously a Rabbi.

8.From Chief Executive Officers To Servant Leaders

Phil 2:5-7

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (NIV)

Paul says that the attitude of Christians and ministers in particular, should be of a humble servant similar to Christ.

In the days of Constantine, the style of leadership authority structure changed to that of the political “pyramid style.” manifest in the religious ecclesiastical hierarchy.

8. From Club Membership To True Discipleship

Acts 6:7

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (KJV)

Christ’s disciples were commanded to do two things which constituted the major elements of their commission.

Preach the Gospel. Mark 16:15

Mark 16:15-16

“He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (NIV)

We must always remember that the Gospel that Jesus proclaimed and commissioned His disciples to preach was specifically The Gospel of the Kingdom.

Mark 1:15

15 "At last the time has come!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Turn from your sins and believe this Good News!" NLT

Luke 9:2

2 Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the coming of the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.NLT

The sad reality is that the modern Church has preached a Gospel that has had little reference to the Kingdom of God, particularly in its eschatological perspective. Very few preachers are currently preaching on

the imminent reality of End Times and the emergence of the manifest Kingdom of God in which the Messiah will reign on earth from the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem. However this will change dramatically in the Church of the future that will function on earth in the Last Days. Jesus clearly intimated that one of the major signs of the Last Days would be the proclamation of the Kingdom to all nations.

Matthew 24:14

14 And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then, finally, the end will come. NLT

Making Disciples. Matt 28:19.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. " Amen. (NKJ)

The emphasis of the modern church has gone from apprenticeship to church membership.

9. From Club Style Membership To Koinonia Partnership

Acts 2:42

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,(Koinonia; partnership) and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (KJV)

Acts 2:44-46

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts," (NIV)

Much of the modern church has become institutionalised and structured by human administration. We need to realise that the true Church is an organism not an organisation. New converts in the early church were inducted into the Koinonia (partnership) of its members. They became members of a body. It was a covenant relationship in which none lived for themselves, but each lived for the other. It was an agreement that touched every area of life including goods and finances. It introduced a

radical culture of Christian commitment and community that shook the world. (Acts 17:6)

10. From Human Ability To Spiritual Authority

1 Cor 2:4-5

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.” (NIV)

In the era of the Church of the future there will be another glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will fulfil the promise made in Joel's prophecy Joel 2:28-29

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. NKJV

One of the con-joined features of this Last Day outpouring will be clearly evident in Jerusalem among the remnant of Jews who are part of this visitation.

Joel 2:32-3:1

32 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls. NKJV

11. From Man's Ability To God's Authority

The message of the Kingdom concerns God's authority (power, might, influence). This authority was given to Jesus and He intended His disciples to go forth in the strength of that authority and also to make disciples who were vitally conscious of that authority. It involves a consciousness of the authority of a king over His kingdom and the authority of those who are commissioned to act in the name of their King.

Matt 28:18-19

“Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (NIV)

Acts 3:6-8

“Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’”

Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. “ (NIV)

12. A Return To Witnessing In The True Power Of The Spirit

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (NIV)

The dynamic and rapid growth of the early church was largely due to the anointed activities of the body members.

Acts 8:4

“Those who had been scattered preached (laleo) the word wherever they went.” (NIV)

Only the Apostles remained in Jerusalem during the intense persecution. The church members were scattered to many places seeking refuge. Their flight did not persuade them to deny their commitment to Christ. Everywhere they went they spoke about Christ, persuading many to receive Him. The word *laleo* implies extemporaneous vocal expression. A crude word to define it would be “gossip.” Everywhere the disciples went they gossiped about Jesus. Their constant conversation was about Him. He was all they could talk about.

13. From Church Programs To Power Demonstrations

Acts 3:12

“When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” (NIV)

In this dynamic incident in the life of the early church, Peter made it very clear that they were ministering by the power of God and not by anything that they themselves could produce. The supernatural power of God was clearly demonstrated through their ministry, attracting the multitudes and convincing them of the reality of the Gospel.

It was only when this power began to wane following many compromises, that the church initiated programs to replace the spiritual manifestations. Much of the church today is program oriented depending on the skills and abilities of man. But the Holy Spirit is now renewing the church in many places, restoring the presence and power of the Spirit. Those churches are becoming Holy Spirit dependent instead of program oriented.

14. From Entertainment To Edification

Eph 4:15-16

“but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (NAS)

To edify means to build up, strengthen, join together, mutually uphold. They grew, as does a body, by the nourishment that every joint supplies. They did not merely entertain each other, they fed and nourished each other, providing mutual sustenance and strength to each other. Many church services today have become entertainment for Christians. Worship in many churches has become a spectator event. Worship teams perform and worshippers tend to listen and participate to some minor degree. When the Church returns to true worship the presence and power of God will return too.

15. From “Holy Communion” To Covenant Meals

When Holy Communion or The Lord’s Supper, was first practised in the Early Church it was preceded and incorporated into a communal meal. The Church members actually ate together as a sign of their oneness, unity and inter-dependence. They had all things common, including food, fellowship and hospitality. The meals were often rather sumptuous, a matter that Paul had to rectify but not eliminate. Eating together has profound effects upon relationships. It fashions links of fellowship that nothing else can accomplish. These meals were a distinct attraction for outsiders, looking for friendship, fellowship and social ties. They symbolised social inter-dependence and covenant commitment. They were all members of a body, (body organs and parts) rather than members of an institution.

Unfortunately, through the years it has deteriorated and diminished in significance until “The Lord’s Supper” has become a thimble full of

grape juice and a tiny piece of dry biscuit. The fellowship associated with it has also deteriorated in similar fashion until it has become a dry and withered version of the original fellowship.

As God restores to His Church “all things spoken by the prophets” (Acts 3:21) the genuine covenant meals will also be restored.

16. From Worship Observation To Active Participation

Rom 12:1-2

1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

(NIV)

New Testament worship involved a yielding of one's total self to God in expressions of love and adoration. Worship was not something that one observed but something that one participated in whole heartedly.

God had commanded that worship of Him must be expressions of whole hearted love that involved the whole heart, mind, and strength of the worshipper. Deuteronomy 6:4; Matt 22:36-40.

The word worship comes from the word worth-ship, i.e. expressing an appreciation for the worth and value of something. In the biblical context that something is God. So worship is giving expression to our deep appreciation of God. So obviously it is not simply something that we do in church, e.g singing hymns etc. Worship should be the lifestyle of every believer. It is not necessarily what we say or sing. It is the manner in which we live in the light of our appreciation of who God is and what He desires of us. God is earnestly searching for true worshippers.

John 4:23-24

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” NKJV

At this prophetic moment in time, God is especially looking for those who will use the high praises of God in their mouths to execute

vengeance upon the nations and bind principalities with chains and fetters of iron.

Psalms 149:5-9

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand,

7 To execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples;

8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9 To execute on them the written judgment — This honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD! NKJV

17. From The “Come” Of Convenience To The Go Of Evangelism

The last two commandments that Jesus issued began with the word GO.

1. Mark 16:15

“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation”. (NIV)

2. Matt 28:18-20

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen”.

(KJV)

He commanded His disciples to GO out and preach the Gospel but the church has changed His command to COME IN and hear the Gospel. Until the church obeys His initial command it will not see the benefits He promised. The church has become a denomination, institution, building instead of an Army, marching into the enemies territory to release men and women from Satan’s bondage and to bring them into God’s Kingdom.

18. From Supporting Missions To Active Participation

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (NIV)

Acts 8:4

“They therefore that were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word.” (ASV)

Jesus decreed that His disciples should be missionaries, not merely people who supported missions with their finances. The mission field does not begin somewhere across the world. It begins right outside one’s front door. The early church went everywhere, spreading the Gospel. (Acts 8:4)

19. From Studying Epistles To Being Living Epistles

2 Cor 3:2-3

“Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables (that are) hearts of flesh.” (ASV)

Members of the early church did not merely study written epistles, (letters) they were themselves, living epistles, known and read by all men. Christianity in its original and purest form did not involve the pursuit of intellectual studies. (The epistles were not yet written) The disciples themselves were God’s living, physical love letters. In much of the modern church there is an intellectual emphasis on theology and academia that was not found in the early church. Instead of a deep, academic study of the Bible, the early church members concentrated upon actually being living epistles in the every day life of their communities.

20. From Consumerism To Productivity

Too many Christians today are intent on “being blessed” instead of being made a blessing to others. They are chronic receivers instead of inspired givers. The very pattern of “church” with the congregation sitting before the pulpit, strengthens the concept that they are there to receive. The church has been likened to a football match where twenty two players on the pitch are desperately in need of rest and forty thousand spectators are urgently in need of exercise. The early church was certainly not a “bless me club” in which people sat quietly for hours hearing entertaining sermons and programs.

21. From A People Who Are Fearful Of The Slightest Change To People Who Initiate Amazing Changes Acts 17:6

“But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.” (NKJ)

The members of the Early Church did not conform to the world, they transformed it. (Rom 12:1,2) They were certainly not afraid of change, they were AGENTS OF CHANGE. So dynamic was their impact on the world that even their enemies perceived them as world changers. Jesus commissioned them to be salt and light. Matt 5:13-16. Salt to cleanse and heal. Light to illuminate, overcoming spiritual and moral darkness.

22. From Church Mentality To Kingdom Authority

Luke 12:32-34

32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.

34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. NKJV

Matthew 6:9-10

9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. NKJV

Totally Changed! When We See Christ

Our final transformation, the grand finale of all the present work of change, will finally transform us eternally into the image of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." (NIV)

1 John 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. (KJV)

Chapter Five

Imperative Prophetic Issues

Israel is currently under a serious and determined threat of total annihilation. If this threat were to succeed it would undermine and unravel forever the sanctity and validity of the Bible in which God consistently announces Himself as the Holy One of Israel.

Fortunately the God of the Bible has guaranteed the future of Israel. His promises of ultimate salvation and deliverance are scattered throughout the Bible from beginning to end. However, that deliverance will not come cheaply. Hundreds of thousands of lives may perish in the inevitable battle that will be launched against Israel by all her Muslim neighbours. From out of this great tragedy Israel will arise like a phoenix from out of the ashes. More accurately she will arise at God's bidding with the glory of God shining upon her. From the midst of a world cloaked in darkness Israel will arise as a radiant light.

Isaiah 60:1

"Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light shine for all the nations to see! For the glory of the LORD is shining upon you. NLT

The Church of the prophetic future will have numerous intrinsic features that will make it remarkably different from the Church of the Middle Ages, or of this present time. These important changes will come firstly through a fresh emphasis on the dual membership of the Body of Christ, i.e. Jew and Gentile, and on a fresh emphasis on the necessity of true repentance from sin, cleansing through the blood of Christ, and living in the Spirit. In Acts 3 Peter proclaims what must happen in the Last Days in which we are now living.

Acts 3:19-22

*19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,
20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,
21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. NKJV*

The phrase “repent and be converted” which means “turn from your sins and turn to God” enunciates the classic meaning of repentance (*Tshuva*) from a Hebraic and Biblical perspective. Firstly it essentially includes a new awareness of one’s sin before God. Secondly a definite (re)turn to God. Thirdly, the need for positive and humble receiving of forgiveness from God.

Peter’s message on that pivotal day was clearly concerned with “what the prophets had said.” He clearly intimated that what his audience were witnessing was the beginning of what Joel had predicted.

Acts 2:16 (AMP)

¹⁶ *But [instead] this is [the beginning of] what was spoken through the prophet Joel:*

Peter clearly indicated that a new era predicted by the prophets was being introduced.

Acts 2:17-21

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’ NKJV

Acts 2:36-39

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

*38 Then Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." NKJV

The subjects of sin and repentance, have both been dropped from the modern church vocabulary. It has become an extremely rare phenomena to hear any preacher denouncing sin, calling for repentance and emphasising the supreme importance of what Jesus has procured through His death as the paschal Lamb of God. This is particularly so when related to a “Christian” audience. In many Christian circles today there is often an emphasis on claiming righteousness through positive confession, but there is often little recognisable evidence of that righteousness in practise.

The Church today, particularly in the Western world, is in desperate need of a season of Holy Spirit refreshing, but this will not eventuate unless and until we acknowledge our sins of commission and omission and turn again to God with true repentance. It is very obvious that there is a very real need for repentance and certainly there is a desperate need for a true visitation of the Holy Spirit. The first area of repentance may be for the divisions, doctrinal and denominational, in a Church that Jesus prayed should be one.

John 17:21 (AMP)

²¹ That they all may be one, [just] as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe and be convinced that You have sent Me.

This powerful prayer of Jesus basically addressed a desired unity between Jew and Gentile. How much more do we need to pray this prayer when the Body of Christ is now divided into thousands of sections by differing doctrines and denominational barriers?

Until the Church is renewed by the Holy Spirit there will not be any great impact on the people around us. The Church is in some form of spiritual paralysis that makes it virtually impotent. The main sin of which many Christians need to repent, is half hearted commitment to God. He detests lukewarm and threatens to spew it out of His mouth. (Revelation 3:16) Only a genuine fresh outpouring of the Spirit will heal this self imposed impotence and release a mighty flow of salvation and deliverance. This visitation of the Holy Spirit can only flow through people who are truly vessels of the Spirit having a vital living relationship with Him.

A Living Relationship Not A Doctrine

The first disciples of Messiah Jesus had a vital living relationship with Him. They did not just have a text book or manual about Godly living that they strove to live out in practise. They experienced the spiritual

transformation that can only come with a close, vital personal relationship with Him. When Christ invited His disciples to follow Him so that He could re-make their lives, it was a challenge to imbibe His Spirit and begin to walk according to His Spirit within them.

Matthew 16:24

24 Then Jesus said to the disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me.NLT

The modern Church has for the most part exchanged a living relationship for theological doctrine. The Church of the first century was birthed in a glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit power. Jesus had promised to His disciples an encounter with a person, not simply with a correct doctrine about that person.

Acts 1:8

8 But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." NLT

Many Christians today have accepted a doctrine rather than receiving a powerful indwelling person. They have become like the people that Paul described, who had an outward appearance of godliness while denying the true power of it.

2 Timothy 3:4-5

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. NKJV

It is not an intellectual knowledge about Christ that saves us nor a correct doctrine. It is the experiential reception of Him that sets us free from our own sinful nature and enables us to live a victorious life through the power of Christ within.

Romans 8:2-3

2 For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. NLT

1 Corinthians 2:3-5

3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. NKJV

If anyone in the early Church was capable of speaking with the with “*persuasive words of human wisdom*” it was Paul, who having received the finest education of all the disciples, chose not to exercise his human knowledge and wisdom but rather to rely wholly on the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the sad facts about the Church today is that many who call themselves ministers, rely upon their intellectual and academic training and ability rather than on the power of God. The inevitable result is that the faith of those to whom they preach is founded on the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God. Their teachers may be proud of their academic degrees but their people are often dying by degrees.

What Christians desperately need today is to learn how to hear and interpret the voice of God.

John 10:14-16

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, 15 just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. NLT

John 10:27-29

27 My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them away from me, NLT

John 10:3

3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. NLT

When the apostles preached, the crowd quickly realised three things:

Acts 4:13

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. NKJV

1. The disciples had true boldness, confidence and genuine power.
2. Their boldness and power was not a result of their intellectual acumen.
3. They had obviously spent quality time with Jesus.

Psalm 37:9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Messiah Is The Bread Of Life

John 6:48-51

48 I am the bread of life.

49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." NKJV

Matthew 4:4

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" NKJV

What I believe Jesus is saying is that we should not live solely by the logos (the written Word) but also by the rhema, i.e. the living Word. Or the Word that God *quickens* to us. It is not sufficient to simply read the Bible faithfully. We should read it with the desire to receive a specific rhema word from God. Of course we may also receive a rhema word from God when we are not necessarily reading the Bible. A rhema is usually "heard" rather than "read." God can speak to us in many different ways. The important thing is that we learn to wait upon God, ready to hear, receive and obey every word that He speaks to us. Every rhema should harmonise with the principles of the Bible.

John 6:56-58

56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

58 This is the bread which came down from heaven — not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."

NKJV

Our Attitude Towards Israel

Everyone knows that if you disconnect a plant from its roots it will rapidly fade away and die. How strange that so few Christians realise that this has happened to the Church! The Church has historically deliberately detached itself from its root system which is the Olive tree of Israel (Romans 11:17, 23,24). The Church actually has no roots of its

own. It was originally a branch from a wild olive tree that was grafted on to a healthy tree. It was never planted into the earth to develop its own root system. Some Jewish branches were detached temporarily from their own tree to make room for the grafted Gentile branches, but the Bible makes it clear that ultimately those detached branches will be regrafted back on to their tree. I will include this passage from Romans 11 because so few Christians appear to have read these verses and seriously studied their implication. Please take time now to read them deliberately, paying close attention.

Romans 11:13-27

13 I am saying all of this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I lay great stress on this,

14 for I want to find a way to make the Jews want what you Gentiles have, and in that way I might save some of them.

15 For since the Jews' rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, how much more wonderful their acceptance will be. It will be life for those who were dead!

16 And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their children will also be holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

17 But some of these branches from Abraham's tree, some of the Jews, have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, were grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in God's rich nourishment of his special olive tree.

18 But you must be careful not to brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. Remember, you are just a branch, not the root.

19 "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me."

20 Yes, but remember — those branches, the Jews, were broken off because they didn't believe God, and you are there because you do believe. Don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen.

21 For if God did not spare the branches he put there in the first place, he won't spare you either.

22 Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe to those who disobeyed, but kind to you as you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off.

23 And if the Jews turn from their unbelief, God will graft them back into the tree again. He has the power to do it.

24 For if God was willing to take you who were, by nature, branches from a wild olive tree and graft you into his own good tree — a very

unusual thing to do — he will be far more eager to graft the Jews back into the tree where they belong.

25 I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud and start bragging. Some of the Jews have hard hearts, but this will last only until the complete number of Gentiles comes to Christ.

26 And so all Israel will be saved. Do you remember what the prophets said about this? "A Deliverer will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel from all ungodliness.

27 And then I will keep my covenant with them and take away their sins." NLT

These verses make abundantly clear the fact that Israel and the Church have a common origin. Yet even clearer is the fact that they have a common destiny. As we rapidly approach a watershed moment in the prophetic unfolding of God's End Time purpose, the Church and Israel are obviously destined to merge into one body. They were never intended to be separate. They became separated not by God but through human instrumentation.

Acts 18:5-6

5 Paul spent his full time preaching and testifying to the Jews, telling them, "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus."

6 But when the Jews opposed him and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his robe and said, "Your blood be upon your own heads — I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." NLT

Paul's determination to "go to the Gentiles" was his own personal decision made to some degree because "opposition and insults" he had experienced from the Jews to whom he had been preaching. It was God's will for Paul to go to the Gentiles but not to completely abandon his ministry to the Jew.

Acts 9:15-16

15 But the Lord said, "Go and do what I say. For Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.

16 And I will show him how much he must suffer for me." NLT

However, this did not necessarily mean that he was to completely abandon his ministry to the Jews. Nor that he was to do so because of the opposition he would suffer in Acts 18:5-6.

Romans 9:1-5

1 In the presence of Christ, I speak with utter truthfulness — I do not lie — and my conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm that what I am saying is true.

2 My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief

3 for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed — cut off from Christ! — if that would save them.

4 They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's special children.

God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave his law to them. They have the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises.

5 Their ancestors were great people of God, and Christ himself was a Jew as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. NLT

Romans 10:12-13

12 Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They all have the same Lord, who generously gives his riches to all who ask for them.

13 For "Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." NLT

Galatians 3:27-29

28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians — you are one in Christ Jesus.

29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and now all the promises God gave to him belong to you. NLT

Colossians 3:11

11 In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. NLT

In order for Jews and Gentiles to come together in the last days, a huge chasm is to be crossed by both Jews and Christians. Both parties will need to fully recognise and accept the Messiah in a new context. The Jews will have to adjust to the fact that Jesus is truly their long promised Messiah. Christians will have to realize and gladly accept that Jesus is actually Jewish by birth, upbringing and culture and that the whole plan of God's earthly reign will focus on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

The Good News Of The Kingdom

Matthew 24:14

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. NKJV

It is specifically “the gospel of the kingdom” that will be preached across the whole world in the last days. Many preachers today are preaching “another gospel” instead of the one that Jesus committed to the Church. For example they often misquote the preceding verse saying that “The gospel must be preached to all nations” rather than “This gospel OF THE KINGDOM must be preached to all nations. When Jesus commenced His ministry, He proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

Mark 1:14-15

*14 Jesus came to Galilee, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,**
15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God is at hand.**
Repent, and believe in the gospel." NKJV*

Jesus also commissioned His disciples to preach the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:2-3

*2 Then he sent them out to **tell everyone about the coming of the Kingdom of God** and to heal the sick. NLT*

Paul’s Emphasis On The Kingdom Of God

Acts 28:30-31

30 Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,

31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. NKJV

When Paul found himself forcibly detained in Rome for two years he used the opportunity to continue his ministry. His primary emphasis was on the Kingdom of God and the things which related to Jesus.

Preaching The Kingdom Of God Pertains To Three Basic Issues.

1. When we “receive Christ” it is not only as Saviour or even our lord, (Romans 1:10) but as our king. A king is far higher in standing than a Lord. The king is the figure of highest rank and it is to such a person that we are required to surrender ourselves. We no longer live for ourselves. From the moment when we are born again into the family of God we are personally under the reign of the King and His Kingdom.

2.

Our salvation does not only pertain to personal forgiveness of sin and a home in heaven when we die. As adopted members of God's family we also become citizens of His Kingdom. As such, we are taught together with Messiah's disciples to pray "Your Kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven." God's rule should be over our personal and family life here and now. However, we also become heirs to the Kingdom that is yet to be made manifest over this earth. We are to live under the reign of the King over our lives while we also live in anticipation of His Kingdom rule over the earth.

3. The Kingdom of God will one day be established over the earth. Jesus did not come to earth just to rescue and save individuals. He came to prepare the way for the manifestation of God's Kingdom rule over the nations. His true disciples are commissioned to prepare the way for the manifest Kingdom by preaching it, but also by demonstrating its culture in our lives here and now. The highway along which the Kingdom would come to earth would be prepared by His disciples. Jesus reminded His disciples that part of their calling and responsibility was to pray for God's kingdom to come to earth.

Matthew 6:9-10

9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

NKJV

When we pray "Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done on earth as it is in heaven" we are praying for two things to happen.

Firstly we are praying for God's Kingdom rule to be established in our personal lives. That we may be enabled by God's Spirit, to completely surrender our own personal will, desires and ambitions to the requirements of the Kingdom rule of God.

Secondly we are praying for the return of Messiah to this earth to establish His authentic rule over the nations on earth. We are praying for the visible, physical, everlasting rule of God upon this earth.

