

Should You Avoid All “Organized Religion”?

Today, dozens, perhaps hundreds of small, independent groups meet together each Sabbath, eschewing any kind of “organized religion.” Is God’s church organized? Is all organization or structure in the church wrong?

The closer you look at things man has made, the more chaos, irregularity, and imperfection you see. For example, even the period at the end of this sentence, if seen under a powerful microscope, would show as a series of tiny dots, some clearer than others; a fuzzy, irregular bunch of splotches on rough fibers which are the paper upon which it was printed. But the closer you look at what God has done in nature, the more beauty, the more intricacy, the more perfection.

Inspect the petal of a flower, or the wing of a bird, or even the molecular structure of quartz under that same microscope, and you will see symmetry, harmony, beauty, intricate organization!

The first great independent was Satan the Devil.

Not that Satan was “against” organization — with him it was merely a question of “whose”?

The same is true of those who rail against “organized religion” today — as if all religious activities should be bereft of any structure; independent, disorganized, anarchistic.

Satan resented God’s power. He became insanely jealous of God. He resented God’s laws, His government, His rules and regulations. After countless periods of time, Satan had imbued his angels with his same evil, rebellious spirit. Finally, Lucifer felt the time was ripe for a takeover!

Christ said, “I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:17). Symbolically, in vision, John saw the same thing: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

“And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7-9). The result of the great “star wars” of billions of years past is readily visible today. All about us, so far as we can peer with modern technology such as the Hubble space telescope, we see *wreckage*. Huge, poisonous clouds swirl in monstrous storms on the planet men named “Jupiter.” Billions of misshapen rocks hurtle in all directions as meteors and asteroids. The lifeless, rock-strewn face of Mars and our own moon attest to countless impacts of huge meteors.

When God decided the time had come to create man, and commence His plan of reproducing Himself through the human species, He came down to see a “void, empty, waste, chaotic” world, covered with tossing, stygian seas, where not a single ray of light had shown for perhaps millions or billions of years. This is the force of the Hebrew words “tohu and bohu”, translated “without form, and void” or empty.

All was confusion. Satan’s handiwork always tends toward confusion; chaos; anarchy. But “...God is *not the author of confusion*, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

God began RE-creating the earth, and when He had finished, all was spectacularly beautiful. Man was created; then Eve — two perfectly-formed and shaped human beings, made in the very image of God. They were placed in the midst of the most beautiful garden place in all history; brooks and rivulets, streams and rivers; countless shrubs, trees of every variety; teeming with life. Do not suppose Eden was like a few acres of landscaped garden in the back yard of some palatial estate. No, it may have been several thousand square miles — an untrammelled, breathtaking scene of fabulous beauty.

But then Satan came on the scene, and deceived Eve. Her husband followed her in her doubting of God, and the two of them broke God’s laws by lusting after the forbidden fruit, then stealing it, and in so doing disobeying their only parent. By doing so, they broke four of the Ten Commandments. Immediately, a great curse came upon them, and upon all nature. “And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent [Hebrew: “nachash,” meaning “whispering enchanter”] beguiled me, and I did eat.

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel [the first shadow, or type, of the promise of the “seed” of the woman, which was Christ, and Satan’s part in His death].

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children [Eve saw her firstborn murder his own brother] ; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

“Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:13-19).

Adam and Eve were driven from the garden, to live lives as described above; hard-scrabble existence by the sweat of their brows, finding that nature itself seemed to have turned against them. Such is the result of the first great rebel; the first great “independent” who set himself against God.

The term “pandemonium” aptly describes what it is meant to imply: “all demonism,” or “demonic abandon everywhere.” Where there is no order; where there is no system, no rules and regulations, no law, there is chaos — pandemonium.

Divided Churches — Scattered Sheep

Today, thousands of God’s people are divided and confused. They fit the description of God’s sheep who wander without a shepherd: “And the word of the

LORD came unto me, saying,

“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

“Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

“The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

“And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

“My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them” (Ezekiel 34:1-8).

Frightened by cruel “shepherds”, or disillusioned with the human frailties of their leaders, many huddle together in little groups.

Opportunists, seeing the fragmented groups, eagerly desire to gather them together. Some, hoping to appeal to their disillusionment and fears, trumpet the voice of “independence.” They eagerly attack all “organization.” Suddenly, organization; laws, order, rules, regulations, are *of the devil*, and not of God. Now, they assert that God is the Author, NOT of rules and regulations, but of independence!

Not that THEY, the preachers of independence want any of THEIR followers to be “independent” of THEM, the leaders — oh, no, of course not! No, *they want to attract a following*. And when such a following begins to meet with such a person, will there be a complete absence of all rules and regulations?

Will they meet together? But how, if each one of them has a different idea about whether to meet in the first place, on which day, at what time, and where? And if they resolve all these necessary arrangements, which requires some organization, who will speak? All of them? All at once? Who decides? Can women preach?

Can children? Or should there be some *rule* applied, based upon the Bible, which prohibits such things? Shall those attending sit down, or mill around with cups of coffee or beer (and if there is no rule against it, who is to say?) while the would-be leader tries to get their attention?

Who should be in charge? Should they incorporate? If so, who should be on the board? Who will draft the constitution and by-laws?

There are those who vigorously attack organizations. They speak disgustedly of “organized religion.” But did not Jesus Christ say He would build His church? Did not Paul speak of how it is to be *organized*?

The Modern World Of “Churchianity”

There are hundreds of churches to choose from; dozens of smaller religious organizations. Must you belong to one of them in order to be saved? According to some leaders of these organizations, if you are not a member of “their” church, you will not be allowed into God’s kingdom.

Some make the ludicrous claim that THEY, meaning their own legal and political organization are the ONLY “true church.” They preach that unless you belong to THEM; to their group, you are not going to be in God’s kingdom.

In recent years, some pastors have complained about religious programming on television, saying too many people are staying at home watching television preachers, and believing that is all the religion they need. They say it is necessary to attend a church in order to be saved. Is this true? But, if you decide to “join the church of your choice,” how do you make that choice? Which church is the right one?

The American Handbook of Denominations lists more than four hundred different churches. Over the more than two decades during which the Worldwide Church of God broke up into many different churches, it is alleged that more than two hundred separate groups have eventually formed. There is plenty to choose from, even among Sabbath-keepers.

However, whether you think of a small hosted fellowship group of only five or six individuals, or larger churches of several thousand people, there must be some kind of organization. Those who preach against any organization are themselves

eagerly desirous for becoming the head of a new organization!

When you think about it, any church; any religious organization which seeks to preach the gospel to the world, or which merely seeks to pastor a small congregation of people must, to some degree, *be organized*.

How else could such a group own or rent a building or a hall? How could they maintain a simple membership list? How could they defray their expenses for such things as utilities, or supply materials for their members, such as children's books, song books, or simple weekly printed announcements? How could they maintain a bank account, no matter how small, so they could pay their workers or their pastor? How could they maintain their building, or water and mow the grass without some degree of organization? Who would make even the simplest of decisions?

Is God the Author of anarchy; of each individual doing whatever he or she chooses, irrespective of the common good?

No, God is the Author of the very opposite of anarchy. He is the Creator of the universe, and of the incredible complexity of our ecosphere, which is orderly, systematized, intricately organized.

Neither the largest denominations nor the smallest religious organizations can carry out their primary purposes without some degree of organization. For one thing, if they are financed by freewill tithes and offerings, and, for the benefit of their donors, wish to have a legal status of a non-profit religious organization or church, they are required to keep records and report to the IRS. For another, if they desire to broadcast their message over radio or television, and to send out literature or cassette tapes, they might want to maintain a mailing list. How else would they respond to the very people they are attempting to reach? Is it wrong to preach over the electronic media; to print and publish the gospel; to send out literature or tapes; to respond to people who are hungry for God's truth?

Obviously, since it is not wrong to do this, how can it be done without organized effort ? Can it be done by just one man, with no staff; no help of any kind?

It is one thing for a small corporation to proclaim itself independent of other churches. It is another for a small corporation to claim it is not "organized".

Why Did Christ Build His Church?

Why did Jesus Christ say, “I will build My church...?” What is the church supposed to do? Was it to be organized; structured, or was it a loosely-affiliated group of small independent groups or individuals who studiously avoided any attempt at organization?

Every serious student of the Bible knows Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to preach the gospel. Every Bible student also knows that Christ commanded His disciples to care for those who would heed the gospel; those who would repent, ask for baptism, and receive God’s Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ called, trained and commissioned His disciples. He then organized them into a small, twelve-man body of believers; a cadre of apostles.

Twelve is the Biblical number for organization, as well as a number signifying *organized beginnings!* It is a perfect *governmental* number, used time and time again by God to indicate how His world-ruling government will be set up.

God insured there were *twelve* tribes in ancient Israel, which were organized into a nation by God Himself. Christ could have called and trained only eleven disciples, or thirteen, or nineteen. But He didn’t. He called and trained exactly *twelve*. He promised His disciples they would sit upon *twelve thrones* in His Kingdom, governing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Before Christ had ascended to heaven in the sight of His startled disciples, He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until they were imbued with “power” from on high. He would send the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to *build His church*. But just prior to that Pentecost, Christ inspired Peter to stand up in the midst of the disciples and inform them that the Holy Spirit had revealed in the scriptures that Jesus Christ wanted a *certain definite number* to form the fundamental cadre of leadership in His church: “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty [which is ten times twelve!]),

“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

“For he was numbered [counted] with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst [he hung himself, and the body became terribly bloated when the rope broke, allowing him to fall], and all his bowels gushed out.

“And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, ‘Aceldema,’ that is to say, ‘The field of blood.’

“For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.’

“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that our Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

“Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained [*one*, not two, or three, or fourteen more out of the one hundred and twenty-only *one*, so there would once again be *twelve* original apostles] to be a witness with us of His resurrection.

“And they appointed *two*, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias” (Acts 1:15-23). They wanted to choose only one. However, in their discussions, when considering the qualifications of the two men mentioned above, they were so similar; so alike in their qualifications, that the disciples could not finally decide by themselves. They wanted the intervention of God.

Notice what happened: “And they prayed, and said, ‘Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen,

“‘That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

“And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:23-26).

Christ was determined that His church would begin with God’s perfect organizational number; the number of “new beginnings,” which is *twelve*.

The disciples had been instructed to *wait* in Jerusalem until they were imbued with God’s power. Notice again what happened: “And when the day of Pentecost

was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

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

“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire [flickering ‘tongues’ of flame, equally distributed among them], and it sat upon each of them.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

Each, in his own turn, began speaking to the startled crowd. They did not all begin to babble at once. There was *order* here, not confusion. God says, “For God is not the Author of confusion [chaos, anarchy], but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33).

Also, notice that the spiritual gifts of God’s prophets and apostles are *subject* unto them. “And the spirits of the prophets [spiritual gifts] are *subject* to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32). Paul instructed the Corinthians, some of whom possessed the gift of speaking with other languages, to *control* such a gift in an orderly fashion. Paul laid down *rules and regulations* to the churches under His care. He said, “If any man speak in an unknown [the word is italicized, indicating it has been supplied by the translators. It does not belong in the text, since the languages being spoken were not “unknown”, but understood clearly by those whose native tongue it was] tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

“But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God [he could *control* the gift with reason and discretion — it did not control him, as in an outburst of passionate emotion!].

“Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

“If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

“For ye may all prophesy *one by one* [*one speaking at a time*] , that all may learn, and all may be comforted” (1 Corinthians 14:27-31).

Clearly, Paul was laying down orderly instructions for the peaceful conduct of worship services. In order to avoid chaos; in order to avoid letting unconverted

visitors think they were all “crazy” (read the entire 14th chapter), Paul made these rules.

Following the miraculous events at Pentecost, which was the “birthday” of the church Christ said He would build, thousands were baptized and added to the church. This required organization! When many people decided to remain in Jerusalem, selling properties in order to defray their expenses, the apostles decided to distribute the money in organized, orderly fashion: “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

“Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostle’s feet: and distribution [an orderly process of disbursement according to each special need] was made unto every man according as he had need.

“And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabus, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

“Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:33-37).

Someone had to be made responsible for these large amounts of money. Honesty, integrity and fairness were involved. In order to insure each family received aid “according to his need,” there had to be someone in charge; a responsible person overall, who could decide how others would carry out a fair distribution. Assignment of responsibilities had to be accomplished by the apostles.

As the early church encountered such sudden and inspiring growth (Acts 2:41,47; 5:14), there was need for more organization. Study Acts 6, where we learn how many widows were being neglected in the enthusiastic crush of the crowds. The apostles asked that the others choose seven men “...of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may *appoint* over this business” (Acts 6:3). These seven were chosen from a group of one hundred and twenty who had been with Jesus since His baptism by John, some of whom had no doubt been John’s disciples previously.

Obviously, there had to be discussion. Suggestions were made. Men’s names were

put forth. The eleven apostles received the suggestions and caucused together, discussing the merits, character and ability of each one.

Here was *order*. Here was *mutual respect*. Here was the government in God's church in action, so as to prevent unconscionable neglect of widow ladies; to prevent chaos and anarchy. Thus, the "diakonate" (deacons; meaning "servants") was chosen, whose task it was to take care of the physical amenities necessary in such large-scale meetings (Acts 6:2).

Some years later, a major controversy arose in the church over the issue of circumcision. Some of the converted (?) Jews, many of which had been Pharisees, began insisting that the Gentiles who were being converted should be circumcised.

So vehement and tenacious were those of the circumcision that it became a requirement to go to the headquarters of God's church to settle the matter.

Here was dissent! Here was confusion! The Apostles recognized that *racism* was involved; that the "Jew-Gentile" controversy had boiled over until people's prejudices were involved. They knew such a thing could *split the church*!

"When therefore Paul and Barnabus had *no small dissension and disputation* with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabus, and certain other of them [those representing the opposite point of view], should go up to Jerusalem unto the *apostles and elders* about this question" (Acts 15:2). Read the entire fifteenth chapter of Acts for this historical insight into how God's *government* in His true church functioned in the first century.

There was order. There was an orderly, logical progression of events. The disputers presented their case, and one by one the leading apostles refuted it. James, who was obviously in charge, waited until Peter had finished his dissertation, and then arose to address the crowd.

Read it, in Acts 15:13-21. James said, after recapping Peter's words, and adding his own quotations from the Old Testament prophets, "Wherefore *my sentence is*, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God..." (Acts 15:19).

This major challenge to church doctrine and practice was handled in a systematic,

orderly fashion. It required *order*, not chaos. It was not accomplished by a number of fiercely independent, unorganized, suspicious, resentful individuals who refused to have anything to do with “organized religion!”

Once the entire subject was reviewed by those in authority in Jerusalem, and once James had “given his sentence,” the apostles then traveled about through the cities and “...delivered them the DECREES for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles [twelve of them!] and the elders which were at Jerusalem” (Acts 16:4).

What was the result of this Jerusalem conference? What were its *fruits*? Remember, Christ said “ye shall know them by their *fruits*” (Matt. 7:16). “And so were the churches *established in the faith*, and *increased* in number daily” (Acts 16:4).

The *fruit* born by the Jerusalem conference was the settling down of people; the resolution of a major difficulty; the establishment of sound doctrine which was *bound by the leading apostles* and rendered as a *decree*. As a result, the church *grew* every day!

Jesus Christ was fulfilling His promise, “Lo, I am with you always!” He was directly inspiring His apostles in *organizing* the work He had given them to do of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to the world, and feeding the flock that came into the church.

God’s Kingdom Will Be Perfectly ORGANIZED

When John saw in vision the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven to earth; the “holy” Jerusalem which is metaphorically called the “Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9), He wrote that the city “...had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

“On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

“And the wall of the city had *twelve* foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:12-14). And *whose name* was number twelve? *Matthias*, not Judas! It was very important to Jesus Christ and God the Father that there be exactly *twelve* apostles in Christ’s *organization* of His

church! Christ promised that those twelve apostles will sit on *twelve thrones*; twelve *kingships*, ruling over the *twelve* tribes of Israel during the millennium!

Continue, “And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, *twelve thousand furlongs*. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal” (Rev. 21:15,16).

This is a picture of the *headquarters of the universe*; the very holy city of God Almighty, from which Christ will *rule* over the whole earth for one thousand years, and on into eternity! God has determined it shall have all these many dimensions of *twelve*!

Now, notice further: “And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones...” (Rev. 21:19). Then follows a detailed description of *twelve* precious stones! Then God describes how each gate into the city; *twelve* gates, is made of *one gigantic pearl*, making twelve pearls in all: “And the twelve gates were *twelve pearls*: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city [there are *twelve* streets leading into it from each of the *twelve* gates] was pure gold, as it were transparent glass” (Rev. 21:18-21).

Notice how God describes the “pure river of water of life” which proceeded from beneath His throne (Rev. 22:1,2). The same river is described in Ezekiel 47, which shows how God will divide up the land which is watered by the great river into *twelve* parts, dividing it equally among the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezek. 47:1-13).

John saw in vision the tree of life in the midst of the city: “In the midst of the street of it, and either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare *twelve manner of fruits*, and yielded her fruit every month [twelve times per year]; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1,2).

Such is the awesome, breathtaking picture of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, which will be headquarters of Christ’s kingdom on this earth. It is positively laden with the number twelve, which symbolizes God’s perfect government, and organized beginnings.

Christ Is The HEAD, and Chief Corner Stone Of The Church

Christ told Peter and the apostles He would build His church: He said, "...thou art Peter [Greek: "petros," a pebble, or a stone], and upon this ROCK [Greek: "petra," a very large rock, such as a monolith, or a mountain of stone] I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18,19).

These are profound and far-reaching words, spoken to His disciples nearly two thousand years ago. First, as you read above, it is important to know Matthew's gospel was written in the Greek language, and that the Greek words used convey a different meaning than one might assume, reading the English.

Jesus Christ was not saying He was building His church on *Peter*, as if Peter would be the head of the church, or the "chief apostle." Christ plainly said Peter was a "pebble," but Jesus Christ was establishing His true church on the ROCK that was Christ.

Notice the many Bible proofs: "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect...then he [Israel] forsook GOD Which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation...of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful" (Deut. 32:1-18).

Paul showed how Israel's walk through the parted waters of the Red Sea typified baptism; how God provided them drink and food for forty years. Metaphorically, he showed how that "Rock" that followed them was Jesus Christ: "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and *that Rock was Christ*" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Christ was the "Chief Corner Stone," the *Rock* on which He founded His church, not Peter

"...He raised Him from the dead, and set Him [Christ] at His own right hand in the heavenly places,

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

“And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the *Head over all things to the church*,

“Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:20-23). Jesus Christ is the *Head* of His true church, not Peter!

A few verses later, Paul writes to the Gentiles, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone;

“In Whom all the building *fitly framed* together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord.

“In Whom ye also are *builded together* for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

Notice the language of God’s word. God’s church is to be “*fitly framed together*,” not haphazardly slapped together as if in indifferent, slipshod manner.

If you were blessed to be able to build a new home, would you want those who framed and poured the foundation to follow the plans of the architect? Would you want the framers, roofers, plasterers and cabinet-makers to *fitly frame together* your home?

How ugly, chaotic, and uninhabitable your home would be if each laborer *refused to cooperate with the others*; if each one pounded boards in any way that suited him; if the house ended up looking like a nightmare of odd-shaped doors and windows, sagging, unsafe roof, and lumpy, cracked driveway!

Building a house takes *planning*. It takes hard-working professionals; framers, cement finishers, plasterers, roofers, electricians and plumbers, to *work together*, to cooperate fully, to *fitly frame together* a new home!

How much *more* should the church of God require *unified cooperation*, so it is

built up into “an holy temple unto the Lord.” When Paul reminded the converted saints at Colossae about Christ’s Headship over His church, He told them that Christ was also the Creator of all things, just as John’s first chapter explains: “For by Him were all things created that are in heaven [an orderly intricately *organized* place], and that are in the earth [an *organized* ecosystem], visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him:

“And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

“And He is the *Head of the body, the church*: Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:16-18).

Time and time again, the Bible shows that Jesus Christ is the Head of His church; that He never turned the headship of the church over to Peter, or any other man. He told His disciples, “...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). The main thrust of the entire book of Hebrews is to show that Jesus Christ is a Living High Priest, sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, making daily intercession for His saints; guiding, directing, ruling over His church. For a complete understanding of these and other essential points, write or call (903) 561-7070 immediately for your free copies of “Where Is The True Church?” and, “Did Peter Have The Primacy?”

It stands absolutely *proved* from the pages of your own Bible that Jesus Christ retained the Headship over His true church. He never gave it into the hands of Peter, or any other human leader.

Jesus Christ *organized* His church by establishing it with exactly *twelve* apostles. He intervened when the eleven could not decide between the two they had chosen, indicating His choice was Matthias. Christ then inspired His apostles to place orderly system within His church so that large sums of money could be equally and fairly distributed; so widows would not be neglected; so deacons could be selected and ordained; so His apostles could go out and preach the gospel of the kingdom to the world.

Who IS Jesus Christ? He is the Creator of the universe! Study John’s first chapter once again. Is the universe organized? Is our solar system organized? Look at all the myriad life forms on this earth; our incredible ecosystem—from microscopic

bacteria to elephants and great blue whales-what do you see?

You see mind-boggling *organization*. The closer you look at what man has done, the more imperfection you see. The closer you look at what God has done, the more harmony, symmetry, order, and organization you see.

One of the main analogies used by God's word to help us understand His church is that of the human body. Study Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, chapter twelve. Here, Paul shows how each part of our body; the eye, ear, nose, hand or foot, is vitally necessary to every other part.

Is your body organized? If it weren't, you could not walk, or talk, or convey food to your mouth, or swallow a drink of water. Our bodies are an awesome masterpiece of miraculous engineering-made in the very image of God.

If our vital organs shut down, such as kidney failure, or heart failure, we will soon die, without emergency medical help, or a miracle from God.

God says all the bodily parts are tempered together "...that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Corinthians 12:4-25). This is an obvious analogy for the church which Christ organized.

Paul wrote, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

"Now ye are the *body of Christ* [metaphor for the church], and *members in particular*" (1 Corinthians 12:25,26). Are the members of your body *attached* to each other? Of course! And so should each member of God's true church; each converted, baptized person be *attached* to all the other members!

God's word makes plain that *every converted member* of His true church is a part of the spiritual "Body of Christ." It is God's perfect will that all these members be joined together in beautiful harmony; organized together in a smoothly-functioning body, in order to accomplish the work of God's church on this earth!

When you or I somehow damage our bodies; either through wrong diet or the ingestion of harmful substances; whether through contracting a disease, or being involved in an accident, the whole body suffers. If one of our major, vital organs ceases to function, the body dies!

If you are truly converted, then you are automatically a member of God's true church. God says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized *into ONE BODY*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

"For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:13,14). It is positively *foolish*, and totally contrary to God's will and His written word, for any person to think they will enter into God's kingdom if they are "*independent*" of the body of Christ.

And *why* did Christ build His church? To do the work of God! He commissioned His church to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the world as a witness! Write or call immediately for your free copy of our booklet, "WHY The Church?"

Now, *how* will Christ and His church rule all nations during the millennial reign of Christ?

How Will Christ And The Saints Rule?

God's church represents those "called-out ones" who are going to inherit eternity with Jesus Christ; who will rule with Him for one thousand years (Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 20:4). How will they rule?

What will this earth be like during the millennium? Will there be hundreds of governments as there are today? Will chaos, violence, hatred, racism, anarchy, and war prevail? Absolutely not! As we have seen, God's perfect government will be established on this earth, and Christ, together with the twelve apostles, and perhaps millions of others who will have been born of God by a resurrection or instantaneous change from human to spirit (1 Corinthians 15:50-52) will rule with Him over the entire earth.

How did God rule over Israel? He established order; He established a government, with Moses as His representative, and handed down laws Israel was to obey for their own good.

Ancient Israel was a Theocracy under God. He gave them commandments, statutes, and laws to regulate what should have been an orderly, peaceful, productive society.

But Israel rebelled. They murmured against Moses and against God. Time and time again, God carried out the death penalty on those who rebelled against Him. There were dozens of laws handed down; laws concerning physical health for their well-being, and that of their children; laws concerning the land; how to raise their herds and crops without pollutants, so their food would be healthy and nutritious. God gave them laws about honesty and fairness; laws about wills and inheritances; about landmarks and respect for another person's property; about how to rear their children to be happy, healthy, and obedient.

God's government was organized under Moses and Aaron. God inspired Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, to inform Moses he should set up a system of judges to hear difficult grievances, because Moses simply could not handle it all alone.

Thus, God showed Moses how he needed help in governing so many people; that there needed to be *organization*. In every facet of the theocracy of Israel; from the order of march (Num. 10:1-10) to their observance of God's seasonal Holy Days (Lev. 23), there was order, system, organization!

When Korah assayed to overthrow Moses; to declare himself equal with Moses, and take unto himself power and authority God had not given, he was destroyed with all his family and co-conspirators (Numbers 16).

God severely punished the evil spirit of independence among Israel when it reared its ugly, chaotic, rebellious head. He was the *Ruler*, and He intended that Israel obey His laws for their own good (Deut. 5:29-33; 28:1-14).

What Will The Kingdom Of God Be Like?

Will *chaos* reign during the Kingdom of God on earth? Will there be *millions* of those who have been inducted into the ruling Family of God who will maintain a fierce kind of haughty independence from their own spirit-formed brothers and sisters?

During the kingdom of God, will very members of God's own family say to each other, "Well, I have no difficulty forgiving you, but I don't want to have *anything further to do with you*"?

Will there be tens of thousands, or millions, of completely independent members of God's own family, who will shun anything to do with an "organization" in the

millennium?

Of course not! Such would be utterly impossible, for God's great plan and *purpose* here below is to *recreate after His own Kind*—to enlarge His loving, merciful, creating *Family*! There is no greater love in the universe than the love shared by Jesus Christ the Son and God the Father. When Christ comes to *rule* this world with a rod of iron, and to *share* that rulership with His own beloved brethren and sisters who will then be *born of God*, there will be fantastic, wondrous *harmony*; agreement, unanimity of purpose—perfect *organization*.

The most perfectly-organized, most beautifully integrated, smoothly-functioning government in the history of the universe will be in place on this earth. It is only those who have come broken-heartedly to God in soul-wracking repentance of sin; who have then humbly submitted to god's rule in their lives; who have asked Jesus Christ to become their *Boss*, as well as their daily High Priest, and their soon-coming King, who will BE in the kingdom of God!

As we have seen, God's own throne, in the midst of the heavenly city, New Jerusalem, will be positively festooned with various jewels, foundations and gates which represent *perfect government*; *perfect organization*; *organized beginnings*—the number twelve.

How will Jesus Christ rule? Will His rule be a reign of randomness; of chaos and confusion? You know better! No, it will be a reign of love, of order, harmony, and of *peace*. Everything will be *perfectly organized* in the millennium.

Think of one major reason why this is so. Satan the devil is the author of confusion! He is the architect of destruction; of chaos, of ugliness, of a proud, arrogant, *independent* spirit which *hates* government!

The devil is responsible for the *wreckage* we see on the lifeless faces of our moon, and the planets. He tried to *wreck* God's creation in the garden of Eden. He inspired Cain to kill his own brother. He utilized a tornado, and terrible boils, to destroy all of Job's family and possessions, and to torture Job. He was present at Christ's birth, to influence Herod to brutally murder thousands of innocent male babies in an attempt to kill Christ! He was present to tempt Christ in the wilderness; urging Him to *commit suicide*! He entered personally into Judas Iscariot to kill Christ, and then abandoned Judas, who, beside himself with horrible guilt and grief, hung himself!

The devil is the original *INDEPENDENT*!

Satan would not *obey* God. He did not want to remain under God's government with Michael and Gabriel, and all the millions of righteous angels. Instead, he plotted and planned; he schemed and influenced his angels until the moment came when he tried to overthrow God from His throne.

Satan, who was "Lucifer," the "bright shining star of the dawn," or "lightbringer," was not satisfied with being in charge of the beautiful world God had given him to rule. No, he wanted to mount up to depose God, and take over the entire universe!

Study Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, which reveal how Lucifer was in the "garden of God" (Eden) long before the Adamic creation. He went about as a "trafficker," or as a salesman, trafficking in his perverted ideas he was using to influence the angels under him.

The Bible does not reveal how long this process continued. Satan has his own twisted agenda. It galled him that God was Supreme; that He, Lucifer, had only the earth to rule. He desperately wanted to *overthrow God*.

Satan has influenced the minds of countless thousands of men down through history to attempt the same thing. Coups and counter-coups; revolutions; violent overthrows of government have occurred too many thousands of times to begin to recount.

Even before the Bible was completed, Jude wrote of such men - men who use *religious doctrines and politics* to gain power: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the *grace* of our God [His gracious forgiveness-unearned pardon] into lasciviousness [license, or permission to do evil], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ...and the angels [those who followed Satan] which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation [they attempted to overthrow God from heaven], He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 3-7).

Here, Jude likens evil men to the *demons* who followed Lucifer in his rebellion. Demons are fallen angels who are forced to remain on this earth until the time of judgment, when Satan and his cohorts will be cast away from the earth (Rev. 20:1-3).

Demons are given over to *caprice*; to chaos, confusion, and perversion. One has only to look at some of the so-called “art” that has been produced by demon-possessed “artists,” or listen to some of the screeching, moaning, wailing, insane so-called “music” produced by those so influenced to see an illustration of this.

The word “pandemonium” means total chaos and confusion. The prefix “pan” means, all, or everywhere. “Demonium” means just what it says—demonism! So “pandemonium” means demonic chaos and confusion! Without order and organization, whether you consider a backyard barbeque or a church service, *pandemonium* sets in.

God does not intend that His church resemble a day care center for undisciplined little children, running in all directions, screaming, yelling, engaging in unbridled behavior.

Jude continues describing those who hate God’s government; hate God’s laws; “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, *despise dominion*, and speak evil of dignities...Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain [who killed his own brother out of *jealousy*], and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward [their god is *money*; they are “for sale” so they can gain *material wealth in this world*], and perished in the gainsaying of Core [Korah; study Numbers 16].

“These are spots in your feasts of charity [love feasts], when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear; clouds they are without water, carried about of winds [unstable, capricious, following every rumor, every new “doctrine”]; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

“Raging waves of the sea [inwardly, they are bitter, angry, raging], foaming out their own shame: wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness

for ever...these are murmurers [whisperers, back-biters, tale-bearers, gossips, whose sole mission in life is to gripe and complain!], complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 10-16).

What a perfect description of those who, influenced by Satan, seek only their own gain; sycophants, they "butter up" those in positions of leadership so they can "gain advantage."

Now, notice the culmination of Jude's striking warning: "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

"How that they told you there should be *mockers* in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

"These be they who *separate* themselves [they become *separate*; independent!], sensual [emotional, reacting only carnally; of the physical senses and emotions], having not the Spirit.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20,21).

Jude urges converted Christians to build up themselves in God's church and fellowship-not to be like those who separate themselves!

The Great Commission To Christ's Church

Jesus Christ did not tell His apostles to each go his own way! He did not found His church on the concept of chaos, rebellion, independence, and pandemonium! As we have seen, He saw to it His true Church would begin with exactly *twelve* apostles, a perfect governmental number-the number of *organized beginnings*.

Then, He gave them a vitally important JOB to do.

There was a plainly-stated *purpose* for Jesus Christ to tell Peter and the disciples what He did. Following His resurrection, and His many appearances to them,

Jesus Christ *commissioned* His disciples.

“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, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:

“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 [Greek: “age”]. Amen’” (Matthew 28:18-20).

The command to “GO” was explicit! Christ enlarged on this command to a great extent, leaving no doubt whatsoever in His disciple’s minds what He meant. He meant for them to travel to the distant lands of the earth; to go from Jerusalem, teaching and preaching the good news of Christ’s life; His death, burial and resurrection, and the good news of the Gospel of the Kingdom He had taught them.

This was a vast and awesome challenge! The whole world lay before them; a world filled with ignorance, superstition, poverty, squalor, disease, crime, and war! Today, conditions are *far_worse* than before! The most *desperately needed* news this sin-sick world could hear today is the GOOD NEWS about the soon-coming government of God; the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, to put an end to human suffering!

Jesus Christ had taught His disciples for three and one-half years. But they were *carnal* during that time; they didn’t truly understand. It was not until He appeared to them time and time again following His resurrection that they finally understood what it was they were to do.

Luke wrote, “Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures [the only “scriptures” extant at the time were the scriptures of the Old Testament],

“And said unto them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.’ And ye are witnesses of these things”

(Luke 24:45-47).

The first part of the Great Commission Christ gave His group of called-out ones was to *preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world*. But there was a *second* part to the Great Commission, and that second part, just like the first part, would require *organization*.

In His final appearance to His disciples, Jesus told Peter three times, "Feed My sheep!" (John 21:15-17). Peter had denied Christ three times, as Jesus predicted he would. Then, Christ made Peter repeat three times how he would faithfully *care* for those who would be converted and baptized: "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest Me more than these?' He saith unto Him, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love thee.' He saith unto him, 'Feed My lambs'" (John 21:15).

Christ emphasized to Peter that his responsibility was to care for Christ's flock by forcing Peter to repeat his love for Jesus Christ three times. Each time, Jesus told Peter to *feed His flock*!

The Great Commission of Jesus Christ was two-fold. One part of the commission naturally led to the other, for when the apostles preached Christ's gospel to the world, it was inevitable God would *call* some of them; that He would draw them to Jesus Christ by His Spirit.

Mark's gospel account says, "And He said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned [condemned; judged]" (Mark 16:15,16).

When people hear the gospel of Christ and are convicted by it, they are led to *repent*, receive baptism, and to be *saved*. It is not in God's intention that they should then be *abandoned* by the very preachers who were used as an instrument in God's hands to call them in the first place!

Christ's final words to His disciples are recorded in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye

shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:7,8).

Again, Christ made it clear that He expected His disciples to go into all the world, preaching the good news of His resurrection, and the good news of His coming kingdom.

Inevitably, as He clearly told them, their message of joy and hope; their message of witness and warning, would result in some repenting and asking for baptism. If you were such a preacher, and thousands of people asked for baptism, would it require any organized effort on your part to baptize them, and then to *care* for them as a church?

Of course it would! First, it would require a place for the newly-converted people to congregate. God's word commands that His people assemble together to worship Him; to hear His word preached; to fellowship. Someone would have to be responsible for setting up a place for the church to meet; establish a time for services, and arrange that worship services are conducted in an efficient, orderly manner.

Traditionally, music forms part of the service, so songbooks and a songleader, together with a pianist or organist, would also have to be present. Is it important for the people attending church services to *hear* what is being said? Certainly! Therefore, if the meeting place is large enough, modern means of communication, such as microphones and speakers, would have to be in place.

All of this would require a certain amount of *organization*. Someone would have to either own, or rent, the meeting place. Someone would have to provide the songbooks, the piano or organ. Someone would have to insure there was ample seating and other amenities, like restrooms; perhaps a sickroom, a mother's room, or a nursery. It might be necessary to provide a *baptistry*, or a place to baptize newly repentant believers.

On feast days, when converted brethren come together for the purpose of sharing in a "potluck" meal, it might require that an adequate *kitchen* of some size be provided.

Imagine a congregation of one hundred or more, which would include several elderly persons and small children, which has *none* of the aforementioned

amenities. Where would they congregate? Where would they sit? How would they hear? How would they sing without song books, a piano or an organ, and someone to play it?

In the first few days and weeks of the early church, the apostles had to learn that the *second* part of the Great Commission to the church requires some careful planning; some *organization*.

Order And System In God's Early Church

Notice what happened on the Day of Pentecost; the birthday of the true Church [assembly of "called-out ones"].

Following the impassioned sermons of many of the apostles, Peter spoke powerfully of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After the huge crowd had seen the miracles of the flaming crowns of fire atop the apostle's heads; had heard the miracle of each one of the apostles speaking in perhaps fifteen different languages, they were astonished. Many of them were deeply stricken with guilt and fear. Luke wrote, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, *what shall we do?*'"

"Then Peter said unto them, '*Repent*, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy spirit'...And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.'

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about *three thousand souls*...And the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved" (Acts 2:37-47).

This was the first part of the Great Commission of Christ in action. Please write or call for your free copy of our booklet "The Miracle of Pentecost" for a thorough understanding of the awesome events of that Day of Pentecost.

For some time, these enthusiastic, euphoric new converts remained in Jerusalem. Acts 4 tell us how they began to be persecuted; threatened not to preach in Jesus' name any further. Acts 4:34 to Acts 5 tells us how they were sharing their money and substance, so that all could continue to hear the apostles; how Annanias and

Sapphira lied to the Holy spirit, and were struck dead; how even the shadow of Peter, passing over the sick, instantly healed them.

Once again, from Acts 5:17 to the end of the chapter, God tells us how the apostles were arrested, beaten, and threatened again not to preach in Jesus' name.

Now, notice what happened: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were being neglected in the daily ministration" (Acts 6:1).

"The daily ministration" means the daily service. So ecstatic were these newly-converted brethren; so eager were the growing number of disciples to learn from the apostles, they were meeting daily! This meant they were spending several hours each day in large meetings; in fellowship; listening to various of the apostles preaching and teaching. Invariably, there had to be foodstuffs provided. Luke tells us what happened:

"Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, 'It is not reason that we should leave the word of God [abandon our preaching and teaching], and serve tables'" (Acts 6:2). The tables were for people to use in sitting down to eat their meals; to visit among themselves; to listen to the apostles.

"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

"Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they *laid their hands* on them [this was an ordination to the office of "deacon;" the original "diakonate" of the church].

"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" (Acts 6:1-7).

Notice carefully the real *purpose* for the ordination of these seven men. Plainly, it was to *care for the widows*, and to wait on tables.

Already, a problem had arisen; human feelings were involved. The Grecians began “murmuring,” meaning criticizing and complaining against some of the Jews, because they saw widows being neglected. Hearing of it, the apostles called a meeting of the larger group of about 120 (Acts 1:15). There was no specific scripture to which Peter could point which told them to ordain seven men as deacons.

The word “deacon” merely means “servant.” Peter and the apostles faced a problem. Emotions were involved. People were talking openly about the widows being ignored. Seeing the need, Peter and the others pondered how to deal with it. What did they decide? Surely, they must have known of how Jethro told Moses the burden he bore was too great for him; how Moses had appointed counselors to help. Surely they knew, from the pattern of the temple itself, as well as many local synagogues, that there had to be *order* instead of confusion; that it was not the way of Christ for elderly widows to be left to fend for themselves amidst a large crowd of hungry people.

Jesus Christ had plainly told them He had given them the power to *bind or loose*; to make certain binding decisions for the good of the church (Matt. 16:19; 18:18).

Therefore, because the fledgling church needed more organization and less confusion, Peter and the other apostles appointed seven deacons to help with the physical amenities at their meeting place--to assist the widows, seeing they had comfortable seating, and sufficient food.

God added remarkable spiritual gifts to at least two of the original “diakonate,” or the deacons. Stephen’s impassioned witness, and his murder by stoning, are set forth in Acts 7. Philip’s preaching at Samaria, and his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch are detailed in Acts 8. However, it is plain that the purpose for the ordination was to care for the widows, and to wait on tables. God can give His spiritual gifts to any person, regardless of any such appointment.

It remained for the apostle Paul, many years later, to list the qualifications for those who would serve the church as elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3).

The Church Is The Body Of Christ

God's word contains many analogies to help us understand what the church is; what it is supposed to do. The church is called the "bride of Christ" (Rev. 19:7-9). It is likened unto a "temple" (Eph. 2:21). It is called "God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). It is also likened unto a human physical *body*, and called, by analogy, the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27). Each of these analogies, and others, such as "Ye are God's husbandry" (I Cor 3:9), are to show how Jesus Christ *dwells* in His true church; how He cares for it, as would a Shepherd.

There is no more perfectly *organized* or flawlessly designed entity in the universe than the human body. As God's created beings, we are awesome living organisms. Any serious study into physiology and anatomy; into the function of your brain, your digestive system, your eyes, your ears, your senses of feeling, taste and smell, is an amazing journey of discovery. Truly, the human body is a miraculous creation.

Is it *organized*? If it were not, you could not walk. You could not pick up a spoon or a fork, and convey food from your plate to your mouth. You could not think, or talk. When terrible diseases like multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease strike human bodies, they become *disorganized*. Tragically, the miraculous, smoothly-functioning coordination of the mind and body are impaired.

God uses His marvelous masterpiece of creation, the human body, as an analogy of the church.

Paul wrote, "For as the body is one, and hath many members [such as our arms and legs], and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body [by analogy, into the church, for the church is the "body of Christ"], whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

"For the body is not one member [independent of all the others] but many.

"If the foot shall say, 'Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;' is it therefore not of the body?

“And if the ear shall say, ‘Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body;’ is it therefore not of the body?

“If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

“But now hath *God* set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.

“And if they were all one member, where were the body?

“But now are they many members, yet one body” (1 Corinthians 12:12-20).

Each member of your body is an individual member. You have a right hand, a right eye, and a left foot. But each member is *connected* to the body; supports the body, makes the body a smoothly-functioning organism.

Paul continued, “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, ‘I have no need of thee:’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’

“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary” (1 Corinthians 12:21-22).

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these words. He was appealing to the Corinthian church to be truly *unified*, and not divided (1 Corinthians 1:11-13). The last thing Paul wanted for the church was for various ones to become imbued with *party spirit*, choose a human leader, and go off in different directions, independently of the body.

Why did Jesus Christ want His true church to remain truly *unified*, and not divided into pieces?

We have already read it. Jesus commissioned His apostles to *preach the gospel* to every creature, and to *feed the flock* that would be converted and saved as a result! For them to fulfill this two-part commission, it was necessary for them to be *organized*!

Paul wrote, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

“And *God* [not man] hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps,

governments, diversities of tongues [languages]" (1 Corinthians 12:27-29).

God is not the Author of confusion, but of *order*. Creation is an *orderly* place--the universe and the solar system are an awe-inspiring example of *order*, not of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

When we read words like "first, secondarily, thirdly," and then read, "after that," and "then," we are reading how Paul said God had placed gifts and callings in His church in an *orderly* manner. That this is not intended to indicate "rank," but *function*, is made plain by the same apostle in his letter to the Ephesian church:

"And He [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). Here, Paul describes the same three functions of Christ's ministry as he did to the Corinthians, adding the descriptive word "pastors" to the word "teachers." The word "pastor" means "shepherd," or caretaker.

Now, *why* did God appoint these different functions within the church? "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

"That we henceforth be no more children [spiritually], tossed to and fro, and carried about with even wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:12-14).

This is a clarion call for *unity* among both the leadership and the laity of the church. It is also clearly describing the various functions of Christ's ministry. Notice that Paul told the Corinthian church that God had placed "helps," and "governments" within the church.

These are not descriptive terms for independence, chaos, and confusion. They do not provide sanction for individuals who proudly *shun* fellowship with God's church, proud in their own self-righteousness. No, they are Spirit-inspired descriptions of an *organized* church, with appropriately designated servants fulfilling different functions for a *purpose*.

How Would YOU Preach The Gospel To The World?

Suppose you felt called to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the general public. How would you go about it?

There are a number of methods that might occur to you. The first, requiring no “organization” of any kind, would simply be to accost individuals on the street, and begin to “witness” to them, attempting to get them to stop and listen.

Among the dozens who would hurry by as if they hadn’t heard; those who might spit at you, or curse, or make an obscene gesture, or those who might complain to a policeman, suppose one person finally stopped to listen. *Then* what? Is it “mission accomplished” for the day? But suppose they were desperately poor, and asked you for food or clothing? Suppose they said they had hungry children, and had no home--would you take them in? What if six, or ten, or twenty such people responded to your personal “witness” in only one day? Would you begin to realize you might need some help to care for them, if this is your goal? Supposing you find a benefactor--an almost impossible scenario--and you began to accumulate hungry, homeless, destitute people. Then what? What do you do for them the following week, and next month, and next year?

And if you *do* succeed in caring for a very few people in a huge city of several million, have you then fulfilled the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to *preach the good news of the coming kingdom of God to the world*? Or have you, instead, made one very small contribution among only a tiny number of people in a vast population of perhaps millions?

Quickly, one might discover that one’s original goal of “preaching the gospel to the world” was abandoned, and that one had, instead, gone into competition with dozens of local, county, state, and federal agencies and the government itself, with its various welfare programs, not to mention many churches and charitable agencies which are established for that very purpose.

Caring for a few people would be fulfilling; a charitable, caring thing to do, but it would not accomplish the goal of *preaching the gospel to the world*.

Another method one might use, if one were determined to avoid any kind of

organized effort, is simply to go from house to house, knock on doors, and attempt to preach to those within. This is done, of course, by a number of large churches. However, they are *organized*, and their “missionaries,” or “witnesses,” are supplied with literature, and instructed in techniques.

Most of the time, any such attempt would be met with stolid indifference; with annoyance at being interrupted and accosted. Doors would be firmly slammed shut. Some might curse those who uninvitedly called on them. Others might physically attack them. Fairly often, we hear of a youth who became turned around, drove down a neighborhood cul-de-sac, and was shot to death by gang members, who viewed any stranger as an invader of their territory.

To increase one’s audience, one might roll up a newspaper or a magazine, and shout at passers-by in their automobiles, or on foot, from a busy city street corner. How many would park illegally, get out of their car, and sit down for an hour’s “Bible study”?

Suppose a would-be non-organized, one-man evangelist decided to utilize some the mass_media to get out his message? Instantly, he faces the prospect of financial capability. Ads in newspapers cost money. Printing even small, one-page flyers for placing in mail boxes or beneath windshield wipers in parking lots cost money.

If such a person had the money, would his message ad contain an address? Would he want a response from the people he is trying to reach? What if he could afford to print a thousand flyers and distribute them, and perhaps six people responded? To what are they responding? Has our one-man, unorganized evangelist already written a book, or booklet; an article, or a brochure that he is advertizing, hoping a few people will respond, and want to look into his message a little deeper?

Again, if he has gone to such an effort, it will have cost him some money. Suddenly, he has a mailing list. Now, he is collecting names and addresses. He will have to keep track of them somehow. A personal computer, perhaps? A simple 3×5 card file? In either event, some money is involved. And something more. Organization. He would probably want to alphabetize his file; presumably send the respondents some literature.

Once again, money will have to be spent, for computers cost money; paper costs money; printing costs money; postage costs money.

Another method an unorganized, one-man would-be evangelist might use is to buy a tent, find a vacant lot where he could obtain a permit to erect it, put up a sign in front of it, and hold a nightly evangelistic campaign. He might also want to knock on doors (making sure to avoid the wrong kinds of neighborhoods), distribute flyers, or take out an ad in the local newspapers. Again, money is involved. The tent costs money. Chairs cost money. Lights cost money. Flyers and ads cost money.

What if a number of people show up, and a would-be evangelist is so successful that some of them want to be baptized? Does he send them to the nearest Baptist church? Or would it be unthinkable for him to baptize them himself, and then assume the responsibility for their *care*, as Christ commanded His disciples? If he is now becoming the pastor of a small flock, do they have a *name*? Does he want to meet with them regularly? If they wish to contribute to his work, and it is obvious he has a number of expenses to defray, should he keep records of how much they give? Does he need to report it to anyone?

What would an unorganized, would-be evangelist call such an “unorganized” effort? “The Independent, Unorganized, Unilateral, Unaligned, Non-involved, Anarchistic Church?”

Suppose such an independent, unorganized, would-be evangelist decides to reach hundreds of people, or even thousands. Radio and television stations are not in the habit of clearing time and selling it to private citizens with no corporate identity; no corporate backing; no legal status. They require bona-fide organizational backing for those they allow to purchase air time, in case complaints are made to the FCC, such as demands for “equal time” from detractors.

Furthermore, radio and television time is very expensive. An independent, unorganized, would-be evangelist would discover that it would cost him several thousand dollars to purchase only one half-hour on one television station in a large city. The Evangelistic Association must pay \$4,500.00 for one half hour on WGN, Chicago at the very early time of 6:00 AM, Monday mornings, which is 5:00 AM Central – virtually useless to us except for the Eastern Time Zone. Now, via radio and/or television, our evangelist is able to reach *thousands* of people. Same man, same message! But instead of accosting one person at a time, he can be invited into the intimate environment of thousands of living rooms via radio or

television, and speak to vast audiences with the same amount of effort!

Which is the most effective? Which comes closer to fulfilling Christ's Great Commission to His church, which was "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?"

Obviously, it is far more effective to reach *large masses* of people, instead of one person at a time. The bottom line is that such an independent, would-be evangelist would find out very quickly that he was forced to *organize*, after all!

Once he does this, he is the leader of an *organization*, whether the word appeals to him or not.

What Is Sinister About A Corporation?

The word "corporation" comes from the Latin "corpus," which means "body." A synonym is to "embody." Put simply, the term means a group of people, organized together into a legally responsible entity to fulfill a purpose. We speak of the "major corporations" when we speak of such giants as General Motors, Ford, Boeing, or IBM. There are tens of thousands of minor ones, including families who have incorporated in order to run in-the-home businesses.

From your local quick-food stop to the filling station; from your local shopping mall to MacDonalds, you are dealing with corporations. There is nothing evil, or sinister about corporations or organizations.

Here is what the dictionary says about the word "Corporate:"

"Of *corporare*; to make into a body. 1. a: formed into an association and endowed by law with the rights and liabilities of an individual; relating to, or formed into a unified body of individuals; society." The word "Corporation" is defined as follows: "2: a body formed and authorized by law to act as a single person although constituted by one or more persons and legally endowed with various rights and duties including the capacity of succession" (Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary, p. 292).

Just as your hands and feet, and various "members" of your physical body are organized into a single entity; a human, physical organism, so any number of *individuals* may form themselves into a "corporation," or a united *body*, in order

to accomplish stated goals and objectives.

Thousands of local, independent churches are incorporated. Why? Because they desire to share collective ownership of their church building, their chairs, sound system, kitchen equipment and the like, instead of allow it to be owned and controlled by only one individual.

Obviously, a primary reason such corporations are formed is *financial* considerations, such as keeping careful records of tithes and offerings, maintaining official control of a corporate bank account, and asking for tax-exempt status from the IRS.

The Intercontinental Church of God was originally formed as a corporation in Texas, in 1998. The ICG is recognized as a bona-fide church by the Internal Revenue Service. It is authorized to purchase and construct the physical facilities necessary to carry out its primary goals. It is governed by a Board of Trustees which oversees the corporate responsibilities of the church. Its primary goals are made eminently plain in its Constitution and By-laws, which explain much of the secondary commission of Christ — that of feeding the flock of God.

The Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association, which was first incorporated in 1979, exists solely to accomplish the *Great Commission* Jesus Christ gave to His church; to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to the world, and to feed the flock.

The two legal corporate entities are mutually supportive of each other; work in perfect harmony and cooperation to accomplish Christ's two-part Commission.

The Evangelistic Association, as a result of the freely-given tithes and offerings of its fellow-laborers with Christ and faithful members of the church, is able to purchase time on a number of television stations. It sends out tens of thousands of books, booklets, brochures and sermon tapes each year, as well as publishing, from time to time, "Twenty-First Century Watch," and its church newspaper, "The Intercontinental News."

The two corporations each maintain a web site. Approximately one thousand visitors each day visit the Evangelistic web site at "garnertedarmstrong.org/."

The headquarters of both corporations are located in our own new building, at

17444 Highway 155 South, Flint, Texas, 75762. The telephone number, advertised over television and in our literature, is (903) 561-7070.

The Intercontinental Church of God maintains over 100 chartered churches and smaller, hosted study groups, providing each with video taped sermons each week. We send out ministers to counsel with and baptize those who are being called of God; who wish to repent, have their sins washed away, and become a child of God by receiving His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

If you want information about the church or study group nearest your home, please call or write immediately. We will supply you with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of our nearest representatives.

Complete, detailed information about the Intercontinental Church of God and the Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association is available on our web sites.

You may copy and distribute this information only to friends and family without changes, without charge and with full credit given to the author and publisher.

You may not publish it for general audiences.

This publication is intended to be used as a personal study tool. Please know it is not wise to take any man's word for anything, so prove all things for yourself from the pages of your own Bible.

The activities of the Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association are paid for by tithes, offerings and donations freely given by Christians and co-workers who are dedicated to preaching the gospel according to Jesus Christ.