

THE CHURCH: THE STRUCTURE AND THE FUNCTION

Since the Holy Spirit has been sent to the church and His function is within individual members which, together, function as the "church", we should understand something about the church in order to understand His work. The scriptural church is identified in two primary ways; It's structure and it's function. We can define the church in many areas but these two objective areas are how the church is identified. While the church is certainly not bricks and mortar, it does have a God designed structure. The structure has a purpose that is defined by it's function. A church with no function is worthless to man and to God.

The church has accepted so many things as scriptural that have only been the traditions and teachings of men. The fact is that man has little or no idea of what the church should be. The scripture is really not that clear and makes no effort to define what the church is in God's eyes. For that reason, we all are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to establish the church according to the directions of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, I will build my church. He is building it through the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit. If we ignore or reject the Holy Spirit, we will not be built into the eternal structure called the church, the body of Christ.

CO. 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you {as} a pure virgin. CO. 11:3 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity {of devotion} to Christ. In many ways, the church has been deceived and led astray by the Devil. Ignoring and rejecting the Holy Spirit is just one way but is fatal. If the church ignores or rejects the Holy Spirit, she will establish a counterfeit structure with a man made function that has no eternal purpose.

God has given us a transparent type from Genesis 11 to identify the difference between a man made effort within an earthly system and God's design for the church. The type shows how God rejected their labor.

GEN 11:3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn {them} thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. GEN 11:4 And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top {will reach} into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." GEN 11:5 And the \Lord\came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. GEN 11:6 And the \Lord\said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. GEN 11:7 "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." GEN 11:8 So the \Lord\scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. GEN 11:9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the \Lord\confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the \Lord\scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

Babel and the city of Babel which was called Babylon is a picture of a counterfeit religion and human effort to reach into heaven. Babylon is called the great harlot. Very religious but earthly in

it's structure and counterfeit in it's function. It is self serving and self exalting in it's purpose. It represented a great cost and much planning and a team effort of labor but God rejected it and destroyed it.

The basis of this structure being built was religious but the method was a substitute for God's requirements to ascend into heaven. It represents man's best effort and his own ideas of exalting himself to heaven. We will make for ourselves a name. They substituted bricks in the place of stone and tar instead of mortar. This was an earthly structure with a heavenly purpose. It's purpose was to reach into heaven. Most all false religions have this same goal but refuse to accept God's provision or His method. It's foundation is on earth but it's top was to be in the heavenlies. This was an earthly structure with a heavenly purpose.

God's true structure is made of living stones and not man made bricks. It is held together with God's Love and His character, with His person. Tar melts and runs in the fire of trials. The church's foundation is in His Holy mountain. The church's foundation is in God presence. The church's foundation is in heaven. It is a heavenly structure with an earthly purpose. While it's foundation is in heaven, it's purpose is to reach the earth.

We could say the church is built from heaven with one living stone joined with heavenly mortar to another living stone. It is built upon the foundation of Christ only. It's goal is to establish the Kingdom of heaven upon the earth. The Kingdom is established when the will of God is being done on earth in the same measure that it is being done in Heaven.

The church is a spiritual structure that must function in a hostile and material world. She must function in a supernatural way, with a supernatural power or it will be swallowed up by the world system. If the church is just another earthly structure, operating in a natural way, it will be just another tower of Babel. It may have a heavenly purpose but it will be so confused it will be scattered. God can't help that kind of church, He can only destroy it.

Even though this tower had a goal of getting to heaven, it is significant that the Devil offered no resistance. Anything that is built with it's foundation on the earth will have the Devil's blessing.

God has not lost interest or rejected the earth. The earth is God created, God designed, God approved and God sustained. The earth has God's blessing. The church, then, must function on God's earth and multiply and subdue the earth and rule over the earth for God. Not for any self seeking goals or self exalting or self glorifying ambition. The church is to function on the earth and to manifest His glory on the earth.

The church must be a spiritual power that functions in the material realm but in a practical way. That is how God prepares the church for His eternal purpose. 1John is the book that focuses on the practical aspect of the true church. Love one another. Keep the commandments of God. Love every child born of God. Overcome the world. The church just cannot be like any other structure that is upon this earth. It cannot be one of many. All gods are not the true God and all churches are not the true church. God is not like any other gods and the church is not like any other structure. The Kingdom is not like any other kingdom.

As we look at the frustration that is universal around the world, it is clear that the governments of this world system are functionally unworkable. When they fix one thing three more break. The confusion in Russia is amazing. Our government thought if Russia just became democratic with a market economy it would solve everyone's problems. None of these things change the selfishness and greed and one man exploiting another for personal gain. Central America is a good example of good intentions producing nothing but more greed and little concern for the people.

God has ordained that the governments of this present world system, which are unworkable, be replaced with the Kingdom of God. Unless the church, which will administrate the Kingdom, is much, much different than the people who administrate the present world governments, the Kingdom would be unworkable also.

The world governments reflect the fallen instincts of man. Their goal is the prosperity and enhancement of the few at the expense of the many. Politics is basically self promoting and is directed toward power and control of others for the benefit of the few. The church must develop exactly the opposite view. Jesus could not establish a political government, like the Jews expected, because of the depravity of man. The Kingdom will be established as the government of this earth but the persons who will participate must be totally transformed from what they are, to what they must become, in order to participate. The center of all that is Christian is Christ. Unless the foundation of the church is Christ only, the Kingdom would be like other governments. Whatever is self centered and seeks to control others is anti-Christ. What ever church is self centered and selfish and self exalting and self-serving is a counterfeit church. It may look O.K. and have orthodox doctrines and hold to all the proper traditions but it is in reality a harlot church. It can no longer be considered as Christian.

We have all known someone who is totally self-centered and selfish and still professes to be a Christian. They have no concern to reach out to others, or give of their time or possessions or sacrifice for the sake of others. In that same way there are churches that hold that same attitude. They may appear to be Christian but are a harlot. The great problem is that much of what is accepted as Christian, is no longer Christian. Churches have been denominationalized rather than Christianized. They are more concerned with building a denomination than the Kingdom. A false church can be identified when it is only concerned with it's own members, it's own growth, it's own provision, it's own traditions, it's own doctrines and ministering for it's own good. If it's goal is not to strengthen the whole body of Christ, the group has become introverted and self serving. It is not yet Christian.

This of course is not new. It is a problem with under developed disciples. LUK 9:49 And John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to hinder him because he does not follow along with us." LUK 9:50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder {him;} for he who is not against you is for you." If they are not with us, we won't help them in their ministry. Their concern was for their own group and not for the ones who needed deliverance. LUK 9:54 And when His disciples James and John saw {this,} they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" LUK 9:55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; LUK 9:56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. " If we only care about

our own group, we may have a proper church structure but we are ignorant of our function and who we serve. We haven't yet discerned what Spirit we are of. When a church can reach out to help others solely for the sake of Christ and not for personal benefit, that church is becoming Christian.

Missionaries have reported that people they were trying to reach with the gospel have said, "Give us Christ but we don't want Christianity". Christ is pure while the church is a mixture. Christ, Himself is desirable while the church is rejected. If we promote Christ, we have something to offer. If we promote the church, it is hard to sell. When a group demands that a believer give himself 100% to the church rather than 100% to Christ, that group is not Christian. They are promoting themselves rather than the Kingdom of God. If a church is pure, it will have Jesus Christ as it's center and not some organization or doctrine. The problem is that even lost sinners have some sense of reality and can spot a phony. The news media may not have any revelation of Christ but they can spot a phony and are quick to expose a fake. I believe God helps them.

The structure may be really perverted by a self-exalting ministry but still have a church that appears to have a valid function. However without a valid structure the function will surely get distorted. Even though the structure seems to be scriptural, if the church does not have a scriptural function, the "church" cannot be Christian. The Christian church can be identified by it's function. Without an eternal vision, the function can take on the atmosphere of a business that measures success by the bottom line. The church may develop a structure that promotes a management team, a new products team, a financial team and various committees to run a well oiled machine. No matter how organized a church becomes, church politics will destroy the church function. The temptation is to appoint function according to natural selection by choosing those who have natural abilities and natural gifts. Certain "ministries" are appointed to work in place of the whole body. Unless the whole church, which means all the saints, are free to function and are encouraged to function, the church will have lost it's life and vitality and will sink into lethargy. All saints must be in "full time ministry".

Full time ministry has been erroneously defined as the Apostles, the Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. Some include administrations and others include those that will assist the "full time Ministries" in dish washing and floor sweepers and transportation workers. Some so called "full time ministers" exist as an end in themselves. They become the "structure" of the church. Since only those who are "full time" are included in the structure only these end up with a function. Actually, the church is the body of Christ and in the true body of Christ every member must function. In the type of the Old Covenant the high priest couldn't have parts of his body that wouldn't function.

LEV 21:17 "Speak to Aaron, saying, 'No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the bread of his God. LEV 21:18 'For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured {face}, or any deformed {limb}, LEV 21:19 or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, LEV 21:20 or a hunchback or a dwarf, or {one who has} a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles. LEV 21:21 'No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, is to come near to offer the \Lord's\offerings by fire; {since} he has a defect, he shall not come near to offer the

bread of his God. LEV 21:22 'He may eat the bread of his God, {both} of the most holy and of the holy, LEV 21:23 only he shall not go in to the veil or come near the altar because he has a defect, that he may not profane My sanctuaries. For I am the \Lord\who sanctifies them. '"

Now Jesus, our High Priest, has entered into the veil and God's purpose is to bring His body (His bride) into that same place, that the two may become one. The true body of Christ cannot have any of the defects that are listed here in type. Every member of Christ's body must function full time.

The structure of the church, which must include every member, has no other reason to exist except to promote church function. If there are members that are under developed or deformed, or have defects, the ministries must provide the encouragement to get scriptural healing for the members so they can function. Of course we are speaking of spiritual weakness and not physical problems. Many who have physical problems are strong workers because they have been encouraged to function.

If these ministries just exist to promote their own offices, they have perverted their own function. These ministries have no reason to exist except to promote church function. When church hierarchy replaces the body or the head in function, we see a perversion of what the church was designed to be. When the ministry assumes that the church cannot hear the voice of God and assumes the position of hearing the voice of God for the church, it has exceeded it's function. How then can we identify the church?

- (1) The whole church is the structure.
- (2) Each church must have living and functioning members.
- (3) Each member will have his God given work.
- (4) Each work will have it's God assigned workers.
- (5) Each worker will have his gift so he may complete the work.
- (6) The whole church provides the workers for the work but each with his own calling and grace.
- (7) God selects and appoints the workers to be sent out to "the Work" that is outside the local church.

ACT 13:2 And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ACT 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. God had a work to be done so he called two workers to be set apart for "the work".

When we seek to change this order, we change the basic order of the church.

Any organization that does not encourage "one talent members" to function cannot be "The church which is His body". Any member that insists upon functioning out of selfishness and self-promoting, in an independent way, cannot be a part of the body that Jesus is building to be His bride. Any saint that is centered on anything except Christ and His purpose cannot be a part of the body that has Christ as its head. One talent members will never find a valid excuse not to function.

There is a tremendous danger of ministries, defining ministries according to their own calling and being blind to all the other ministries that are just as valid. There is a great danger of "ministries" designating certain requirements before a ministry can be recognized as a valid ministry. Each potential member of the completed body of Christ will have his own calling and his own grace. The calling and the grace, along with the gift will define the ministry. Everyone who is saved is called. 2TI 1:9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, Everyone who is saved is called. Not according to our own natural abilities but according to His own purpose and grace. All this is part of God's predestined plan from all eternity past. To eliminate "one talent believers" and depreciate their function, is to rob the church of a large part of its purpose. Ten believers with one talent function is equal to one with ten talents but offers much more diversity.

ACT 9:36 Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which translated {in Greek} is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did. ACT 9:37 And it came about at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. ACT 9:38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him, "Do not delay to come to us." ACT 9:39 And Peter arose and went with them. And when he had come, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. ACT 9:40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ACT 9:41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

This question should be continually asked, until it is resolved; Was Dorcas in the full time ministry? What was her standing in the community of believers? Was God pleased with her life and work? Did she fulfil the purpose for which she was called? If she didn't live in a church specified place and meet certain consecration requirements, could she still be considered as a minister of God to the church and the community where she lived? In some churches Dorcas would be considered "just a believer" who didn't have enough faith to believe God for her support, so she worked to support herself. This story about Dorcas was not included to convey anything like that kind of message. Dorcas was an example for us to encourage us that everybody in the body of Christ has a ministry and a calling from God. It shows us God was pleased with her life and ministry. She didn't have to preach and teach to have a "valid ministry". She was not just teaching words but she preached "life" as was witnessed by the mourners.

Acts 6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing {in number,} a complaint arose on

the part of the Hellenistic {Jews} against the {native} Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving {of food.} ACT 6:2 And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. ACT 6:3 "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ACT 6:4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." For the church to function as a real church, different and diverse ministries were needed. The Apostles couldn't do it all and they recognized their grace and calling was for the study of the Word of God, the ministry of the Word of God and prayer. This is a valid and God appointed ministry. Someone has to do it. But what about all the other ministries that are absolutely necessary for the church to be the church. Is the ministry of the word and prayer the "consecrated ministry" and waiting on tables on the same level of ministry as handing out tracts and paying the tithe? Unless the widows and orphans were provided for, God's heart would not be satisfied and He certainly couldn't have blessed the ministry of the word and prayer.

A ministry that exists just to perpetuate itself would have said, Let us work longer hours and complete the ministry of the word and prayer and then we will wait on tables because we are the only qualified ministers who have met all our designated conditions. Minister means "servant" so we want to serve in every way possible and in the place of all others who are "just believers".

This is not what Acts 6 is teaching. It is teaching that each God given ministry is valid and is necessary. It teaches that the Apostles were not threatened by others in the body functioning. They recognized their own calling and stuck with it and didn't try to do everyone else's ministry. This is not just "delegating authority", as is commonly taught, which is a business and political tool. The Apostles recognized that there is a whole body that must be encouraged to function. The structure of the body is not the Apostles or the ministries but the whole functioning body as one unit. Whenever "a ministry" tries to divide the body up into two groups, one that functions and one that doesn't, they have already fallen into great deception.

ACT 6:5 And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. The scriptures don't tell us what these other men went on to accomplish but it does tell us about Stephen and Philip.

ACT 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. ACT 6:10 And {yet} they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ACT 7:55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ACT 7:59 And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon {the Lord} and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ACT 7:60 And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep.

Stephen preached one tremendous sermon and then they killed him. There is no doubt that they killed a functioning Christian and a minister of the word.

ACT 8:5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and {began} proclaiming Christ to them. ACT 8:6 And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. ACT 8:7 For {in the case of} many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out {of them} shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. Philip was a minister of the word and God was confirming the word he preached with signs and wonders.

ACT 8:26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert {road}.) ACT 8:29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." ACT 8:35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. ACT 8:36 And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch *said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ACT 8:37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] ACT 8:38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him. ACT 8:39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. ACT 8:40 But Philip found himself at Azotus; and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea. Philip was a minister of the word.

Because both Philip and Stephen were men of integrity and filled with the Holy Spirit they were chosen by the church to wait on tables. They evidently fulfilled their duties well because the Holy Spirit promoted them to the ministry of Evangelist. Neither of them were included in "the ministry of the word and prayer" but they both ministered the word and won souls. They had intimate contact with the Holy Spirit and He directed their ministry. To put certain physical requirements upon Stephen or Philip before they could have been recognized as "ministers" is ludicrous and unreasonable. Both Stephen and Philip were what some would call "ordinary believers" and not "ministers". The word of God doesn't make that distinction. MAR 16:17 "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; MAR 16:18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly {poison,} it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. " It is probably better to be "a believer" who does things than a "minister" without power.

In some churches today, neither Stephen or Philip would have been accepted as "consecrated ministers" because they didn't fulfill the denominational designated requirements. If we just had the revelation that God wants to use the body of Christ on the earth, it would set us free from all these silly church designed requirements. God is certainly looking for integrity and those who are full of the Holy Spirit but He will have the freedom to set His own requirements and do His own calling.

ACT 21:8 And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. ACT 21:9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. Philip was a married man who had a house and four daughters to support but the bible says he was an evangelist. An evangelist is one of the five ministries of Eph 4:11 that some call "The full time ministers". The consecrated ministers.

EPH 4:11 And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, EPH 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; EPH 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. His work in the local church was waiting on tables but God had the freedom to use him as He saw fit. If a man has integrity and is full of the Holy Spirit and God wants to use him, he shouldn't be restricted by some silly church requirements.

Paul was called in a unique way for a unique ministry that was defined by God and not limited by the church's own requirements. The fact that no one else was called the same way, for the same ministry, should tell us, God is the One who decides these things. Not only that, but Paul had all the grace necessary to fulfil his call. So many "church designed requirements" are not accompanied with sufficient grace because they are not ordained by God. If Stephen and Philip had been forced into a ministry of the word and prayer so that they could be accepted "in the ministry", they would have had trouble obtaining enough grace to do "the ministry". But worse than that, the ministry to Samaria and to the Eunuch and to Azotus and Cesarea would have been neglected. If everybody does what they are called to do, all the work will get done. But if men start adjusting men's call to fit into certain requirements, many areas of work will be neglected.

Churches metaphorically design "old wine skins" and try to force the new wine into them. Some churches metaphorically have seamstresses assigned to sewing new patches on old garments and have called it "consecrated ministry". It seems just too traumatic to permit brand new garments. When ministries exist to promote, authorize and empower themselves, they have already perverted their office. This has often crippled the church and made it ineffective.

It is easy to study the church and take the most obvious things as the standard by which everything must operate. We accept the most familiar things as the only possibility. So much of the time our traditions and customs along with our established doctrines prevent us from searching for other possibilities. Some times there are more than one example given but we accept only one as valid.

Many different groups accept a concept of "the universal church" but can't exactly define what the "universal church" means. There is also the concept of the "local church". Most would agree that the local church is the church in one geographical area. For example the local church at Ephesus or at Rome or at Corinth. In each geographical area there can only be one church because Christ only has one body. The error comes when we designate our denomination as "that church". If other people want to become a part of the "local church" they must come and join us. The true local church must be made up of all those who are fully given to Christ and walk under His Lordship. It is the denominations that confuse the concept of the local church. Is it possible to have different headquarters and different leaders and different doctrines and still be part of the same body of Christ? Some churches have fallen into the error that the church that has the highest doctrines must be the only true local church. Higher doctrines won't buy you anything in the Kingdom of God. It is integrity, character and oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ, along with doing the will of God, that is recognized by the Kingdom.

Different groups may have different doctrines and religious opinions. They may have different leaders and Apostles and Prophets. However all who qualify as "the local church", regardless of the denominational label, must be seen as "His Local Body".

To form a scriptural viewpoint of the local church, it is important to look at two pattern churches in the New Testament. The local church at Jerusalem and the local church at Antioch. In other studies we have done detailed analysis of these two churches. To make this point we will just point out a few differences.

These two "pattern churches" are quite different in their vision, attitude and function. There was also a difference between those whom they accepted as members. The Jerusalem church was "the original". It was a Jewish church that still clung to certain traditions of circumcision and keeping the law of Moses. They taught that the Gentiles must first become proselyte Jews before they could become Christians. When the church was scattered because of the persecution of Stephen, the apostles remained at Jerusalem. ACT 8:1 And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Some teach that Jerusalem was the real "apostolic church" because they had to apostles to prove it. Those who defend the Jerusalem church as being the God given example for the New Testament church structure, say that the church began at Jerusalem therefore must be taken as our pattern church. Others say Jesus never designed the Jerusalem church to be the headquarters church but just another local church.

ACT 1:8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. " The apostles were told to move with the gospel. The word apostle means " One who is sent". An apostle is not one who stays and sends someone else. The apostle is the one who goes. Those who hold to the Jerusalem theory say, the apostle was the one who stayed and gave oversight to the other churches. Later we see that God had designed that task for elders who were chosen from among the believers in a local church. False doctrine about circumcision actually came up from Jerusalem to Antioch. The question we are raising is this: Is the pattern church really Jerusalem or is it Antioch?

Those who hold to the Antioch theory say the Holy Spirit was careful to point out that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. Antioch was not the first place the gospel was preached to the Gentiles but it was the place those who were scattered established a church among the Gentiles. Most of the Book of Acts is a record of the missionary travels out from Antioch. It was from Antioch that the commandment of Jesus to go into all the world was fulfilled.

Some who hold to the Jerusalem theory, as the pattern church, say that Paul had to go consult with Jerusalem about the doctrine of circumcision that came to Antioch so Jerusalem must have been "the mother church". They say that Jerusalem was exercising "translocal" authority over Antioch so Antioch had to submit to Jerusalem. Others say since the doctrine came from Jerusalem, Paul went to Jerusalem to get a false doctrine stopped, not to seek permission from

headquarters to change an established doctrine. Paul's trip was more of a confrontation than seeking for guidance. Paul knew what Jesus had told him to preach and to whom.

If we accept that Antioch is at least one of the pattern churches, we should see how it began and who started it. As the believers (who were called disciples) were scattered from Jerusalem they began to preach just to Jews. They didn't know any better yet and that was the custom they had learned. However, the farther they got from Jerusalem the more they preached to Gentiles also. The Gentiles believed and were converted. These same believers came to Antioch and preached and both Jews and Gentiles believed. Out of those believers, the Church at Antioch was formed.

In the very narrow sense of the phrase, this was not an "Apostolic church" because it was started by believers while the apostles were in Jerusalem. Never-the-less the scriptures make no such distinction between apostolic and believer started churches. There is no record of Jerusalem sending up pastors or elders or ministers to establish or oversee the church at Antioch. It was a local church with it's own elders.

Since there was some communication between Jerusalem and Antioch, we should understand if it represented oversight or fellowship.

ACT 11:27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ACT 11:28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and {began} to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the {reign} of Claudius. ACT 11:29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send {a contribution} for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. ACT 11:30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders. This in no way suggests that Antioch was paying tithes to the elders in Jerusalem. Rather, Antioch was simply helping the poor in Judea and actually sent the contribution to the elders in Judea and not in Jerusalem. The church in Antioch did not hold all things in common. The disciples who had money gave.

ACT 13:1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was {there}, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ACT 13:2 And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Barnabas was a believer who was sent up to Antioch by the church at Jerusalem to investigate some rumors that the group had accepted some Gentiles. Barnabas was sent as an investigator and not as a "consecrated minister". It is significant that when Barnabas saw what had happened and how the Gentiles were believers, instead of going back to Jerusalem to report, he went to look for Paul whom he knew was called to the Gentiles. It was after the Holy Spirit called and sent Barnabas and Paul out to the mission field that they were called Apostles.

ACT 15:32 And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. ACT 15:33 And after they had spent time {there}, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. ACT 15:34 [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] ACT 15:35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and

preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord. Paul and Barnabas were both called apostles when they were sent out but when they returned to Antioch they were teachers and preachers.

The church at Jerusalem was established with Jews and they held to certain Old Covenant requirements that were later found to be wrong for the New Testament church. Even though they had some false doctrine, the Holy Spirit confirmed their word with signs following. Many at Jerusalem had sold their possessions or some of their possessions and they were distributed to some who had need. There was a hierarchy of ministry at Jerusalem. Peter was part of that ministry at Jerusalem but the Holy Spirit called him through a dream and sent him to the Gentiles at Cornelius home. There he reluctantly preached to Cornelius, his friends and relatives. ACT 10:28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and {yet} God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. ACT 10:29 "That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. And so I ask for what reason you have sent for me." As Peter was preaching the Lord baptized them with the Holy Spirit. From this Peter knew that God had accepted them, therefore He commanded them to be baptized. God was still using the church at Jerusalem.

From this we see that God was anointing both local churches to minister at the Holy Spirit's direction. One church was not over another and the "mother church" was not Jerusalem. The Antioch church prayed and fasted and the Holy Spirit directed the work there. The decisions for the Antioch work were made in Antioch.

A few years after Peter knew, without question, that God had accepted the Gentiles the same as Jews, he went to Antioch to visit the church.

GAL 2:11 But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. GAL 2:12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James (Jerusalem), he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he {began} to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. GAL 2:13 And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. GAL 2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how {is it that} you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

The local church at Antioch had sent Paul and others out to preach to the Gentiles and several Gentile churches were started. A few years later Peter came to Antioch and fellowshiped with the Gentiles and the Jews in that local church. Most likely he was invited to preach and teach and exercise his gifts. Even at this late date there was still some at Jerusalem who held to this false doctrine about circumcising all believers. Even James wasn't clear about it. Apparently Paul got Peter's attention because when they went to Jerusalem, Peter stood with Paul.

ACT 15:6 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ACT 15:7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the

word of the gospel and believe. ACT 15:8 "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;. ACT 15:9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ACT 15:10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ACT 15:11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." It appears likely that Cornelius and his friends were compelled to be circumcised because that was the custom in Jerusalem. If Jerusalem was an Apostolic church, then it is possible for an Apostolic church to have strange doctrines and place yokes on believers, that God has not ordained. This also shows that a true Apostolic church is eager to search out the truth and lay aside custom and tradition and go on with God.

One revelation about the church being the body of Christ and functions as a body is found in 1 Corinthians. This book has been used to prove that the church is divided into two groups. One group is the "WE'S" who are ministers and the other group are the "YE'S" that are believers. One group functions and the other group doesn't. One is the group that ministers and the other group sits and listens and obeys the group that ministers. The minister group hears the voice of God for the believer group and reports what God says. As with most strange doctrines, there is a little truth mixed in with man's concepts.

Let us be forcefully clear that there is always "government" in the church. The Kingdom of God is the government of God in manifestation. Whenever we find God's order, we will find God's government. Whenever we find God's government, we will find God's order. God has set a government in the church. Various churches define the government different ways and with different terms. Some define the government by the word "Apostolic". Some by the word "Bishop" or "Episcopalian". Others by the word "Presbretery" or elders. Other churches are called "Congregational". This means the government rests within the members of the local church. Most all churches recognize "government" in their churches, although the governments differ.

The bible is clear about "government". The bible also tells us to submit to government and God has set government in the church. What we see in Acts 15 is the government of Jerusalem, consulting with the government of Antioch. The government of Antioch was representing the local church at Antioch concerning this doctrine of circumcision.

We want to be dogmatic about government and ministries being two different things. The church has a government of local elders in each local church. These elders have certain qualifications that indicate that they are really elders and not a popular novice who was elected by a political campaign. For example an elder must be able to teach and he must be above reproach. TIT 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, TIT 1:6 {namely,} if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. TIT 1:7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, TIT 1:8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, TIT 1:9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

There was not an "elder" in each city but "elders", plural. The words bishop, overseer and elder are all the same office. They are all elders with slightly different function.

ACT 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

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

1TI 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

1TI 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires {to do.} 1TI 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 1TI 3:3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. 1TI 3:4 {He must be} one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 2TI 3:5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); 2TI 3:6 {and} not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 1TI 3:7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside {the church,} so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

PE 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as {your} fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, PE 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to {the will of} God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 1PE 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. The word "Pastor" is only found once in the New Testament. Here it is clear that the elders are the "Shepherds" or Pastors of the local church. Oversight is the same as Bishop. It is clear that the bishop is just an elder who oversees the church. We might call him an administrator.

These elders were not called by great and assuming titles like "consecrated servants of God". They were ordinary men who had wives and children and lived among the unbelievers in the community. They had to have a good reputation among those "outside" the church. To do that they had to be known outside the church. These elders were not a cloistered group that stayed in their rooms praying and searching the scriptures, even though they certainly had to spend time praying and searching the scripture. They had to be firm in their doctrines. Many of them worked a job in order to be a good example to the church.

There is no question that Peter was an elder, and as we see in 1 Pet 5:1 he was a "FELLOW ELDER". That means one of several. An apostle can be an elder but an elder doesn't have to be an apostle. An Apostle is one who is sent. An elder is one who stays in the local church and lives with his family. Peter was an apostle who was sent out but in the local church at Jerusalem he was an elder like several others. If we just used terms that we understood it would be much simpler. Peter was an elder who occasionally traveled.

A prophet came up to Antioch and told them, by the Spirit, there was going to be a famine. He didn't rearrange the church and move elders to other places. When he prophesied, that was the ministry. If we make more of these titles than what the scriptures indicate, we pervert the ministry by assigning more translocal power and authority to a local church than is appropriate.

We should be quite certain there is scriptural authority before we come up with a mother church theory or a "Headquarters Church" theory. Mother church implies that birth originates there. In fact, the births take place at a local level and the local church goes through the birth pains. The mother church concept has become like the I.R.S. where you pay your taxes so they have the money to perpetuate themselves and enact laws that makes their ministry essential to the welfare of the poor souls in the local churches.

Paul was always an Apostle to the churches he started but he never became a "Headquarters" church.

ACT 15:2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, {the brethren} determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. ACT 15:4 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ACT 15:6 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ACT 15:22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, ACT 15:23 and they sent this letter by them, # "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

The elders in Jerusalem, who were ordinary men with wives and children and their own houses, along with the Apostles made these decisions about this false doctrine. It appears the whole church at Jerusalem was in agreement to write a letter of apology to the church at Antioch. Some will insist this was a letter of authority and oversight but it looks like a letter of apology to me. ACT 15:24 "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with {their} words, unsettling your souls, ACT 15:25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

"The Apostles" is the composite name given for the group that were with Jesus. This term indicates those men, without calling them each by name. "The elders" were the other leaders in the group who represented the government of the church. "The Apostles" were also elders and of an equal status with the others. The decision they made was a group decision and was approved by the church. When we alter this pattern, we begin to pervert the function that God intended for the office of elder. The apostles and the elders along with the church chose men from among "them" to send to Antioch , to Syria and to Cilicia to apologize to the Gentiles for this disturbance. V 23.

This is a quick look at how "government" functions on a local level and how governments relate from church to church. If local governments would communicate in this way many church splits would be avoided. When one local church government insists upon lording it over other local

church governments, the divine order is compromised. The "denominational concept" works as a "universal" government over all the churches in their group. When the local church government becomes a puppet of the "headquarters church" the divine order is jeopardized. Whenever the "headquarters government" can overrule the local elders, the local church no longer has a local government.

The local government, which are the elders, has the responsibility of looking out for the needs of the local assembly. They must handle the business management for the local assembly. Their "ministry" is more administrative. Watching out for the widows and orphans, rebuking those who contradict and those who are unruly. For this work, they must be temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, gentle, not contentious and not a fighter. They must be able to teach without lording it over the flock, Etc. If a man can't administrate his own family, how will he administrate the church?

The other aspect of the church has to do with "ministries". The whole church is the source of all the "Ministries". Since an elder is part of the local church, he also has a ministry within the local church. This is not based upon his work within the government but upon his membership within the body. The church, scripturally, is the "body of Christ" with every member functioning. No member is unnecessary. The government is not based upon "ministries" and the ministries are not based upon government. These are two different things.

We can divide the ministry of the church from the government of the church but we can't divide the body into two groups. One that functions and one that doesn't. A person may be an elder in the government of the church but in a meeting of the believers he must develop his ministry like everybody else. He is just one believer among all the others. Just because he is an elder doesn't automatically give him a "position" in the ministries of the body.

1CO 14:26 What is {the outcome} then, brethren? When you assemble, *each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.* Let all things be done for edification. 1 CO. 14:27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, {it should be} by two or at the most three, and {each} in turn, and let one interpret; CO. 14:28 but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. CO. 14:29 And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. CO. 14:30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. CO. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; CO. 14:32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; CO. 14:33 for God is not {a God} of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Ordinarily the "government" has no function when the saints come together in assembly. When the local church assembles, every member is supposed to function in the ministry that God has given. The purpose of assembling is so that each member can be edified. If one believer has the ministry, to the local assembly, as a prophet and another who has the same ministry gets a revelation, the first is to sit down and permit the other believer to do his ministry. The ministry of prophet is not "an office in the government" but is a ministry within the local assembly. When these ministries, that God has distributed through out the whole assembly", begin to function " as government" they have perverted their ministry. When "the government" insists upon functioning as ministries in the local church, the government has perverted it's function. Of course, an elder in

the government may also be anointed and have ministry as a member of the local body, but he must function as a member and not as a "LEADER". MAT 23:8 "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. MAT 23:9 "And do not call {anyone} on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. MAT 23:10 "And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, {that is,} Christ.

Now, if something goes wrong during the assembly and someone causes a disturbance, the government must restore order. The government should be present during the assembly but normally have no function. "The assembly" is believers ministering to believers to edify the whole body.

When "an elder" stands up and preaches and everyone else sits and listens, the divine order has broken down.

CO. 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. CO. 12:8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; CO. 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, CO. 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another {various} kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. CO. 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. CO. 12:12 For even as the body is one and {yet} has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. CO. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. CO. 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

Of course, we hold to these things as a doctrine but in actual practice our meetings are far from this kind of function. The reason is because too many crazy and off the wall things happen that humiliate "the leaders". The safest way to have an assembly is for "the leader", "the teacher" or "the father" to stand up and preach and everybody else listen. After he is through everyone can file out having been properly edified. If no one else gets an opportunity to function there will not be any problems and we can keep everything in line and in order. Just like a cemetery where all the graves are in line and everything is quiet and in tremendous order.

When Paul came through an area in which he had started a church, he called the whole church together. This may have consisted of several local churches. He stood up and preached and the churches sat and listened. One time he spoke all night. Another time he was saying goodby because the Holy Spirit had warned him that he wouldn't be back again.

All these were unusual meetings that only happened a few times. These were not the normal meeting of an assembly. 1 Cor 12 and 14 were normal meetings. We have made the exception to be the normal and the normal to be non-existent. We have a doctrine that every member is useful and necessary but that must mean to pay their tithe and fill a chair. In actual practice it really doesn't matter if no one shows up if they mail in their tithe.

CO. 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many. CO. 12:15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. CO. 12:16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. CO. 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? CO. 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. CO. 12:19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? CO. 12:20 But now there are many members, but one body. CO. 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." CO. 12:22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; CO. 12:23 and those {members} of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly {members come to} have more abundant seemliness, CO. 12:24 whereas our seemly {members} have no need {of it.} But God has {so} composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that {member} which lacked, CO. 12:25 that there should be no division in the body, but {that} the members should have the same care for one another. CO. 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if {one} member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. CO. 12:27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

This is a great philosophy but in most places this is just a theory that doesn't work. Each of us can tell if we are "just believers" or if we are "members". If you are "just a believer" when one member suffers you call "the consecrated ministry" so they can suffer with them. If you are a "member" you will suffer with the member that suffers. Most of our churches are made up of "just believers". We can excommunicate a "believer" really easy, but how do you excommunicate a member?. If you excommunicate an eye, you go blind. What if you excommunicate a mouth or a heart?

The church has become a victim of a synthesis of ministry and government that operates separate from the body and are not subject to the body. They are a self perpetuating and self appointed "leadership" of teachers and fathers that function as a combination of ministry and government. This ignorance has crippled the body and caused it to go into a comma and a comatose state where activity consists of artificial respiration and other mechanical devices that keep it from going brain dead. The "leadership" must be careful that it retains just enough life in the "body" to pay the tithe and to fill a seat but not enough to be a functioning body.