

An Admittedly Flawed System

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One clergyman wrote, “I have found in the admittedly flawed corporate expression of Christian faith traditionally called ‘church’ deep nurture for my faith in Christ and a profound vehicle for loving service.” At the least, this clergyman is leagues ahead of some others who won’t (or can’t) even admit that the “church” system is flawed! But let us consider some of the deeper implications of this seemingly benign remark.

Let us consider what we are agreeing to when we do recognize that the usual corporate expression of the Christian faith is flawed. The Bible teaches the inerrancy of truth – that is, the Bible, as originally inspired and when rightly interpreted, contains no errors. God presents Himself in the Bible as perfect, complete, infallible, all-wise, all-knowing. If our current method of “church” produces a flawed system, how did a perfect, complete, infallible, all-wise, all-knowing heavenly Father who also gave us His New Covenant manifesto completely free of errors, how could such a perfect Being create a *flawed* system that would be so central to the manner in which people would seek, know and follow Him? The obvious answer, to those with eyes to see and ears to hear, is that He did not create the “church” system.

When we arrive at that obvious conclusion, we stumble upon the next question: if God did not create the flawed system we call “church,” who did?

- Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.” (Mt. 13:24-25)

- Jesus also said in His first apocalyptic letter, “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars. And you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Rev. 2:2-6)

- Paul wrote, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” (1 Tim. 4:1)

- Paul also wrote, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

- Peter wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Pet. 5:8)

- Paul, in a letter that may have been specifically aimed at the people who would endure the apostasy and deceptions of the end times, warned of the schemes or wiles that would be the strategy of both the devil and of cunning and crafty men. (Eph. 4:14, 6:11)

- Paul had previously warned the Ephesian elders, “From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:30)

In the second through the fourth centuries, bishops (Greek, *episkopos* [1985]) arose from the ranks of the elders (*presbuteros*, presbytery – [4245]), distorted the gospel (primarily by incorporating what they proclaimed to be the rightful place of the bishop over the people and between the people and God) and drew followers after themselves. After the rise of the bishops, early church history is little more than people adhering to their favored bishop and clinging to his peculiar doctrines and practices. While men slept (were unaware of the consequences of their actions) the leaders of the “church” incorporated a system of leadership patterned after the Roman empire and the “church” system has been inherently flawed ever since.

It is probably the hardest message to present that Jesus is the truth but “church” is a lie. It is probably most useful to begin exploring this idea by comparing the definitions of “church” and ekklesia. “Church” in English means 1) building, 2) clergy, 3) religion and 4) people. Ekklesia ([1577], the Greek word most often mistranslated “church”) means only people. Three parts lie, one part truth – tells the story very well. If anyone can recognize this linguistic difference, we now at least have a communication basis by which to begin to discuss which is original and genuine and which is appended or even counterfeit. Those who are working toward any changes of their particular “church” will need to recognize that these three distortions – “church” buildings, exalted clergy and false religion, three of the very cornerstones of “church” practice – are exactly what must be abandoned and forsaken if the people are to press on in truly knowing, seeking and following God. Few indeed will be willing or able to step away from these, even though they risk their eternal union with God by remaining.

Let us return to the original quote and consider whether one can truly experience in “church” a “deep nurture for our faith in Christ” as well as “a profound vehicle for loving service.” The “church” is a scheme of the devil by which he intends to and succeeds in cleverly and subtly drawing people away from the road that leads to life, seducing men to utilize Nicolaitan (literally, “conquer over the people,” [3531], thus representing delegated authority with special privileges) authority and positions to render the people unwilling and unable to hear the Spirit of truth so that they no longer follow the Shepherd but instead follow the precepts and teachings of men and even demons. How can any man who stands in a Nicolaitan position possibly and truly *love* those whom he is deceiving and using for his own purposes? How is that love? How can any person who is immersed and ensnared in this flawed system truly have their faith in Christ and His ability to lead and direct them in every circumstance deeply nurtured? That some have even survived the spiritual abortion clinic and baby mutilation factory men call “church” (especially the mega-“church”) is a miracle for which only God can be credited! This clergyman is not receiving deep nurture for his faith nor truly loving anyone with God’s love – he is simply receiving self-gratification and self-fulfillment and then is deceived into thinking that so long as he feels good about it all, God is pleased.

What we must ultimately come to recognize is the dual streams of power that are at work in the “church” system. When God truly moves among the people, no man or demon can withstand Him. But after God has moved in the hearts of the people, some men (and/or women) begin to listen to whispering spirits and begin to organize and institutionalize and squelch the life of God out of their gatherings. This is the pattern of every move of God that has brought about every denomination. Every denomination is founded upon some truth (usually to the exclusion of other truths) but has also incorporated the “church” deceptions of buildings, clergy and religious practices. No serious attention has ever been paid to anyone who spoke against “church” – until now that the return of Christ is imminent and the bride must prepare herself for the return of her Husband.

As the “churches” persist in their deceptions, errors and apostasy, it is all the more imperative that we hear the call of the Spirit to “Come out from among the ‘Christian’ idolatry and idolaters” (2 Cor. 6:17-18, 1 Cor. 5:10-11, Rev. 18:4) We can no longer remain in the midst of the idolatrous and paganistic practices of “church” and pretend that we are truly following Christ and God in spirit and truth. If we are blessed by being in contact with other people who have also truly come out of “church” and we have endured the time God prescribes for us to get the “church” out of our own hearts, then we must look to Him who called us out for the method by which we can come together as genuine ekklesia and not incorporate human or demonic “church” deceptions back into our midst. This is serious business indeed!

The answer is really simple – we must return to our first love, Christ Himself. We must no longer rely on the calendar or the clock to tell us when to meet – we must rely on the Spirit to lead us into contact with one another when He knows the time is perfect. We must no longer look at the phone book or google for an address for some place to meet – we must rely on the Spirit to have us be in the right place to attend to the affairs of the kingdom of God. We must no longer look for people who agree with us and believe the same kinds of things – we must simply discern by the gifting of the Spirit whether the person(s) we are interacting with truly has the Spirit of Christ and God dwelling within them and then we are free to discern to what degree they walk in the liberty that God gives and then aid them along in their walk with Christ and God. We no longer need a list of precepts and doctrines which others must submit to in order to be received into our “fellowship” – that is abomination! – we need only know and serve one another as the Spirit directs us. We need only take the individual training we have received so that we follow the Lamb wherever He leads (Rev. 14:4) and apply it to anytime we come together, primarily and most likely in twos and threes (Mt. 18:20) but possibly occasionally in larger numbers. The end times genuine remnant will not be about mass movements of men but about small groups and individuals truly being led by the Lord and deeply impacting people in their own circles of influence. It will not look like “church” but rather like the book of Acts!

Until we step away from the three deceptions of “church” we will never experience the fullness of a deep faith in Christ nor the completeness of expressing the love of Christ for all of fallen mankind. We will continue to be content to seclude ourselves in our own building, having our ears scratched and tickled by our own preferred “man of God” and doing whatever is right in our own eyes for a “God” who is in need of our help because He is aged, toothless and lame. Until we return to the Lion of Judah (who is neither aged, toothless or lame!) and fully engage in the war against the deceits of the devil (who also is neither aged, toothless or lame!), we will continue to be just another victim, simultaneously useless to both fallen mankind and the kingdom of God though we may well be a very useful tool in the hands of the enemy of God. This is our choice and no one can take the responsibility for choosing which side of this war that

we will be on. We must choose – now, this day – whom – whether God or the devil – whom we will truly serve. If we will serve God, it is no longer tolerable to serve God with lip service while we do all those things we prefer and which are right in our own eyes while in God’s eyes they are only abomination and rotten filth. In these end times, we simply cannot afford to participate any longer in the devil’s deceptions.

Let he who has ears hear.

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