

Coming Out and Moving On

Part 2 of 7

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Observers, prognosticators and visionaries of many sorts are proclaiming these days that there are deep and fundamental changes on the horizon where the way of following Christ is concerned. Some have rightly said that the very “church” system must change – but it is doubtful that those who say this realize all that they are advocating for – nor do they seem to realize that failing to attain to *all* that they are advocating will surely result in dire consequences. That is to say, this is indeed the right thing to be calling for but few recognize how deep this “rabbit hole” goes – and it is equally true that failing to come completely out of the “rabbit hole” can be as lethal as simply and blindly remaining asleep in the depths of that pit! To those who are only partly out of the “church,” it is appropriate to say what was said to the men pinned down by enemy gunfire on Omaha Beach, D-Day, 1944: “If we’re going to die, let’s not die here!”

Repent!

The primary element of Christ’s gospel that has been virtually “missing in action” in many “church” circles is the need for repentance. “Repent! The kingdom of God is near.” (Mt. 4:17) was the first thing someone heard when Jesus or His disciples came to town but it’s almost the last thing one hears in many “churches” as now it is enough to simply “believe.” To repent (Greek *metanoeo* [3340]) is to “think again” or to “change one’s mind and direction.” Painting in broad strokes, there are two kinds of people in this world – those who will repent of their sins and wrongful living and those who will not. This is the characteristic that will have the most profound implications on the outcome of one’s attempts to change the practice of Christianity just as it is the characteristic that will have the most profound implications on where we will spend eternity.

Just as there are two kinds of people, so too, again painting in broad strokes, there are two categories of those who claim to follow Christ: genuine and counterfeit, true and false. In Jesus’ parables, the classic picture of this distinction is drawn between the wheat and the tares. (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43) Because there has been so much deception regarding what will be the true way to follow Christ (what men most commonly call “church” and which is practiced, in varying degrees, by wheat and tares alike), it has become necessary to return to the original Greek word, *ekklesia* [1577] to refer to the original and the genuine and to use the English word, “church,” when we want to refer to some man-made tradition or demonically-inspired addition or counterfeit.

We can begin to see the necessity for this when we consider the linguistic elements involved. “Church,” as an English word, was never once used by Jesus. He did not speak King James’ English – in spite of what some rabid, extremist groups seem to believe! We can literally and honestly say that Christ never once talked about “church”!

And since the original Greek word was indeed a Greek word (and not a Hebrew or Aramaic word or concept) and Jesus was sent “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 15:24), it is most likely that Jesus never used the Greek word either. That Greek word is inserted into Jesus’ teachings only by Matthew in only two verses. (Mt. 16:18, 18:17) We can also literally and honestly say that He didn’t speak about *ekklesia*

either! It is a profound truth that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God but it was the “church” that came!

When we look more closely at the two words, *ekklesia* and “church,” we also discover serious discrepancies between the meanings – so serious that one even wonders how modern translators feel justified in using the English word “church” to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*. “Church” has four meanings: the “Christian” 1) building, 2) clergy, 3) religion and 4) people. *ekklesia* has only one meaning: *people*, specifically the people called out of the darkness of this world into Christ’s kingdom of light, life and truth. Three parts deception and only one part truth is a very appropriate way to envision the contrast between “church” and *ekklesia*. But it is in this light – that *ekklesia* means only people – that Matthew’s insertion of *ekklesia* into Jesus’ teachings makes sense. If we compare this idea with Paul’s statement, “you [the people] are the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:16) and we know that both *ekklesia* and “temple” are virtually interchangeable terms for the same group of born again people, then Matthew’s liberty of inserting this Greek word into Jesus’ teachings becomes much less sinister and actually becomes enlightening as it begins to open up to us why the “church” is the way it is.

The “church” today is not just flawed because imperfect people are involved with it. Anything that has human beings involved is flawed on one level or another. Rather the “church” is systemically “flawed” in such a way that it is virtually incapable of producing spiritually mature people. The question arises, then, how did an infallible, all-knowing, perfectly wise God create an inherently flawed system that cannot perform its intended function? The obvious answer is that He couldn’t have done so and still be the kind of God the Bible says He is. So, if He didn’t create it, who did? The only alternative available to such a question is: the devil. The “church” is not just flawed, it is systematically designed to inflict damage, even lethal damage, on spiritual believers.

Certainly Christ built and is still building His *ekklesia* and the prison gates of death and darkness cannot overcome His people who live in His light and life. (Mt. 16:18) But the devil built the “church” (the building, the clergy and the false religion) so as to conceal his sons (the tares) and to ensnare as many genuine wheat (the sons of God who obey the King) as he could deceive and lure into disobedience.

Only when we recognize that it is only those who have both truly repented and believed and who are experiencing the new life in Christ who can be the genuine and real *ekklesia* are we beginning to enter into the realms of spiritual truth. One can attend a “church” building, submit to clergy, practice various “Christian” religious practices, be a faithful “church” member or even a “church” “pastor” for all of one’s natural life and never once experience either the spiritual rebirth or the abundant life from above. Such a one will burn in hell as surely as the worst of unrepentant sinners.

Mother “Church”

John in The Revelation is shown a woman who rides on a 7-headed, 10-horned beast. This beast is Satan himself. (Rev. 12:3) The woman is said to be a mystery, a divinely withheld or revealed secret, and given the name “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth.” (Rev. 17:5) This woman is none other than “Mother Church.” She was fashioned among men while they slept (Mt. 13:25, 25:5) and she has been the hiding place for the tares ever since.

The “church” can only change by repenting. The Great Prostitute will neither repent nor change. Only true *ekklesia* will repent. This is inevitable though just which individual belongs to which of these two opponents is and always will be subject to change whenever anyone chooses to repent before God and change over to the way that leads to life.

When we know this truth – that the Great Prostitute, Mother “Church,” will neither repent nor submit to change toward righteousness – we need to evaluate what elements of our current practices actually come from genuine *ekklesia* practices and which come from abominable, Babylonian “church” practices. If we refuse to return to what the Bible says (when rightly divided and applied by the work of the Holy Spirit of truth), we can know that we have not escaped the deceptions of the end of the age and that we are still participating in the things of the Great Prostitute.

There are some things which the “church” will simply be unable to let go of because these are the very things that keep the wheat, the genuine sheep of Christ, from growing to maturity.

- The “Pastor”/CEO will not relinquish his power base, his cash cow nor the source of what makes him feel like he is making significant contributions to a “better” world.
- “Church”-ites will not take up their God-given responsibilities and will continue to desire to have their ears scratched and soothed (2 Tim. 4:3-4), will continue to use slander and gossip and power tactics to keep their “man of God” in his pulpit or place of power, and will continue to propagate whatever “doctrines” and “theologies” suit their own tastes and preferences and even sins. (2 Ths. 2:11-12)

These things will not disappear until the Great Prostitute is destroyed according to the dictates of the judgments of God – a future event. (Rev. 19:2-3, etc.) In the meantime, this leaves the *ekklesia*, the genuine follower of Christ, with only one option: “Come out!” (Rev. 18:4, 2 Cor. 6:17-18) Once a follower of Christ has come out of the Great Prostitute, then comes the time period when the Great Prostitute must be gotten out of the disciple. All traces of her deadly leaven must be purged and cleansed from our thoughts, beliefs and practices so that we may be pure and unleavened before Him who is pure and righteous and holy. Only when we have on hand such people who have never been involved in a “church” or who have been through the wilderness training and purifying period can we really begin to think in terms of reformation because if we bring anything of the Great Prostitute, it is no longer a reformation but only another abomination. It will only bring disaster on the people of Christ to secretly keep the silver and gold and Babylonian robes from Jericho when we go into the next battle. (see Josh. 7:21, etc.)

The deadly leaven that must be removed from our lives will surely include the items that have kept us from reaching spiritual maturity.

- There will be no “church” buildings used to promote the Nicolaitan (Rev. 2:6, 15), delegated authority or superiority of the supposed and exalted “man of God.”

- There will be no “pastor”/CEO, no pulpit, no pews in a row that deposits idle, passive spectators at the feet of the supposedly superior priest and “spiritual guru.”

- There will be no denominational, sectarian schisms (Greek *schisma* [4978]), divisions (*hairesis* [139]) or dissensions (*dichostasia* [1370]) that are based on carnal (fleshly), intellectual knowledge of spiritual matters. (see also Rom. 8:7)

- There will be no scrabbling for position of preeminence and delegated authority nor will anyone respond to sin or error or doctrinal questionings with “damage control” tactics.

- Sin will neither be tolerated nor persecuted – nor will sin be “theologically” ignored and excused (as is done where hyper-“grace” is embraced.)

If these things still exist in our own circles, we can know with certainty that we have not yet successfully completed the reformation in our own lives!

Restoration

There are some things which the *ekklesia* absolutely must regain and be restored into because these are the very things that enable the wheat, the genuine sheep of Christ, to grow into spiritual maturity. There must be:

- The priesthood of all believers.
- Equality of all brothers.
- The ministry (service) done by the saints and not by paid professionals. (This is the self-sacrificing, Christ-oriented one anothering found throughout the New Testament.)
- The saints will be supported by those gifted/graced to equip (Eph. 4:11) as well as by the elders and overseers (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9) These must be realities and not mere teachings (doctrines) that are not actually put into practice.
- Personal responsibility for what one does in service to the King. There will be no “pastor” or “apostle” or “mentor” or “accountability partner” to blame-shift upon – the responsibility for what one does after claiming the name of Christ is on that one’s shoulders alone.

- The unanimity of the Spirit and of the faith. (Eph. 4:3, 13, also see *henotes* [1775])
- Our being led by the Lamb and His Spirit.
- Reliance upon the Spirit and the power of Christ to preserve His work in our midst.
- Gracious, loving correction and nurturing toward true holiness.

If we do not see these things regularly and routinely around and in us, we have not attained to the real but are still in the counterfeit.

It will not be enough to walk in miraculous power – the time of the end will be a time of lawlessness (doing what is right in one’s own eyes – see Jdgs. 21:25) and “is according to the working of Satan; with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception...” (2 Ths. 2:9-10) Even if one is doing miracles and these are truly not being done by some demonic power or scheme (that is, we are experiencing God’s mighty power in our midst), the gift of healing is only one evidence of the life in Christ and must be accompanied by ever deepening pursuit of *all* that Christ is. It is too easy to think that, because God is using us mightily in one area, we have arrived at the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Too many people believe that truth cannot be found in any one group or person – and this is a partial truth. Many use this partial truth, however, to invalidate truths they don’t want to hear while the devil uses this partial truth to keep us from thinking that it is even possible for one group or one person to know the full truth. But this idea that we cannot know the full truth is not necessarily the case.

This idea that one person or one group can know what the Bible calls “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) is one of those truths that must be held in balance. While no one group can claim exclusive rights to all truth, it is still possible (as Paul demonstrated to the Ephesians) for one man to be able to declare the whole counsel of God. We get off course when we forget to go to the Holy Spirit to confirm what the one man who claims to have the whole counsel said!

The *ekklesia* does need the whole counsel of God. It is not enough to have the complete canon of Scripture because, by itself, this is not an infallible guide – though the canon of Scripture is the *complete* message (or word) of truth from God. It surprises many to find out that the Bible is not “the Word of God” (Heb. 4:12, Jn. 1:1-4, 14, Eph. 6:17, etc.) but that the Bible is simply “the word of truth” that must be rightly divided and rightly nested in the whole counsel of God and brought to life by the Spirit of truth in order to be the Word (Breath, Intent, Thought, Communication, etc.) of God.

It is only when we desire the will of God above our own (Jn. 7:17) that we can take a rightly divided, rightly nested, rightly enlivened, rightly applied truth and know that we have the “more sure Word” (2 Pet. 1:19) that enables us to discern whether a messenger and a message is from God. Miracles and “gifts” can be counterfeited. That is why God points us to His Word – but we must know that His Word is not merely the Bible. Signs and wonders can lead us astray, indeed, but so too can some man’s (or our

own!) twisted interpretation of the Bible! God's Word, the rightly divided, rightly nested, rightly enlivened, rightly applied word of truth, will always be the light we need to walk His true path. (Psa. 119:105)

Yet we must also return to the notion that no one group can claim exclusive rights to all truth so we must be willing to submit any and all of our spiritual knowledge to that of those others who demonstrate that they too possess the true life of Christ within and that they are determined to attain to His will no matter what the personal cost. This will never be a one-way street of leftover Nicolaitan clergy mentality but will always be a two-way street of equals "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21) and of simply recognizing any who have gone ahead of or further in front than where Christ has taken us in a particular area and duplicating or replicating (Greek *mimeomai* [3401]) their faith. (Heb. 13:7)

If we are to truly come out and move on and complete the last reformation or final restoration, we must "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1) The true bride of Christ will prepare herself for her Husband and will show Him the proper respect He is due by clothing herself in deeds of righteousness. (Rev. 19:7-8) No grotesque prostitute nor grunged-out tramp will appear at the wedding feast of the Lamb (Mt. 22:12-13) – only the bride who is "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but [rather] holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:27)

Let he who has ears hear.

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