

The Origin of the Word "church"

By Andy Zoppelt

Part 1: The Word that Changed the World

Language is the fundamental method we use for conveying information and understanding. The changing of one word can literally change the world. Therefore, translators are given an extreme responsibility in making sure they get it right, especially key words. When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my *ekklesia*." (Mat 16:18) The word is pronounced ek-klay-see-ah. The translators purposely used a word identifying a building rather than the people. I discovered that I had a choice; either I believed what the translators had to say or go to the original language and read what the Jesus and the apostles had to say. I found no mentioning coming from Jesus that He called the translators to represent His authority.

Our word "Church" is one of those words that has impacted the world and has subverted the purpose for which it was intended. Because the translators used the word "church," meaning a building, instead of a more accurate word reflecting a functioning body, it has affected our whole approach to the meaning of body of Christ. We have been given a word from the translators that has nothing to do with the original Greek word *ekklesia*.

The idea of the "church" being a building was not given by the apostles or the Holy Spirit. It certainly was not what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Upon this rock I will build my believer together (church?)." The early church did not have a clergy distinct from the rest of the body. Clergy with titles and authority was foreign to the early disciples also. It was the rise of this authoritarian clergy that needed a building to control the people both religiously and politically. The Catholic Church and the Church of England both used the word "church" and its meaning as a building to hold the people in subjection to their control. Without a building they would have lost their power over the people. Even today, without a building the clergy system would fall. This system of clergy/laity and the use of a building is what we have come to know as the "institutional" church system. This system was totally foreign to the vocabulary and the life of the disciples of Jesus, who built and depended on the move of the Holy Spirit through **all** the people being built together. Therefore the retaining of the word "church" in our translations of the bible became crucial for the survival of the institutional church system even to this day.

To change the true meaning and function of the Greek word "ekklesia" to our English word "church" strengthened the clergy system and their power over the people. The statement, "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" has been the downfall and corruption of body ministry. The original intent was relational and not institutional. For in all the writings of the first and second century we do not find an "institutional" treatment of "ekklesia."

The word "church" actually comes from a different Greek word "*kuriakon*," pronounced koo-ree-ak-on. *Kuriakon* actually means "pertaining to the lord." It is used twice in scripture: 1 Cor 11:20 The " Lord's [*kuriakon*] supper;" and Rev 1:10, the " Lord's [*kuriakon*] day." In those passages it is the supper belonging to the Lord and the day belonging to the Lord respectively.

The new Webster's international dictionary, 1909 edition, gives this definition of the word:

"Church (church), n. [ME. *chirche*, fr. AS. *circe*, fr. Gr. *kyriakon* the Lord's house, fr. *kyriakos* concerning a master or lord, fr. *kyrios* master, lord, fr. *kyros* power, authority; akin to Skr. *gram* mighty, bold OIr. *caur*, *cur*, hero. Cf. KIRK.] 1. **A building** set apart for public worship, esp... 2. **A place** of worship of **any** religion, as, **formerly**, a Jewish or **pagan temple** or a mosque. Acts six. 37."

There were pagans using the word "church" long before Christians ever began using it. The word "church," originating from the Greek word "*kuriakon*," which later evolved into our pronunciation "church" in English. Let's now look as some well noted bible dictionaries.

"Church: Derived probably from the Greek *kuriakon* (i.e., "the Lord's house"), which was used by **ancient** authors for the **place** of worship." (**Easton's Bible Dictionary**.)

"CHURCH: I. The word Church. — 1. The origin of the word is uncertain. In the Germanic and Slavonic languages it is found as follows: Anglo-Saxon, cyrica, circ, cyric; English, church; Scottish, kirk; German, kirche; Low-German, karke; Frisian, tzierke or tziurke; Danish, kyrke; Swedish, kyrka; Bohemian, cyrkew; Polish, cerkiew; Russian, zerkow." (McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia.)

"CHURCH, 1. The derivation of the word is generally said to be from the Greek *kuriakon* 'belonging to the Lord.' But the derivation has been too hastily assumed. It is probably connected with kirk, the Latin circus, circulus, the Greek kuklos (ku/klo\$) because the congregations were gathered in circles.

The English word church is not a translation but rather is a transliteration of the Greek word kuriake.

2. Ecclesia (e)kklesi/a) the Greek word for church, originally meant an assembly called out by the magistrate, or by legitimate authority. It was in this last sense that the word was adapted and applied by the writers of the New Testament to the Christian congregation." (Smith's Bible Dictionary)

"CHURCH: From the Greek *kuriakee*, "house of the Lord," a word which passed to the Gothic tongue; the Goths being the first of the northern hordes converted to Christianity, adopted the word from the Greek Christians of Constantinople, and so it came to us Anglo-Saxons (Trench, Study of Words). But Lipsius, from circus, from whence kirk, a circle, because the oldest temples, **as the Druid ones**, were circular in form."

(Fausset's Bible Dictionary)

The word "*church*" is known in Scotland as *kirk*, and in German as *Kirche* and in Netherlands as *kerk*. These words show their direct derivation from the Greek *Kirke* even better than the English "church". When you see the German word "kirche" from the Greek word *kuriakon*, you can begin to pick up our English sounding word "church." English has many words that have come from the German language. The words "*kuriakon*" and "*ekklesia*" are not synonymous by any stretch of the imagination and there is no justification of the use of "church" for *ekklesia*. Unless of course one has a built-in bias in shifting the meaning of the word from "the people" to "a building". A building would more serve the purpose of a religious group with a built in hierarchy.

Kuriakon, kirche, and church, all meant simply a religious building originally used by pagans and later used by Christians following pagan customs. Christians originally didn't use buildings, which distinguished them from the pagans whose focus was on building, statues, ritual and physical objects.

From its earliest usage, the word "church" has been understood in pagan traditions, then later in Roman Catholicism and now in this present day as a building, but never has the word "church" been demonstrated or justified from a biblical stand point to represent the Greek word *ekklesia*. Church was a pagan concept and not a Christian one.

When I gave my life to Jesus some 43 years ago, I struggled with the idea of going to church. I thought church was boring and irrelevant. I wanted friends, fellowship, challenge and love. Later, feeling that all Christian must go to church, I went out of what I thought was obedience. I was falsely led to believe that the activities of the "church" were biblically an essential part of my being a Christian. I just couldn't understand how sitting in a pew or chair and listening to some person preach from the bible could change my life... especially when the bible spoke overwhelmingly of my relationship with the members and not a pastor. I wanted to experience life, not just hear about it.

Many say, "We know the church is the building." Do we? Do we act like it? No, of course not. We **go** to church rather than our "being" an assembly of believers ministering to one another. We ask people what church they go to. We collect money for the church (a building). We ask who the pastor of their church is. Where is your church? Each building has its own pastor and its own congregation. Then we are often given the scripture taken from Hebrews 10: 25 if we miss the church service. But let's see if this verse matches our typical church service, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting **one another**,

and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." First, they were a part of an assembly of people who have in common their commitment to Jesus and to each other whose coming together involved exhortation and fellowship with one another. They were not an audience for a speaker.

William Tyndale, who in the 16th century translated our first English Bible, translated "*ekklesia*" as "congregation," moving the focus from a building to the people. He wanted to rid the Bible of the ecclesiastical words set in by a powerful clergy system. Tyndale used the word "church" one time and that was to describe a pagan temple (Acts 19:37). His translation brought down the wrath of the Clergy and it cost him his life and for it he was burned at the stake. This is true even to this day; the most hated people are those who challenge our religious system.

Many in the clergy derive their prestige and livelihood from a clergy system with its corporate headquarters of a building. A change back to the faith that was once given to the saints rings fear to the order of our institutional church system.

Such words as: "bishop," "office of," "pastor," "deacon," etc., have been improperly translated to build an empire around men and denominational divisions.

When the King James Bible was published in 1611, it was flawed before it got started. Archbishop Bancroft, the head of the Anglican Church, set fourteen rules of translation to maintain the doctrine and practices of the Anglican church of England. King James made himself "head" of the Church of England, and he required a translation which would facilitate his control over the church and the people. James knew "no bishop, no king."

Bishop Bancroft and Erasmus were the architects of the King James Version translation; they were far from being saints. The translators were obligated to fit the translation with the Anglican agenda and beliefs without any conflict between church and state.

Bancroft's third rule required "the old ecclesiastical words to be kept, such as "church" instead of "congregation." He also wanted the old offices of bishop, deacon, pastor to relate to their "most commonly used by the most eminent fathers" (rule four). The King James translation maintained the offices of the Church of England, so we find words added into the text like "office of" a bishop or a deacon. They also purposely translated many words differently to agree with the Anglican Church.

If you look in your bible, you will find "office of" in *italics*, if using a KJV.

When we study the history of the Bible translations, it is easy to see why those in authority sought to hide the original languages from the common people's understanding, but that is not the case today. We have bible programs that show every Greek word, its meaning, and what part of speech it is. We have bible dictionaries, lexicons, the internet and resources without end.

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Part 2: Man's Niche to Build

"You mistakenly think we conceal what we worship since we have no temples or altars... How can anyone build a temple to Him, when the whole world can't contain Him? Even I, a mere human, travel far and wide. So how can anyone shut up the majesty of so great a Person within one small building? Isn't it better for Him to be dedicated in our minds and consecrated in our innermost hearts - rather than in a building?" (Minicus Felix, *Octavius*, 2nd Century A.D.).

"'We have no temples or altars.' This statement, referring to Christians, comes from the pen of the apologist Minicus Felix, c 200, and all evidence supports its accuracy. Throughout at least the first two centuries there were no church buildings as such" (-The Early Christian Church - J.G. Davies).

"When the church was very young, it had no buildings. Let us begin with that striking fact. That the church had no buildings is the most noticeable of the points of difference between the church of the early days and the church of today. In the minds of most people today, "church" means first a building, probably something else second; but seldom does "the church" stand for anything other than a building. Yet here is the fact with which we start: the early church possessed no buildings and carried on its work for a great many years without erecting any." (When the church was very young -Ernest Loosley).

Lightfoot says that there were no church buildings as such before the third century. Since Lightfoot made that statement, however, archaeologists found a most interesting place in Rome. Roman houses - unless they were the great mansions - were relatively small. What archaeologists found was a place with the facade of two houses still untouched, but with the internal walls torn out to make a larger room. And from everything that was found there, the archaeologists believe that this was a church building. This structure is dated at the end of the second century. But whether one accepts Lightfoot's starting point in the third century, or whether one dates it at the end of the second century, it really makes no difference. There is no biblical norm as to where, and where not, the church should meet. The central fact is that the early concept of the church had no connection with a church building.

Constantine (280-337), the Roman Emperor and his mother, Empress Helena, built many pagan temples. After his conversion in 313, he continued his custom of building, but this time it was "Christian" temples. They simple went from worshiping the pagan gods to the memorializing the dead saints. Many pagan buildings were later converted to churches. This was really the official beginning of recognizing buildings as churches.

We want something we can see and someone to represent us... something physical. Whether we are building a building to reach the sky as the tower of Babel or an edifice to hold our pastor's meetings on Sunday... we want **our** own building.

I would like to respond to one thing I am often challenged with. Some say, " doesn't the bible say they met in the temple and from house to house?" Yes, but their meeting in the temple was nothing like what we are doing in our church buildings. First, they met in the outer court, a very large open area. It would like meeting in a park and not inside a church building. Second, they didn't own the temple and pay a staff for the up keep. Third, the meetings in the temple served as a tool to reach the Jewish people, much like the same reason Jesus went to the temple. Fourth, they didn't have a pastor who was over the temple like we do our churches. Fifth, the temple was not a building that divided the body of Christ. Fifth, they didn't name the temple like we give our churches names. Sixth, they didn't conduct all of their operations out of the temple. Seventh, the temple didn't belong to them... it was a public facility. Often we hear of places like China where thousand of people will gather together in open fields or in open public places, this would be much like the early believers meeting in the temple (outer court area).

Then I hear, " didn't Paul meet in the synagogues and in the school of tyrannus? (Acts 19:8-10)

Most of the above reasons for meeting in the temple apply here also. But let's point out a few: First, Paul met in the synagogue "reasoning and persuading" them concerning the kingdom of God (evangelistic). It was when it became contentious that Paul moved the meeting to the school of Tyrannus where he continued for two years. The school of Tyrannus was a "public building" and not a "church" building. The early believers would use public facilities as long as they were permitted. Eventually the facility served their purpose and they would move on. The use of a public facility is much like our conventions. We use the public facility as a temporary facility for a specific purpose and move on.

This was not something that the believers spent millions of dollars on and divided themselves by naming their buildings. This kind of reasoning is only dodging the bullet in hopes of justifying our use of creating divisions around "our" pastors or church leaders.

If done today, it would be like thousands of home assemblies gathering in parks or public facility to worship or to listen to a special message from one of the leaders. Such would draw attention to the public and often would draw the public into the meetings as an evangelistic tool. Our public meeting would show our unity and not our divisions.

When Peter saw Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration, his first inclination was to build three tabernacles.

In Acts 7:48, Stephen angered the Pharisees by saying that God "dwells not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48). Such a statement and change would abolish everyone from the gatekeeper to the high priest who served the old system of the temple. What Stephen's statement said back then would be an offense to our spending of billions of dollars of God's money on the millions of buildings. What he said then is just as offensive as it was to those Pharisees, God does not dwell in "Churches" or any other building; our focus is not to be distracted on the material but on the temple of the Holy Spirit. That departure of emphasis has permitted the enemy to come in our midst and pick us off one at a time. Though our buildings might be able to withstand a hurricane, its members so loosely joined can't.

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Part 3: The Kingdom and the Gifts

The use of our word church as a building has totally affected how we view building. The early Christians focused on their relationships with one another and the building of their lives together in a common unity. Their focus was not on an audiences-driven meeting facilitated by a building with its staff. Such impersonal meetings are causing many who are seeking help to fall through the cracks and be devoured by the enemy.

"So they (the sheep) were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them." Ezek 34:5-6, NKJV

The early believers met in homes. Leadership led by example and personally fed the sheep as a father feeds his own children. The early believers functioned like the cells in a body or as members in a family.

"From whom [Jesus] the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies [not just one person], according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Eph 4:16

In the assembly of believers, like a family, if the son was missing, the father would immediately go out to look for him. There was responsibility, accountability and a cohesion within their relationships that was tighter than a family. They had the power of the Holy Spirit knitting them together in love and faith. They had no need for a building or teaching on the level that we see today.

The Holy Spirit was present and worked with them. They had a supernatural foundation (Jesus) and a supernatural builder (Jesus and the Holy Spirit). The early believers came out of the kingdom of this world and became a part of the kingdom of God. They understood the kingdom concept taught by Jesus. They were Jews who understood a kingdom and a king. To the Jews, they were now a part of a new kingdom and Jesus was their king. Israel with its kings and high priest was a thing of the past. Their building was now made of living stones and Jesus was building them together. In scripture believers were likened to a body, a temple, a house, a bride, etc.. Jesus was the foundation of His building and He was the Head of His body and the Husband to His bride. The early believers had no clergy and laity. As believers they were called out (the meaning of *ekklesia*) of the world into the kingdom of God. They *were* the called out ones.

Gifts of the Spirit

The use of the word church as a building has changed the source of our meetings: form replaced the power of the Spirit.

When the early believers assembled together the Holy Spirit would manifest the gifts and virtues of the Spirit in each of the members to share with one another. They were built and knitted together on a sacrificial love for God and one another. They experienced love and unity. If we distort the building of the saints together, we jeopardize the life of the body of Christ and its function. To dismember and disjoint any body is death... the very thing we have done with His body and we are all guilty!

Once the reference to believers switched from the people being built together to a building of stone and wood... all meaningful function within the body was lost. We lost body ministry, unity, supportive relationships, fellowship and community. The funds that normally went to the poor and widows now went to the institutional structures and organization. This was a major shift (from people to building) and delivered a key blow to the function of the body of Christ, changing it to a teacher/audience structure. The intention of Christ building His believers in one body was thwarted by the traditions of men who translated our scriptures for their own

benefit... and not Christ's. Because of this switch, all ministry, as we understand it today, became skewed. When we look at what we have come to know as the five-fold ministry, we see offices, hierarchy, authority of men and fulltime ministry. We see audiences without personal care and without tight knit and supportive relationships. Such a switch of the ministries has divided us into a clergy and laity resulting in a passive and lethargic body. To even deepen this division, these ministries have further separated us into denominations, non-denominations, networks, etc.. Each of the five-fold ministries, developed believers around them instead of around Jesus... the very thing they were not supposed to do. Men became associated with "their" apostles, pastors, etc.. Most of those ministries became teaching ministries and the real function of unifying the body was gone.

Rather than having two or three gathered together in His name, we have multitudes gathering in a name totally foreign to the word of God: Presbyterian, Baptist, Calvary Temple, Don ministries, Joe's Evangelistic Association, ... the list goes into the thousands. This forming of congregations under other names has been one of the major disrespect for Jesus and His prayer for unity.

So today we have built ministry around men (pastors, popes, bishops, apostles, Dr's. and you name it) who usurped the authority of Christ as Head and have built around denominational titles and names separating His body into corporations. There are no words too strong to demonstrate this deception and shift. Words that come to mind are: abomination, heresy, anathema, reprobate and blasphemy. You say, "Andy, those are strong words." I don't know of any way to explain the devastation and damage of taking away from Christ His body which started in unity. We are to gather around the name of Jesus, not the name of a building or rented store front or a pastor or apostle. We have literally robbed Christ of his rightful place and therefore His glory in His body has departed. Because of this we are not equipped to build a Glorious body without wrinkle and spot! We have replaced the ministry of the Holy Spirit with the works of men. We have replaced first love (a true love and obedience toward Jesus) with work.

I am convinced that leadership is so caught up in the paradigm of the American church structure; they refuse to look and question their own place and responsibility in the body of Christ. Historically, since the reformation, leaders have put the emphasis of what they have perceived as truth (theological) and have not been willing to deal with the issue of the body of Christ and its unity and function. Such an honest inquiry would be devastating to works of most leaders and "their" groups, but not to the true body belonging to the Lord. Such an inquiry reminds me of the farmer's breakfast. The chicken has only to sacrifice an egg or two, but the pig must give up his life to supply the bacon. Theological differences are ok and we can pound the pulpits about being a bible believing church, but to remove a man from his position of being the minister over "his" congregation is costly. The truth is costly, who wants to buy it? "Buy the truth, and do not sell it ." Prov 23:23, NKJV

Such a move is forthcoming and many pastors are getting the message. What we are doing looks good and professional, but it is not God. Our approach is only further dividing the body and isolating the laity.

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Part 4: The Way We Were

Let's us now turn our attention to the scriptures and the workings of those early believers and what Jesus meant by "upon this rock I will build my assembly [*ekklesia*]". the true definition of the Greek word *ekklesia*. Let us look at the intended function set by the apostles and Jesus and see if we can see a pastor, an audience, and a building.

1 Cor 14:26, "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, **each of you** has a psalm, has a teaching [when we come together only one has a teaching], has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let **all things** be done for edification." NKJV

Does this happen when we come together? The reason we don't see the power and the gifts should by now be obvious. Often groups will manifest the vocal gifts, but rarely the power gifts.

Rom 12:4-13, "For as we have many members in **one body**, but all the members do not have the same **function**, so we, being many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually **members of one another**. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, **let us use them**: if prophecy, let **us** prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let **us** use it in our ministering; **he** who teaches, in teaching; **he** who exhorts, in exhortation; **he** who gives, with liberality; **he** who leads, with diligence; **he** who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to **one another with brotherly love**, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints [not a building], given to hospitality." NKJV

But that is exactly what we see again here:

1 Cor 12:4-31, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But **the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all**: for **to one** is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, **to another** the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, **to another** faith by the same Spirit, **to another** gifts of healings by the same Spirit, **to another** the working of miracles, **to another** prophecy, **to another** discerning of spirits, **to another** different kinds of tongues, **to another** the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, **distributing to each one individually** as He wills.

For as **the body is one** and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body [no denomination or non denomination. We are dying in this competition of churches]. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But **God composed the body** [not man, it is His body], having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members

individually. And **God has appointed** these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way." NKJV

Let us now turn to what we call the five-fold ministry. My comments in brackets [].

Eph 4:7, 11-16, "But **to each one** of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.... And He Himself gave some [of "each one of us"] to be apostles [sent one – bondservants], some prophets [those who speak from God], some evangelists [those who evangelize], and some pastors [shepherds is a better word. It speaks of those who personally care for the sheep on a one to one basis] and teachers [those who instruct us **to keep** Jesus' teaching – not information but instruction], for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry [so the saint could work the ministry once the apostle left] , for the edifying of the body of Christ, till **we all** come to the **unity** [Jn 17] of the faith and of the [full] knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man [are we seeing this kind of spiritual growth?], to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ [our focus has been diverted away from maturing the saints to numbering the saints. Discipleship works, audiences don't]; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine [are we being carried away by every kind of teaching possible?], by the trickery [fraud]of men [translators included], in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting [keeping everything surrounding a clergy laity], but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom **the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies** [not just one joint], according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." NKJV

We are not seeing **anything** near this. We are seeing men build around them and their groups. We see the saints reach a certain level and they stop growing or regress. We see the ministries creating lethargic audiences. We see cell groups that only mimic the larger group without power or body ministry.

It was the world that said, "Behold how they love one another" about the early believers.

Paul said this concerning the believers in Thessalonica, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, [Why?] because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of **every one of you** all abounds toward each other" 2 Thess 1:3

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Part 5: Conclusion

This all has come about because we understand *ekklesia* to be a building and therefore we conduct all our affairs in a building.

Division has become a way of life for us. Competition and church growth has put a wedge between the people of the Lord in our cities.

What does the bible say about our apostles and pastors today?

Jude 17-19, "But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, 'In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.' **These are the men who divide you** [who are the men who are dividing us in these last days?], who follow mere **natural** instincts [success, dynamic messages, enticing words of men's wisdom, worldly programs, etc.] and do not have the Spirit." NIV

To our leader Paul says, "... take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from **among yourselves** men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to **draw away the disciples after themselves** [the building and numbering of people around men and not the head]. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day **with tears**." (Acts 20:28-31, NKJ)

A savage wolf will tear the carcass apart, that is what we see today: the body being tore apart.

We as believers are **commanded**: "Being **diligent** to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph 4:3)

We are to " Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned ." (Titus 3:10-11)

Paul's apostolic word for us today, "Now I beseech (urge) you, brethren, **mark** them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned [they learned unity Jn 17]; and **avoid them**. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ [his concerns], but their own belly; and by **good words** and **fair speeches** [good sermons] deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom 16:17,18)

How do they deceive us - with "good words" and "fair speeches"? Just look at what divides us; it is men with good teachings who are capable of holding us to their apron strings.

How can one preach the scripture while ignoring Jesus, His apostles and the scriptures? Leadership has divided us and we have rallied around them.

"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ (Jn 17) does **not have** God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring **this doctrine** [it make no difference how good it sounds], do not receive **him** into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (II Jn 1:8-11)

These are very strong words; I am not suggesting we mark all leaders. I think many are sincere and are trying their best to do God's will. I just believe a cloak has been thrown over all of our eyes and we are all to blame...

especially me! It is only now many are seeing the scriptures without men's interpretations and translations. The cloak is being removed and God is working in many of the third world nations in power and in the reality of the body. It is now time for us to discuss these issues and pray and go from here.

"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions (no denomination, no networks, no non-denominations...no divisions) among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor 1:10-13)

Paul uses the strongest exhortation through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ... there can be no stronger exhortation. Where do we stand?

The doctrine and teaching of Christ :

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, **just as** you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)

I never heard of the Jesus denomination or the Father denomination.... Did you? It is because the Father and the Son are one... let's dare to be one as they are one!

It is sad that the people who divide us the most are our leaders; they have the most to lose by unity. They are the ones we have trusted. God is shaking and when He is done, what is at the top will come down and what is at the bottom will come up.

If we continue to mistranslate *ekklesia* as a building, we are forced to use programs, buildings, offices and men excursive authority over other men. Let's get back to Jesus and His body. Let's get back to unity and body ministry. Let those who are leaders, lead the people into their ministry to one another and rescue the millions who are falling through the cracks. Let us stop the competition and in infighting. Let us go on to maturity and become like Jesus.

God bless you

Andy