

Revelation's events unfold according to a seven-sealed scroll. These events unfold in a similar manner and sequence as to what happened to the Old Testament Jews. Thus, the events unfold in a Pattern Sequence. I call my prophetic view the Pattern View.

WHY THE ENDTIMES ARE UNFOLDING

(Chapter Seven of my book: *Watchman Warning*;))

by
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Christ- Centered



Biblical Training

This chapter presents the endtimes are coming because the church and people are falling away from God to various sins of commission and omission. This falling away gives Satan more power to bring His plans. The primary cause of the falling away is that of Church leadership followed by the Church people. We need to come to greater obedience.

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Scriptures quoted are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

See the glossary for definitions and understanding of the terms used.

Note: This report is chapter seven of my book: *Watchman Warning* (1994). The details are summarized in my other book: *Watchman, How Far Gone is the Night?* (1995). We encourage you to read these books for more detail and breadth for greater background and more complete understanding. They are available by contacting the above.

This chapter is written for those who have some knowledge of the issues and doctrines in prophecy. Those wanting a more beginning view can read *Watchman, How Far Gone is the Night?*

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CHAPTER SEVEN WHY THE ENDTIMES ARE UNFOLDING

WATCHMAN WARNING TO THE CHURCHES

The Problems Before Us

This chapter deals with the problems in our churches (on an overall basis) that are causing or contributing to their spiritual decline and to the decline of America. It is necessary to deal with these problems in order to alert and warn church leaders and believers that they may be part of the problem of causing the endtimes to come without their realizing it. Thus, if they are, they must deal with their problems and carry out their God given responsibilities, or they may face God's endtime judgment. It is an absolute certainty that God's judgment will come!

The endtimes will bring another spiritual dark age when little biblical doctrine will be taught or known. Spiritual perception of God's truths will be diminished severely by the time of their end. The dark age will continue until Christ comes again for His church. God will retain a faithful remnant during this period, as He does now. They will bring Bible teaching throughout this period to the degree that it will be allowed. But this teaching is expected to be shut down gradually or even abruptly by law and by persecution. Today, in many countries, it is against the law to witness the Christian faith to those of other faiths. This type of law could come to America and, particularly, early in the fifth-seal period of divine discipline.

As stated in the first chapter, the endtimes are coming, first, because the overall church is declining spiritually, and second, because the rest of the people are rampantly sinning. The people are sinning more because God is reducing His restraint on sin commensurate with the sin of the church. Thus, it is important that each local church ensure that she is faithfully obedient without trends of compromise and apostasy.

There still remains many faithful churches (and church families) that are doing God's will and doing a good job of training His people for life and ministry. This would need to be so or the country would be totally gone by now. But because the country is seriously, spiritually declining, we know that the overall church is falling away from the obedient faith that represents God's norm for His church. Observation shows this is true.

Hopefully the discussions in this chapter of why the church is departing from active faith will provide help for these churches to make corrections and also to provide insights to the faithful churches as well. **The word "leaders" is used in this chapter to mean pastors, elders, deacons, prophets, evangelists, teachers (including college professors), and parents.**

This alert and discussion of the problems in this chapter are part of the Watchman Warning message. God told Ezekiel as a Watchman to speak to Israel's elders and people about their sin (Ezekiel 20; 21:1-27). He was to warn them of coming judgment (Ezekiel 3:16-21; 33:7-9). As a Watchman, I must also address this difficult subject.

I believe it is better that we learn we have a problem, and make the necessary corrections and avoid judgment, than it is not to know about it. This is true, even though we may not want to hear about it.

But, because, I believe that most Christians want God's best, and, because, I believe that God wants the Watchman Warning proclaimed, this warning must be proclaimed to church leaders and people about potential problems in their churches and about their sin, and warn them of coming judgment. This warning is part of God's grace. Church leaders can assess their own problems and determine what action they should take to correct their problems and to train their people. This warning, with an encouragement, is also meant for faithful churches that they maintain their faithfulness and do not fall away when the spiritual warfare gets rougher, or they also will experience judgment. They are encouraged to maintain their testimony and to work within the circumstances as conditions worsen and adjust their operational strategies accordingly.

How far the church has departed from sound doctrine is a matter of degree and personal perception.

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There is no way to gather precise data. But because the country is in serious spiritual decline, the sin in the church must be extensive.

But, why is all this happening? What has caused the American church to decline spiritually?

By my perception, the main cause of the church departing from the biblical faith is a doctrinal problem and lifestyle in the leadership; mainly in the elders (including pastors). Their problems, of course, lead to problems in the congregations. This problem in the elders has led to improper discipleship training, insufficient teaching of biblical doctrine, unbiblical organizations, inadequately carrying out the church's purpose for being, and not having a sufficient biblical church lifestyle! As a result, leaders are leaving their people and children unprepared for the intense onslaught of the spiritual warfare that is coming upon us soon. The churches are operating at a level that is way below God's intended standard for the church — at a level of spiritual mediocrity. Leaders are accepting such operation as the norm. However, this situation is not true of all the churches.

The situation of accepting a norm way below God's standard is like being satisfied with flying a Cessna 172 private airplane to travel around the world when flying a four engine military jet is required. The people in church leadership do not have an adequate perception or concept of what God wants done. They settle for much less. Because this is true, even though the churches do much good, they have some form and amount of unacceptable apostasy. This lifestyle and acceptance over a long time period invites God's judgment.

Church leaders no doubt have gradually departed from their commitment to sufficient sound doctrine without their realizing how far they have come. They are no longer committed to teach the whole counsel or purpose of God. Their church life and ministry has commensurately suffered.

2 Timothy 4:3 - For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ...

Discussion of the Problems

As we consider our spiritual problems and potential judgment, we are to concentrate on living spiritually accurately in the present. We are not to be anxious about the future.

Matthew 6:33, 34 - "But seek first His Kingdom, and righteousness; and these things [the needs of life] shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

But at the same time, we must prepare for the future because we have knowledge of what the future will bring, just like Joseph did for the famines of Egypt (Genesis 41:25-57) and like Joshua did when Israel was about to enter the promised land (Joshua 1). God told both to prepare.

The reason that we must give special attention to prepare for the future is that our churches are operating way below God's spiritual norm in life and ministry, in various forms and levels of apostasy. If this were not true, America would not be spiritually declining, and a Watchman Warning would not be necessary. We need to change what we are doing to avoid God's judgment and be a light for God for those in the coming spiritual thick darkness. What we need to do is to obey God's mandates to the fullest. This together with the knowledge of what the future will bring, will prepare us.

Because God names the elders as leaders of the churches (1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Peter 5:1-5), they are the ones that God will primarily hold responsible for the decline of the churches followed by the decline of America. (The Bible uses the term elders to mean the top church leadership. God holds the top leaders responsible regardless of what other names churches use for them such as pastors or deacons.) The church believers as a whole are also responsible. But because the elders are in charge, they are expected to receive the greatest judgment for the departure of the church from obedient faith. Thus, the elders should do all they can before the judgment comes to set things right before God.

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A List of the Problems

The major problems in our churches, by my perception, will now be discussed. They are summarized as follows:

1. **God's Overlay** - The churches have not put God's overlay into place and organized their operation to carry it out. This overlay is that God's primary objective for the church is to bring her people to spiritual maturity in Christ. This maturity is necessary to know God and to live by His resurrection power by the means of her exalting God, living a godly life and accomplishing God's work in the environment of trials, testings, temptations, and persecutions.
2. **The Elders** - The elders of the churches are not living sufficiently, exemplary lives as adequate role models before the congregation in living out the three activities and do not know sufficient doctrine, both academic and practical, to lead, organize, and train the church in living out God's overlay.
3. **God's Whole Counsel** - The church is no longer teaching God's whole counsel of His Word resulting in the churches no longer knowing sufficient doctrine to adequately live out the three activities and establish their faith so that they will not depart from active faith.
4. **Pulpit and Pew Separation: The Church Organization and Operation** - The churches have organized themselves to fail and not to do God's best by following tradition instead of the Bible in organization, operation, and ministry.
5. **Insufficient Commitment to Christ** - Believers no longer have sufficient love for Christ and commitment to Him to be involved in carrying out His Great Commission, especially in local communities. They have departed from solid biblical teaching and singing the hymns of the faith to the giving of sermonettes and the singing of choruses.
6. **Doctrines That Lead to Complacency** - There are doctrines that lead to complacency in the churches so that the congregation is not greatly involved in ministry. These doctrines include declaring false peace without the fear of coming judgment, such as by believing in a pretribulation Rapture, and by believing that God because He is sovereign will save people regardless of whether the local church does witnessing and evangelizing.
7. **Doctrines of Disobedience** - There are many doctrines that the churches are now disobeying. These include believers who do not live by great faith so as to allow God to accomplish great things through them. And the churches and believers are giving lip service to God and have become lukewarm, double minded, and sin tolerant.
8. **The Apostasy of Tongues** - Many churches have involved themselves in false worship by speaking in false tongues and by being involved in contrived emotionalism. This apostasy is serious because it has gone worldwide.

Each of these problem areas will now be discussed in the same order as listed above.

1. GOD'S OVERLAY

The churches have not put God's top-level overlay into place and organized their operation to carry it out. Because many churches have not, their church life, operation, and ministry are way below God's norm. This overlay is that God's primary objective for the church is to bring her people to spiritual maturity in Christ and to know God by her exalting God, living a godly life and accomplishing God's work (the three activities using the Romans 8:28 Faith-Process) in the environment of trials, testings, temptations, and persecutions — amidst spiritual warfare. [Figure 7-1](#) illustrates the overlay.

The main job of the church is to bring her people to spiritual maturity in Christ. This gives her the maximum ability to know God, to live by His character qualities and resurrection power, and to live righteously. Everything the church does should be ultimately aimed at bringing about this objective. Equipping the saints to accomplish ministry is necessary.

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Ephesians 4:11-13 - And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 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.

Thus, the church's main job is to bring her people to spiritual maturity in Christ. It is not to: (1) teach the Bible, (2) have church services and sermons, (3) have fellowship, and (4) evangelize the world, even though all of these are vitally important and must be accomplished. **Thus, a church that is satisfied with having a weekly biblical sermon, a church service, a Sunday School program, and even a missions program, but is not maturing her people, is not carrying out God's primary objective and has some form and degree of apostasy.**

Churches should organize and operate around God's main objective of maturing believers. To accomplish this goal, the church must teach and train her people with God's whole counsel. When believers are maturing, being transformed into Christ's likeness, their worship and fellowship will greatly increase because they are doing more of God's will and best. Their lives will be much more effective in glorifying God. As a result, the people will naturally witness and evangelize and bring in new converts to the local body or church. They will exalt God more accurately and fully, and will automatically have high quality fellowship. But because much of the church life is in spiritual decline, many, if not most, of the church elders and people do not have sufficiently transformed lives.

God uses the trials and testings of life as a training process to bring his saints to this desired maturity — as they apply biblical doctrines that guide their proper response to them (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9). Leaders are to train their faithful people who are able to teach and train others (2 Timothy 2:2). Thus, the church is a body of believers that is regularly training others to accomplish ministry and to become mature with transformed lives in Christ through the trials and testings of life. These testings come about also from being in the ministry.

With this maturity and transformed lives:

Ephesians 4:14-16 - ... we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Living out the three activities by faith, love, and hope completes the Romans 8:28 Faith-Process selected by God. As the church completes the process, He works all things together overall or for ultimate good on the behalf of those implementing the process. Thus, the church needs to emphasize living by faith and the implementation of the Faith-Process. As the church implements the Faith-Process, they will live by love, keeping the commandments of God, and they will be involved in God's work, according to God's purpose for them. The overall result is that God will be exalted. Christians will be in great fellowship and the world (especially local communities) will be evangelized.

The church is to organize and operate to train her people to live out the three activities in order to reach spiritual maturity and obey God. However, many, if not most, church members, even though committed to Christ and the Cross, seem mainly to visualize themselves worshipping God in a Sunday service and fellowshiping with their friends. They do not see themselves involved in ministry.

God's primary relationships in living the godly life are that His people live the servant role in love-based head-subordinate, unity, relationships; whereby the believer lives under the authority of God, working out in real time what God is working in the believer. Unity is achieved by all in the church believing and acting according to God's attributes and biblical truth at His leading. As a result the believer takes no independent action apart from God. He only does what is written in the Bible, such as in obeying the commandments and principles. The believer only thinks and acts according to what comes from God as a source (what is written in the Bible), and lives using the attributes of God that are usable by people under His direction. These attributes include love, grace, righteousness, faithfulness, lovingkindness, truth, longsuffering, justice, holiness, mercy, etc. He has faith in God to do what the Scriptures say that

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He will do, and the believer obeys the Scriptures where it says what he is to do. See Endnote #1¹ for a list and description of God's attributes.

This organization and training consists of leaders accepting the commitment and responsibility to care for those of whom God holds them responsible and to ensure that the ministry gets accomplished. For example, local witnessing and evangelism may be greatly accomplished only if a leader takes the responsibility, trains people, and sees to it that the ministry gets planned and accomplished. He acts as if he is responsible under God's direction for the outcome, as far as it depends upon him. Accomplishing this ministry to which God has called him, is a main reason the elder wants to live. Commitment causes people to actively plan how they are going to carry out their ministries. They work their plan. The elders should carry out every ministry in the church life with this type of commitment.

2. THE ELDERS ARE INSUFFICIENT ROLE MODELS

Because the churches are spiritually declining, it is apparent that the elders (leaders) of the churches are not living sufficient exemplary lives as adequate role models before the congregation. They are not sufficiently broken before the Lord, so as to receive and understand His leading to guide their lives and the church. They are not leading themselves and the church to adequately live out the three activities. And because they do not, they do not know sufficient doctrine, both academic and practical, to lead, organize, and train the church in living out God's overlay. Because the elders are not pointing the way by living the example exemplary Christian life, the rest of the church does not have adequate role models to imitate. Thus, the whole church does not live adequate role models and is falling away from active faith, resulting in some form and degree of apostasy.

God is against leaders who do not know sufficient doctrine and who do not adequately enter into and live the Christian faith and as a result do not train their people to enter into it and live it. God is against those leaders who do not live the three activities and train their people to live them. This situation is a very serious situation with God.

Matthew 23:13 - "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men, for you do not enter in yourselves; nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

Being an example is the requirement for leadership (elders):

1 Peter 5:3 - ... proving to be examples to the flock.

Christians are to imitate God, Christ, the apostle Paul, and each other as godly examples in the faith (1 Corinthians 4:15, 16; 11:1; Ephesians 5:1, 2; 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 6; 2:14; Hebrews 6:12; 13:7). Leaders who live this way will have a regular testimony of trusting God and living a sacrificial life of service from their love of God and people.

The people will look to the elders as examples to follow if the elders are living as exemplary role models. They want to see the elders living what they teach about. They want to know if anyone lives out the teachings. If the leaders and teachers of the churches do not do it, what faith will the people and children have to live it out themselves?

Elders with spiritual maturity will know much doctrine, they will be living by faith, and reaching out to their people in love. They will be involved in leading and participating in ministries. They will set before the people the ministry the church is to carry out. They will give the church a vision to follow and train them in living out the three activities. They will be living the total and balanced Christian life. They will be examples to follow.

On the other hand, leaders who are poor role models, including those who act from pride will often drive their people away from their fellowships. The people leave the churches because they have little respect for the elders and their resulting church life. Their needs are not being met so they no longer invite people to attend church there. Such elders probably do not qualify to be elders. God is against such shepherds

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that drive their sheep away.

Jeremiah 23:1, 2 - "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!" declares the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds," declares the Lord.

Churches who lose significant attendance over a long period or do not grow should take inventory of what they are doing that may be the cause. The lives and doctrines of leaders should be inspected in such situations. Regularly losing attendance or having a lack of growth shows that the church is not meeting the spiritual needs of the people. This situation can be a result of sins in the leadership (the sins can be sins of omission). Certainly they are not receiving the revelation (illumination) of the Scriptures that are needed to meet the spiritual needs of the people in these situations. This lack of revelation reflects a lack of faith-obedience and directed prayer.

Another reason that elders are poor role models in today's churches is the lack of their involvement in evangelistic and discipling ministries. They sit primarily on church boards, making policies and decisions, and approving budgets. Because they, themselves, do not enter into leading discipleship and evangelistic ministries, they are not effective in leading their people to enter into them. Remember Matthew 23:13 shows that God is greatly against this type of leadership because His people are left untrained, and He has given the mandate to the leaders to make it happen. Because they are not directly involved and responsible for the outcome, they do little thinking about it. Thus, they, by their actions, organization, and alignment of responsibilities, do not allow themselves to provide good leadership. The overall church suffers because of this kind of leadership. They act as poor role models to follow. God is not pleased with this arrangement.

Young people are looking for spiritually mature role models to imitate and are having difficulty finding them. Godly examples inspire others in godly living. The same is true for family leaders. The husband, father, and single parent need to implement the church's three activities in their families; they need to live as godly examples. God holds leaders accountable.

Church leaders who do not disciple themselves and their people to live the church's three activities can be responsible for their people falling away from active faith and for the nation's spiritual decline. They can expect great judgment. As judgment comes, bad leaders may die by the sword, famine, disease, and pestilence (Jeremiah 14:10-12).

3. GOD'S WHOLE COUNSEL

The churches are falling away from the faith because the church is no longer teaching the whole counsel of God's Word. This is resulting in the churches no longer knowing sufficient doctrine to adequately live out the three activities and establish their faith so that they will not depart from active faith.

The apostle Paul trained the churches in his day with the whole counsel or purpose of God. He did not leave out anything. The whole counsel of God in reality includes a comprehensive systematic theology of both the academic and the practical doctrines. Thus, he carried out his responsibility under God, and thus, he was not responsible for the blood of any people. This latter term means that he did not hinder anyone from responding fully to God in order to carry out God's purposes.

Acts 20:26, 27 - "Therefore I testify to you this day, that I [Paul the Apostle] am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose [or counsel] of God."

But in today's churches the whole counsel is seldom being preached — church people generally are no longer being sufficiently trained. Major portions of God's Word are being omitted or treated lightly. Few pastors are now doing expository preaching, teaching verse by verse, and drawing from the depth and breadth of God's Word. They no longer teach the major doctrines of the Bible. The trend in the churches today, often among young pastors, is a departure from teaching and living out comprehensive sound doctrines representing God's whole counsel. Instead many use a few Scriptures, and then preach using mainly their own ideas. Their sermons last about 20 to 40 minutes and generally teach only practical

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doctrines without showing how they fit into God's plan. While this is helpful and useful, the necessary training is not accomplished for either a sufficient doctrinal background or sufficient principles for living the Christian life.

Because we are not oriented to building spiritual maturity in our people, we take other routes of training. We concentrate on what we think draws people into our fellowships. We concentrate on what pleases others more than we concentrate on what pleases God. We conclude that short practical sermons with the singing of modern choruses using guitars gets the job done. But just the opposite is true. People are more attracted by strong doctrine in depth and breadth (meat of the Word) and to the great hymns of the faith using the piano and organ. In comparison, the depth of the word is to great hymns as short sermons lightly done are to choruses. The latter does not get the job done. Our job is to mature believers, not please people. These other approaches are the way of compromise and appeasement.

Today, churches have much clapping for performers in the church services. Thus, church services have become man centered. Church workers should get their praise and reward from God instead of from men. I have noticed that when a choir or soloist sings a hymn or song spiritually with high quality, there is no clapping. There is no clapping because the people are more awed with God than with the choir or the soloist.

The singing in the church appears to be greatly different when singing hymns, than when singing choruses. There is much more volume and emotion toward God with the singing of the hymns. In the singing of the choruses, there is more emotion toward self and ecstasy. Such results are not of God. From my perspective, there is a tremendous difference when starting a church service with "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name" or "The Doxology" than there is with singing such choruses as "I Love You, Lord." These hymns are worship toward God in a selfless manner. The chorus deals more with the worshipper. And singing I Love You, Lord or I Worship You, Lord can be shams, if the congregation is not keeping Christ's commandments, living godly lives, and being involved in Christ's work (John 14:15; 15:10). Such is not the case when singing about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Bible doctrine. Where neither may be wrong, the emphasis is different and the results are different. My perception says hymns are a higher form of worship with more honor toward God and are more toward God's best. If choruses are used, I recommend using only those that do not draw attention to man, are not repetitious, do not contrive emotions or the raising of hands, and that are doctrinally correct. Where the raising of hands is not always unbiblical (Psalm 134:2; 1 Timothy 2:8), I believe that it is under contrived conditions of emotions using choruses.

Other preachers state what they believe is biblical truth from anywhere in the Bible without showing their listeners how it is developed. Still other churches teach mostly academics without the application to the Christian life or how to carry out what God wants done. They generally only teach what is to be done or obeyed. They seldom teach how.

This situation of not teaching God's whole counsel and living it out is most likely a main reason why the church overall is not spiritually strong. The lack of this type of teaching effects the lives of the leadership and the way the ministry is carried out.

Teaching mostly Bible content without discipling people to live godly lives and accomplish God's work is like teaching the design of a well-equipped fighter aircraft without training military people to fly it and accomplish a designated mission. The mission of the church is to evangelize and lead converts to spiritual maturity by training them to live godly lives through effective discipleship. By necessity, this ministry must be carried out by the whole church and not just by the few who have professional training. On-the-job training must be provided and involved.

My choice for teaching and training is to have one hour plus of solid exegetical and expository Bible teaching that is adequately developed every Sunday morning and another 60 minutes each Sunday night and another 90 minutes of teaching on another night of the week. Exegetical and expository teaching goes verse by verse, examining the original languages, and drawing upon related teachings and passages from all of Scripture. It provides much application on how to live out the doctrines. I then would like to have audio cassette tapes of the messages so that I can listen to the teachings again as often as I desire. It would be good to have detailed outline notes with the Scriptural references and with the main

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issues, points, messages, and conclusions (and the why of the conclusions) clearly written out by the teacher. These teachings need to include what we are to believe, what will happen, what and how we are to live, and what the future is expected to bring. The teachings need to be aimed at God's plan and how we are to grow in spiritual maturity in Christ in close relationship with Him. This doctrinal training must definitely contain the practical as well as the academic teachings of the Bible. This type of training, consisting of a balance of the academic and practical, will bring the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2) that is required to adequately live the Christian life. Along with this type of teaching, I would like to personally study the doctrines and have the opportunity for a mutual sharing of their meaning and application with others.

My analysis shows that it takes more than 10 years to teach good quality and adequate Bible content that represents God's whole counsel if we have only one quality whole hour per week. Several hours per week of solid exegetical and expository teaching are necessary for people to learn the Bible in any practical time interval. But if we use only 20 to 40 minutes per week, lightly done, what hope is there to train with God's whole counsel? What hope is there to bring our people to spiritual maturity?

What we need is a Discipleship Training Center in every church that teaches and trains our people with God's whole counsel several times per week in depth and in breadth using some method of on-the-job training. Such a Discipleship Training Center would be one where students use workbooks to develop and share their own understanding of the doctrines and afterward hear a lecture on each subject from a well informed Bible teacher. And we need these training centers now! The Discipleship Training Center Concept is shown in Figures 8-5, 8-6, and 8-7 in the book.

By my observation, churches that teach insufficient doctrine are casualties in the spiritual warfare, and they cause their people to be casualties (Matthew 23:13). They are leaving their people unprepared for the onslaught of Satanic persecution that will come in the fifth-seal warfare.

It is essential that we continue teaching the Bible in depth and breadth to our people in order to maintain a base of strong Christians. They then can pass on the teachings to others and enable them to go through the coming intense spiritual warfare and darkness. We need to train faithful elders, pastors, and teachers who will do this. If we do not continue to do this, the time will come when people will no longer know sound doctrine, just as the Bible says will happen (2 Timothy 4:3).

At this time, we need to develop exemplary-living churches whose people will shine like lights as examples to the rest. We need churches and home groups that will commit to doing everything right before God and then implement their commitment. But we need do to this with the meat of God's Word, representing God's whole counsel. Your church can make such a commitment.

When the church is obedient to God, this allows God to work all things together for good. God and the church win the warfare. But when the church is disobedient, God no longer restrains sin as much as He did, and Satan begins to win the warfare. The latter is what is happening now. This warfare is similar to the situation of a battle in the Old Testament when Moses was holding up his hands and arms toward heaven (Exodus 17:8-13). When he held up his hands, Joshua and the Israelites would be winning the battle. And when he put his hands down because he became tired, Amalek and the Amalekites would be winning. Finally in order to win the battle, Israel had to prop up the hands and arms of Moses.

Church leadership has not recognized that God fights the spiritual warfare in the heavenlies based on the faith-obedience of His church. The warfare is being won when the church is obedient. The warfare is being lost when the church becomes disobedient. Because the spiritual conditions are worsening, the church has become seriously disobedient because of the influence of the spiritual warfare and because it has not sufficiently recognized that God's purpose is to take His people to spiritual maturity in Christ. And the only way to get to spiritual maturity is to know and practice sound doctrines as our minds are renewed with God's many doctrines. Generally, the more doctrines we know and practice, the more our minds will be renewed, and the more we are apt to live as Christ lives, exalting God. Because the church is no longer honoring sound doctrines in practical living, America is in spiritual decline. Satan is winning the warfare. And the situation is serious because we have few examples to show us the way. Thus, we do not recognize the level of Christian living that God wants. So we settle for much less. This lesser

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obedience allows Satan to win the warfare and take our privileges and freedoms away.

Anyone who has attended school and college realizes that there is a curriculum associated with every major course of study. It would only seem natural that the church would have a curriculum for God's Word, representing God's whole counsel, that would be aimed at maturing Christians — a curriculum that would be taught to every Christian. Such a curriculum helps to mature believers and prepare them for the coming spiritual onslaught. This curriculum needs to include the practical and some form of on-the-job training, such as homework, personal investigation, sharing of results, taking tests, and performing actual ministry as workers in training. The students need to be responsible for part of the outcome.

We need to implement these Discipleship Training Centers post haste in all our churches in order to train our own people and others who desire it. We need to do it knowing that the intensity of the spiritual warfare is ever increasing with the sin of the church and the rest of the people. It is a real, not a simulated situation.

As part of the Discipleship Training Center activity, churches also need to have regular programs to train their people to do witnessing, operate in evangelistic teams, teach and preach, and prepare papers on doctrinal subjects. The church needs to train faithful people in leadership. The church needs to train her people to accomplish God's work in every area of ministry.

There may still be time for another revival amongst God's people before the severe endtime judgment begins. If many churches throughout America and parts of the world would only implement these Discipleship Training Centers and their people would only begin to live exemplary Christian lives as a result, they may help to bring another spiritual revival before the end comes. We should work hard to help bring it about. But if the churches do not do it, then the spiritual darkness will continue to get thicker and pervade the world until Christ comes.

We can teach our people with little or much of the Bible (both the academic and the practical). But unless we see the coming of spiritual warfare, the need to mature Christians (not just bring them growth), have a definite and comprehensive curriculum, and have a definite schedule for the training, we will probably just fill Sunday mornings with selected topics or a Bible book study for our sermons. We will accomplish good things, but not great things. We will leave ourselves and our people as possible casualties in the spiritual warfare.

Not training our people can result in our watching them being spiritually slaughtered before our eyes in the warfare as the onslaught comes upon us. It will not be a pretty sight, particularly concerning our children.

Our churches must come to the status of spiritual warfare that is above and beyond normal operation and training. We need to organize and operate our churches and implement a Discipleship Training Center in most of our churches in order to bring our people along to spiritual maturity as far as it depends upon us. We need to prepare our people for what is coming, and we need to do it now.

Parents, in particular, need to train themselves and their children. They need to this training even if their churches do not.

4. PULPIT AND PEW SEPARATION: THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION

Unbiblical Organization Is the Problem: The Professional and the Laity

The churches have organized themselves to fail and not to do God's best by following tradition instead of the Bible in organization, operation, and ministry. The organization and the operation of our churches into the unbiblical concept of the professional and the laity has, by its own inherent design, brought a separation of the pulpit and the pew. It has brought about the situation that the professional does most of the ministry with the rest of the church shut out and watching. It has the quarterbacks on the field

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playing the game with the rest of the workers on the bench watching. Of course many of the players work with the system and are involved in the game. But because the quarterbacks have professional training, none of the other players, without this training, can become quarterbacks. This widely accepted concept and tradition of churches having professional pastors has been very detrimental to the training of the church and the carrying out of ministry. The concept did not come from the Bible and was not true of the church for the first 300 years of the church. It came about probably from the Roman church near the time of Constantine based on a professional priest standing in front of the meetings. Seminaries are not in Scripture, and they probably came about based on the need to train the priests. The organization of the professional and the laity creates the following situations or trends by its own inherent, but unbiblical design (of course, many churches partially overcome the situation by using a hybrid of both biblical and unbiblical methods):

1. Because the professional has professional training, and because the church does not train people with adequate training that equals that of the professionals, the churches remain insufficiently trained.
2. Because the church is left insufficiently trained, she does not involve herself in much ministry, and she does not have the knowledge and the training to advance to the spiritual maturity planned by God. She operates at a much lower level.
3. Because the professional separates himself from the workers, the workers cannot be sufficiently close to him to observe his lifestyle as a role model. Because of the separation caused by the professional training and way of operating, the church does not work adequately as a family type team. And because it does not, the ministry greatly suffers.
4. Because churches operate with the professional pastor doing most of the preaching ministry, the rest of the leaders (elders or deacons) do mostly board work and do not minister to the people. Because they do not minister, they do not think about the ministries and, therefore, do not lead the churches adequately. The pastor is generally too busy studying and preparing, to do it. Because of this situation, other ministries, that are not led by pastors, generally do not get efficiently accomplished. Thus, because of this arrangement, local communities seldom get evangelized. They do not get evangelized, because the professional does not have time, and the church, who does have more time, is left untrained. Thus, the church life and ministry greatly suffers.

Because leaders do not seriously train and draw their people into ministry, the people do not take their teaching about their being in ministry seriously. When they are drawn in, it is to a ministry that does not require a large biblical background. Thus, the people do not visualize themselves as team members with the entire church, being called of God to accomplish some ministry, and taking the gospel to every person in their community. As a result, they then see themselves living a normal life, as unbelievers do, except that they use godly principles. They do not view themselves committed, as part of an organized church body, to carry out the work of the Great Commission, including doing witnessing wherever they go. They view themselves as spectators to the main ministries and see the pastors and missionaries as accomplishing most of the work. They do this because the challenges, the worries, and the tasks of everyday life seem to keep them occupied. They seem satisfied to sit in the pew and fellowship with their friends. (Of course this may not be true of the faithful remnant.) **The church organizes, operates, and trains as if this is God's norm for intended operation.**

5. Based on the auditorium format, that probably comes from a priest standing in front of the meetings teaching the people, the church has gone primarily to this format. The professional ministers, and the others watch. They are shut out of the worship. Some, such as the Brethren church, have seen the fallacy of this approach as the only one, and have gone to a round-table type format with their people sharing on a more equal participation basis. But this operation used alone can leave out major teaching.

The Biblical Form of Organization

The above is the not the biblical norm for organization, operation, or ministry in the churches. Such operation has been the cause of churches working way below God's norm.

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God wants the churches to operate with all Christians, working together as a team. Christ has chosen gifts and callings for each believer that represent spiritual capabilities and ministry functions (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12). The Scripture represents them as functions of Christ's body such as the eye, ear, foot, etc.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11-14, 18-20, 27, 28 -Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good ... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 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. For the body is not one member, but many ... But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired ... but now there are many members, but one body ... Now you are Christ's body, and individual members of it. And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers ...

Thus, the concept is that Christ has his whole church before Him and appoints Christians to various jobs with appropriate gifts. All the workers are in the game and know the doctrines that are associated with their job. They also have been trained for their jobs, or they are in training. There is no such thing as the concept of the professional and the laity in His thinking, even though some elders are financed or supported full time by the church. The church is simply one team of people carrying out His will in life and ministry. No one is separated from the others because of training or man's ordination.

Christ has selected the elders to manage, head, and train the churches (1 Timothy 3:4, 5; 5:17; Titus 1:6; 1 Peter 5:1-4). They are to shepherd the church. He does not have pastors and their pastoral staffs as practiced today. If there are pastors as such, those that spiritually qualify, they are numbered among the elders without any special recognition. And many elders, not just one, do the teaching and preaching.

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

Titus 1:9 - [the elders] 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.

As the churches were being established, the apostles appointed elders in every church and city (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). They did not appoint pastors.

A study of the Greek for deacon and its grammatical derivatives for being "a minister," "the ministry (some translations may use office)," or doing "ministering" (serving) shows that the heads of all other ministries than those of the elders are deacons. Thus, all the rest of the workers (other than the elders) that qualify and that lead ministries inside and outside the church are deacons. Thus, all the workers in the church, heading ministries, are either elders or deacons.

The Bible gives spiritual qualifications only for elders and deacons (Acts 6:3, 5; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 2 Timothy 2:24, 25; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). It does not give them for pastors or for any other ministry. This confirms that the main ministries are only led by elders and deacons, and that pastors are not in God's main plan. (If they are used, they would need to be numbered among the elders and deacons.) There are other gifts² concerning the early church ministry and operation when she was a church in transition near the time of the Day of Pentecost. But these gifts are no longer in the church from God.

The Pastor Situation

The so called pastor-teacher is listed in Ephesians 4:11 (the only place in the Bible where this concept is used) as being among the prophets and evangelists as emphasizing ministries, not as heads of churches. Generally speaking, these gifts will be divided among the church elders (and deacons). There could be several elders having each of the gifts, with different elders having different gifts. The pastor-teacher concept of Ephesians 4:11 is in the plural. This means that there will be several pastor-teachers among the elders and in different ministries in the church. (The Bible could also mean that they are distributed among the many churches.) Regardless, however, the Bible does not teach that a church is

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to have one lead pastor-teacher (or even a pastor that is called the pastor of a church), and that he is to be a single leader and do most of the teaching. The Bible knows nothing about the concept that a pastor is to be the chief executive officer (CEO) of a church for training or for the church life. This practice has become traditional and operative in many churches, but, by my perception, it has not come from the Bible.

Because elders are to be examples to the church, they are to live exemplary lives, imitating the life of Christ (1 John 2:6). As such, they are to keep God's commandments, do His will, and be involved accomplishing His work (cf. John 4:34; 15:10). They are to train their people with the whole counsel or purpose of God (a selected curriculum), not omitting any important doctrines (Acts 20:26, 27). They are to train faithful people who can train others (2 Timothy 2:2). Titus 1:9 teaches that elders must be able to exhort in sound doctrine and be able to refute the wrong doctrines of others. Thus, the elders are to know sound doctrine in depth to ensure that the life and ministry of the church is according to it. Elders, then, will be heads of ministries, they will train others, and will share all the doctrines that they know. According to Scripture (1 Timothy 5:17), it is the elders who are to do work hard to teach the entire church and be responsible to bring in others to teach and train. It is not pastors as such by the modern traditional understanding.

Some may believe that young Timothy was a pastor. But he was an associate of Paul that Paul used to serve in many churches such as in Corinth, Phillipi, Ephesus, and Thessalonica (1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18). Some may believe that Titus also could have been a pastor (Titus 1:5). But Titus also was an associate of Paul because Paul left Titus in Crete to do the work of an apostle or a missionary. Another possibility for a pastor is James in Jerusalem. But he was an apostle, not a pastor (Matthew 10:2; Luke 24:10; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19). The doctrinal situation of the council at Jerusalem was handled by the apostles and the elders — not by pastors — because there were none (Acts 15:2, 4, 6). There is no reference in Scripture that teaches that James, Timothy, Titus, or anyone was a pastor of a church, or that churches are to have pastors. There are many teachings that elders are to lead and train the churches.

The pastor-teacher reference in Ephesians 4:11 has no reference to the pastorate or to being a pastor of a church. It is a gift that God gives for the way a person is to minister. A pastor-teacher could minister at any level in the church — such as an elder or as a deacon — but not necessarily as the lead or head pastor. There are no examples of pastors of churches anywhere in Scripture, nor do the Scriptures infer that a local church should have a pastor.

The main concern is that when churches have professional pastors that are set apart from the rest of the workers, the church life and ministry suffers — it is a non-trivial situation.

(I encourage readers who believe in having pastors to develop the concept from the weight of Scripture [investigating all the Scriptures that bear on the subject] based on at least two witnesses in Scripture [not on isolated cases, or on unfounded, implied, or unverified assertions] as to whether or not a church is to have a pastor at all [and whether the pastorate is a biblical concept] or if the elders, as a group, are to do the preaching, teaching, and leading without pastors. When you complete your study, I believe that you will find that the elders are to do the main teaching and preaching, leading the church in all of its aspects — not pastors. The Bible knows nothing about having pastors, a pastoral staff, or the pastorate.)

The practice of a church having a pastor will probably rarely change. Existing pastors will probably resist such a change because it puts them without a job in the church, based on their description of the job. If pastors want to be true to Scripture, they should train the elders to do teaching and training, and then give up their jobs. If they spiritually qualify, they can remain numbered among the elders and join with them in the preaching and training of the church without special significance. They, as any elder, can still be maintained fully supported by the church to do the administrative functions. All the elders are to be shepherds (pastors), and all who lead and teach (whether or not they are elders or deacons) are shepherds (pastors).

The Greek work for pastor means shepherd. Thus, in this sense, whoever does shepherding anywhere in the church would be pastors, regardless of professional training. It would be better not to use the term of pastor, but instead, use leaders of ministries or ministry team leaders.

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The main point is that the entire church people are equal in the ministry, but called to different jobs, having been given different gifts. No one is to have preeminence except Christ. The elders who work hard at preaching and teaching can receive double honor, but not first place (real or implied).

Church Leader Development

As believers are learning the Bible, maturing, and being involved in ministry, they will come to know more about God and His desired godly living for them. Many will meet deacon and elder qualifications. Leaders will observe God's call, gifts, revelation, and blessing in these people, and then appoint or affirm them to leadership and the job to which God has already appointed them. God's people are appointed to deacon and elder because they are already doing ministry. Stephen, Philip, and their friends were appointed to be deacons for a specific job when they were already fully involved in ministry and living exemplary lives (Acts 6).

As this process of church and body operation continues, deacons and elders become the leaders of the church's ministries to which God has called and gifted them. The elders become the leaders of the church and all are in ministry. They are doctrinally strong. As a result of their ministering and demonstration of leadership, meeting the Bible's qualifications, they are appointed to the position of elder and deacon. (Generally, leaders are not to be appointed by the church to be elders and deacons with the idea that they will then begin to head and start ministries. God has only men elders in the churches. Women are not allowed to rule over or to teach men [1 Corinthians 14:34, 35; 1 Timothy 2:12].) The above action results in the entire leadership being in ministry, and their lives as examples, being observable by the church. Much of the whole church body is being trained and ministering. The elders as leaders in living godly lives and in accomplishing the training act as examples to the entire church.

Today's Situation

Although I discuss an all-elder church organization as biblical and, therefore, God's best, I do not expect many churches to organize according to the biblical norm, by moving away from having pastors. However, they should work toward it. It may be too hard for churches to accept this truth because of the long-standing tradition. And additionally, churches generally have not sufficiently trained their elders so that they can do most of the teaching. However, if we do not organize according to God's ways, we cannot expect to have God's best.

Because we probably have little time left, even though we should work toward the goal, there may be insufficient time to train elders to take over the teaching and training before the fourth-seal war comes. **It is most important at this point in time that an organization is selected or maintained that will effectively train teachers and God's people with God's whole counsel post haste in a Discipleship Training Center environment. This we must do regardless of our organization that we now have or adopt, in order to meet the coming spiritual warfare. We should organize the church into ministry teams in order to effectively implement the Discipleship-Training-Center ministry.**

Choice of Church Meeting Formats

The Bible has little to say about how a church should be organized and how it should operate. But it does give principles. The Bible teaches that the early church met in homes and that the early teaching was in homes and in the temple or in the synagogue (Acts 2:46, 47; 5:21, 42; 11:26; 18:7, 8; 20:7; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:19). The church met together to break bread (the Lord's table) on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The Bible teaches that the church is to be ruled and led by multiple elders.

Although the Bible does not explicitly teach it, the church meetings generally appear to take on two general formats. One is when a leader trains the entire group such as in an auditorium, like in the temple or the synagogue. The other is when believers share such as when sitting around a round table or around a living room, like in a home church. There can be also the auditorium format in the home. There can be both at different times. In the home round-table format, there is a leader who keeps things going, but he does not dominate. The people share a message or a Scripture that they have learned, testimony in their lives, and prayer needs. The people share and talk to each other and not just with the leader. Today, the auditorium format is the one that we normally associate with a Sunday church service, and the round

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table format is one that we normally associate with home or other small group meetings. This round-table format may be similar to what is used in the Brethren churches. They have seen the need for the round-table format. The first, auditorium format, is when the people are mainly spectators and the second, or round-table format, is when they participate in the training and worship. **Both formats are needed.**

In the early church, the apostle Paul and others taught the people in the first format and the people shared in the second format. Both of these formats appear necessary for a healthy church life. The early church met mostly in homes, even with the enlargement of rooms to accommodate more people. The church was centered around Christ, not a church leader, and was centered around living the life, instead of just hearing a sermon. They practiced "the Way," walking with Christ (Acts 9:2; 24:14, 22).

Modern churches shut out their people from an adequate church life because their people do not have adequate opportunity to share their learning, teachings, testimonies of what God is doing, their needs, and problems, and their prayer requests. They have little opportunity to discuss their many questions. They get little personal service and the attention that they need. The ministry is generally accomplished by formally trained people. These type meetings can shut out much of the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit is shown very often when people share what God is doing, including in their lives. Very often the testimonies of the people are the only ones that can help other people. The pastor and elders very often do not have the needed testimonies. When you shut out sharing and the meeting of people's personal needs, you shut out an important part of the church life.

Center of Worship

To have proper biblical fellowship, our devotion must be centered around Christ as a person and our love for Him and the people must be allowed to share and interchange their experiences, teachings, needs, and prayers from their walk with Christ. Such a fellowship centers in the Lord's Table in a round-table type meeting. This brings life to the church. It also helps to have a rallying point of becoming mature, learning doctrine, living the Christian life, and accomplishing common ministries, such as evangelizing and discipling the people in the church's local community. **Having the objective to be mature in Christ results in believers more effectively and accurately worshipping and praising God. It is a very worthy and honorable motive. Nothing else is more important than believers becoming mature and honoring God which in turn allows them to know God more intimately and fully. (Leaving believers immature does not make this happen.)**

When we have this type of fellowship, we have true fellowship with God because He is now participating with us through the sharing of the people and in a focused training and ministry in which we all participate. It is the operation of Christ's body with all the gifts interacting. This type of lifestyle breeds love for each other because we are now living for Christ, His work, and caring for each other and unbelievers outside the church. We are team members obeying a common Lord. We are keeping the commandments of God. True fellowship does not result from centering our attention to a pastor or to just a Sunday morning church service as spectators that has become the norm among the churches. We must organize ourselves to center around Christ, the person He wants us to become, the life He wants us to live, and the work He commands us to do — as a team of people — not as professional and laity.

Training Workers

Christ in His ministry, worked mostly with a few men who responded to Him. He worked also with the masses, but less often, because He had compassion for them. But His methods were to train disciples to carry on the work of the ministry after He was gone. The church is to do the same by training faithful men who can train others (2 Timothy 2:2). Christ's main message was to live on the basis of love in constant unselfish service to God and others, reaching them with God's truth. He wanted us to keep His commandments out of our love for Him. But in all of this, we were to work out what God is working in us without taking any independent initiative. It is God and Christ in us, and we in them. This is life under the auspices of the Kingdom of God.

Summary

In summary, regardless of the church organization that leaders end up choosing, I recommend that

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churches:

1. Concentrate on maturing believers, not just having a church service, a Sunday School, and a missions program. Place God's overlay in operation as the prime ministry and way of church life. Train the entire church to live out the Romans 8:28 Faith-Process to implement the three activities.
2. Have the fellowship centered around Christ (and God the Father), not around the pastor, the institutional church, or the church services.
3. Have an in-depth and in-breadth teaching of the whole council of God in auditorium type meetings, but include round-table type meetings. The students must be personally involved in the learning and training process: on-the-job training. Everyone gains in this format, including the teachers.
4. Have round-table type meetings in our church life so that we release the power of the Holy Spirit to work among an interaction of our people. Give the people opportunity to share their teachings, needs, testimonies, and prayer requests. This format recognizes the priesthood of individual believers to learn from God. These type meetings can be effectively accomplished in homes.
5. Have an outreach ministry that penetrates the community with the gospel and love that rallies the church people as workers together. Train the entire church to do on-the-way and friendship witnessing as lifestyles. Have the teaching in the church aimed at maturing believers and have the work outside the church aimed at witnessing and evangelizing. Then bring the converts into the church for maturing.
6. Train people, especially children and young people, expediently, because of the circumstances, to be prepared for the soon coming intense spiritual warfare. This ministry should be of the highest priority of the church leadership.
7. Have regular training of responding people, particularly young people, who will carry on now and after we are gone. We are to concentrate on the few who will respond. We should train them in a manner that many of them will be able to train others.
8. In order to implement the training in items #1 through #7, have a Discipleship Training Center in some manner that trains people with the whole counsel of God. Use both the auditorium and the round table formats. Have the students do personal investigation and study, and then have them share their results with each other. Have them hear the teaching also from a teaching leader. Make your training available to other churches and reach out to the community at large.

There are many practical considerations in implementing the above items, especially for large churches. There are many options. For example, the church could have auditorium type meetings on Sundays and the round table meetings could be week nights and/or on Sunday mornings during the Sunday School hour and even on Sunday evenings before the Sunday evening church service. The church service, aimed at the committed, could reach the committed and the non-committed. The Sunday services and the round-table format could reach and fulfill the needs of the committed.

Using all the above, have a church whose goal and commitment are to have exemplary living and ministry as an example church to other churches and the world. Such action is to live as Christ lives and having a love that God desires. It gives Him exaltation and worship — and we grow to spiritual maturity in a fair spiritual exchange.

The bottom line is that the churches that do not operate, organize, and train biblically may always exist and do some good things, but they will never achieve great things with God. They leave their people untrained to handle the onslaught of Satan in the terrible conditions and persecution that will come as the endtimes unfold. But in addition, they leave their people with less maturity than they could otherwise have. As such, believers are left with less capability to praise, honor, and know God in eternity. Because leaders let this happen, they will be severely judged. By necessity, we must not let this happen, as far as it depends upon us.

5. INSUFFICIENT COMMITMENT

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TO CHRIST

Believers are becoming more concerned about their salvation, a worship service, health, and fellowship with each other than they are with God and Christ as persons and accomplishing Their work. They are no longer interested in a comprehensive understanding of the Bible and the Christian walk, as shown by their lack of biblical study and commitment to live godly lives and to accomplish ministry. They certainly are not aiming diligently toward becoming spiritually mature.

The church needs to be concerned with the person of Christ and what He wants, even if doing so means inconvenience, hardship, persecution, sickness, imprisonment, and martyrdom. The church must truly become Christ-centered people by carrying out His entire program in the church life for the purposes of maturing the people in Christ. This kind of commitment takes believers to the mission field, even under the worst of conditions. This commitment is needed for pastors and elders to train their people with God's whole counsel, helping to take them to spiritual maturity.

Most of the church, even those who now are regularly involved in ministry, probably do not have the commitment to go all the way with Christ at the time when the persecution comes and the system fights back. Thus, Christians do not have sufficient commitment to Christ and His work such that they will be willing to lose their jobs or go to prison for His sake. They will probably back away, and be part of the great departure from the faith, that God says will come as the endtimes unfold. We all need to do personal inspection here.

This situation, today, is similar to Peter's when the Lord, after His resurrection, asked Peter if he loved Him. If he did, he was to tend the Lord's sheep — to train His people (John 21:15-23). Peter had been fellowshiping with the Lord for over three years, but he was not committed sufficiently to the Lord, as a person, and to His work. So Peter answered the Lord that he did indeed love Him. Peter used the Greek verb *phileo* for love that means one of fellowship. However, the Lord used the Greek verb *agapao* for love that means commitment to Him and to His work.

Apparently much of the church has changed attitudes — going from *agapao* to *phileo* love. Christ indicted the Ephesian church for having lost her first love (*agapao*), for she was no longer doing good deeds (Revelation 2:4, 5). Much of the church still wants to have salvation and fellowship with the Lord, but she does not necessarily want to be committed to Him to the degree that she must exert effort to do His work and obey all His commandments, even under difficult conditions. Thus, she no longer carries the desire and commitment to sacrificially serve the Lord, carrying out His ministry.

A higher level of fellowship results from service founded on strong commitment to *agapao* love. Fellowship, the Greek *koinonia*, means a joint participation of things held in common by both parties. If we are in fellowship with God, He is acting with us. This means we are committed to and are carrying out the Great Commission and living what we teach from the Bible. Service according to God's truth, out of our love for God and others, is what we are to imitate.

First Thessalonians 1 implies that when Christians have transformed lives (Romans 12:2), they will naturally desire to witness. The Thessalonian Christians received the Word of God with full conviction. This caused them to spread the gospel everywhere they went. They were examples to other believers of what committed believers should be like.

1 Thessalonians 1:7, 8 - so that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth ...

The Thessalonian believers imitated the lives of the Lord and Paul, during much tribulation (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Many church people today are not receiving God's Word with the conviction to carry it out and, thus, be an example to others. They are not obeying Christ. But if we are not obedient to God, how can we truly call Him Lord?

The Lord Jesus said:

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Luke 6:46 - "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say."

Many Christians today do not act like Christians because they do not have adequately transformed lives. They do not because they do not have a sufficient renewal of the mind.

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Not having a renewal of the mind means that they have not learned and practiced much of God's whole counsel. They have not learned to live by love, keeping Christ's commandments, and have not lived according to God's purpose for them, accomplishing God's work. They are not sufficiently trusting God to work all things together for good. They continue to think and act like they did as unbelievers. Their lifestyle is similar, except that they attend church services.

Believers who live their Christian lives mainly on the basis of fellowship (phileo love) most likely do not live sufficiently under the Lordship of Christ (agapao love) and do not have the commitment to be involved in accomplishing His work.

6. DOCTRINES THAT LEAD TO COMPLACENCY

There are doctrines that lead to complacency in the churches that result in much of the congregation not being greatly involved in ministry.

Inadequate Faith

Because of the worsening of spiritual conditions, much of the church overall is probably living in the wilderness of life without spiritual power and is not adequately accomplishing the Great Commission. She has become immobilized because she does not go against the enemy with great faith in God to accomplish the seemingly impossible. This is a typical happening when God's people are not adequately obedient.

When God commanded the Israelites to enter the land of Israel at Kadesh Barnea, they did not have faith in Him to go before them and make them successful against the giants and the fortified cities (Numbers 14; Deuteronomy 1). They did not trust Him to bring the promised victory. Instead, they trusted in themselves who were unable to bring the victory. Thus, they remained in the wilderness without going against the giants and had little spiritual success. This happened because they did not sufficiently know God and His ways (Hebrews 3; 4). They had not matured and learned to trust Him to accomplish the humanly impossible tasks. (People who will do all of God's will, He will strongly support and make them successful, regardless of the difficulties [2 Chronicles 16:9; Joshua 1:8].)

Jeremiah 4:22 - "For My people are foolish, they know Me not; they are stupid children, And they have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good they do not know."

The Bible warns the church not to make the same mistakes the people of Israel did. The church is to enter into His rest.

Hebrews 4:11 - Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience.

The church today lives in the wilderness by not trusting God to bring success as she refuses to move against the giants and fortified cities of today with the gospel and God's Word in discipleship. As the endtimes encroach upon us, the action of government seems to make the giants even taller and stronger. Thus, the church lives without great faith and spiritual power, and what faith she has is expected to diminish because of the giants and fortified cities growing increasingly greater in size. What we need, as they grow in size, is even greater faith to go against them as God leads.

As a high priority, leaders should teach and train their people to know God and to live by faith in Him to

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battle the giants and fortified cities of life that He has directed them to act against. Living by faith is necessary to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Disobedient believers (and unbelievers who do not know God) will fall away from whatever active faith they have, when persecution comes. They will die in the wilderness of life when the giants appear, just as the Israelites did. They will help contribute to the coming of the great apostasy of the fifth-seal period. As the persecution greatly increases, and the giants become larger, much of the church is expected to be in or return to the wilderness — as a massive departure from the faith.

The church remaining in the wilderness is a leadership problem because the people have not been adequately trained! They have insufficient knowledge of God and His ways.

The Teaching of False Peace

The Bible warns in many places that the teaching of false and deceptive extended peace, without fear of judgment occurs when a covenant nation is in great apostasy, immorality, sin, and false worship (Jeremiah 4:10; 8:11; 14:13-15; Ezekiel 13:10; Micah 3:5). But in reality, a judgment bringing calamity and war will come because the people disregard the holy and righteous living that God requires. The people are in apostasy, immorality, sin, and false worship. **This false teaching occurs before each calamity, Day of the Lord, and retribution-war.**

Jeremiah 14:13-15 - ... "Look, the prophets are telling them, 'You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.' ... The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds ... Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who are prophesying in My name ... by sword and famine those prophets shall meet their end!"

This teaching of false peace without the fear of coming judgment and war is a major strategy of Satan to lull people to sleep. Without the fear of judgment, the church can be lax about obeying Christ's Great Commission. They can do what they want without fear of judgment.

The church, today, is being taught she will be raptured before the endtime wars and calamities of the final Tribulation begin (Pretribulation Rapture View). Other churches are being taught that the world will be Christianized before Christ comes (Post Millennial and Reconstructionist Views). These are teachings of false doctrines that mislead the church because they give false hopes of peace without the wars of divine discipline.

Believing that the Rapture can occur at any time has been a strong strategy in the spiritual warfare. It has caused many to be complacent and to do little in ministry, especially as conditions have worsened. This is because, as conditions worsen, they believe that the Rapture must occur at any time. So why do anything. But the time drags out and little gets done. **This strategy is genius because, when conditions worsen, it is just the time when more ministry is needed in order to stop or stay the development of Satan's forces.**

Satan used this strategy many times during Old Testament history. He is using it again through the teaching that the church will not experience the endtime discipline or Tribulation, by means of the Rapture. Even today, many believe that Russia is no longer a military threat and that peace prevails. But such thinking is a result of deception. Russia and the Middle Eastern nations are arming with advanced nuclear, chemical, and biological short and medium range tactical missile weapons. The next Middle East war will be a type that has never been fought before because of the new weapons.

As the endtimes approach, the church appears to be oblivious and unconcerned about the build up of Satan's forces that he will use to bring God's disciplinary judgment. The church is also lax about evangelizing and discipling. They no longer evangelize their local areas. The church enjoys her salvation and comfort within the four walls of the church buildings, believing she will be raptured before any judgments of the final Tribulations come. Thus, many with this belief do very little.

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The teachings of false peace without judgment for sin bring false hopes because war will come, taking people into discipline. As the apostasy and complacency of the church increases, Satan continues to build his forces to be unleashed upon the church and the world when the fourth seal is broken. Satan will bring persecution and world government. Much of the church is unaware.

Impacts and Trends of Views Regarding the Sovereignty of God

Believing strongly in the sovereignty of God, many adherents tend to believe that, because God is sovereign, the elect will come to salvation and to God's chosen level of maturity whether or not their workers preach the gospel and train their people to walk with God and do local witnessing. Because many believe this, adherents may not make the connection that this will not happen unless their own people are trained to live godly lives and witness the gospel. They believe that people will be saved regardless of whether or not they witness the gospel.

Believers should realize that if no one witnessed the gospel, then no one would be saved. Thus, it becomes obvious that workers must be trained to witness the gospel to fulfill Christ's Great Commission. Churches must have efforts to accomplish the training and evangelism with a community wide commitment.

Many churches very often emphasize the grace, holiness, character, and sovereignty of God without doing evangelism. While the former is good, vital, and necessary, it is not the whole purpose and counsel of God. This emphasis can leave many of God's people untrained for the coming Tribulation and helping them reach maturity. Because of these views, local communities very often are not evangelized. All churches must also include witnessing and evangelism training in their curriculums. This is mandatory because it is mandated by Christ in His Great Commission.

7. DOCTRINES OF DISOBEDIENCE

There are many doctrines that the churches are now disobeying. These include believers who do not live by great faith so as to allow God to accomplish great things through them.

Leaders Should Not Use Programs That Essentially Give God Lip Service

Leaders should avoid leading people to live and worship mostly by tradition and rote instead of training them to live dynamically, responding to God as they live out the church's three activities. Tradition and rote are evidenced by weekly repetitive activities in which the church participates without doing serious thinking. God is against this because He is not truly worshipped.

Isaiah 29:13, 14 - ... "Because this people draw near to me with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, therefore behold, ... the wisdom of their wisemen shall perish and the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed." (See also Matthew 15:8; Mark 7:6.)

This lifestyle brings the danger of God removing good leaders and leaving their people to perish as the discipline period comes. There is the trend for this kind of worship during periods of great apostasy. But, we must not let this happen to any of our churches.

The Apostasy of Lukewarmness

Much of the church is lukewarm, even among the church leaders. God is against lukewarm living. Believers are lukewarm when they are indifferent about doing what they know and say they believe. They do not ardently pursue living godly lives and accomplishing God's work. **They are not against doing these, but they show little initiative to do them.**

Revelation 3:15-19 - I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you

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say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent.

Lukewarm church leaders and people know that God desires them and their churches to penetrate their communities with the gospel, but they do not do it. Because they do not, they are neither hot nor cold toward God; they are lukewarm. The lukewarm church is a Christian church that thinks she is doing God's will and thinks she is rich spiritually because she has weekly biblical sermons and a Sunday School. The people enjoy each other in fellowship, but they need more of God's dynamic Christian living, and they need to reach their community with the gospel.

This lukewarm church could be an "evangelical" church where the people are saved, but they are complacent about doing God's work of evangelizing and discipling and are not diligently keeping God's commandments. Lukewarmness is also characteristic of unbelieving churches who desire to worship God, but who do not have salvation in Christ and who do not share the gospel.

God says He will discipline the lukewarm church. He is not pleased when people practice token obedience, in regard to keeping His commandments and accomplishing His work.

The Apostasy of Double-Mindedness

God is against the double-minded who desire the best of both God and the world. Today, much of the church is double-minded. The double-minded are Christians who attend church, and even a weekly Bible study, but spend the rest of their time pursuing the world's achievements. They do this without spending adequate time accomplishing God's work, including local evangelism and the study of the commandments and godly living. It is not wrong, and it is good, to have blessings of the world that righteously come from God and to work hard for success on one's job. We are to be good at what we do. But these are wrong if such efforts cause God's people to pursue the world more ardently than they do God's will and work.

Matthew 6:24 - "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon." (Mammon is the false god of riches and prosperity.)

Psalms 119:113 - I hate those who are double-minded, but I love Thy law.

James 1:5-8 - But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 4:8 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The Apostasy of the Toleration of Sin — Both of Commission and Omission

Churches often tolerate situations and sin that God is against. They do this for various reasons, but toleration causes problems among believers and impedes righteous living. It breeds disunity and the decline of the church because it does not allow the effective implementation of the three activities.

Toleration implies that the sin is longstanding. Long-term sins can include the sins of omission, such as not discipling and evangelizing, particularly in local communities, even though the church may support foreign missionaries. Toleration of sin also includes long-term toleration of losing attendance without determining the cause and of disunity among church leaders and people as well as immorality and false worship. Disunity can be caused by leaders and believers who do not know sufficient biblical doctrine and

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methods to lead a church and train her people. **Disunity happens when God's obedient remnant, living godly lives and doing His work, cannot agree with their leaders who are not doing these things. This disunity brings a lack of true fellowship. Leadership very often has long-term sin of not trying to resolve these problems.** The fact that leadership does not see or know what to do shows that there may be something wrong with their spiritual walk and their response to the Holy Spirit.

Toleration of sin is particularly serious among leaders, because their sin affects others. God is against such actions. An example in Scripture is:

Revelation 2:20 - But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

8. THE APOSTASY OF TONGUES: THE APOSTASY OF FALSE WORSHIP

Many churches have involved themselves in false worship by the speaking in false tongues and being involved in contrived emotionalism, particularly when God's safeguards are disregarded. This apostasy is serious because it is going worldwide. God is greatly against false worship.

The modern tongues movement consists of people speaking in ecstatic utterances in both believing and unbelieving churches. People who speak in tongues have a non-biblical emotional attachment to them and appear to have accepted non-biblical interpretations of several doctrines. These include the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit, spiritual power, and spiritual maturity.

The sincerity of many tongues-speaking people who want God's best and to do His will, generally, is not in doubt. However, whether or not God has tongues today, tongues-speaking people need to obey God's safeguards regarding tongues and believe doctrines as the Bible teaches. Otherwise, they will be disobedient to Scripture.

Tongues have no function today. Study shows God's purposes for tongues **were completed** in the first century. They were always used as signs to the Jews that God's program was transitioning from the Jews to the all-nations church with Gentiles. This is true for every instance when tongues are mentioned in Acts. In all these instances, Jews were present.

The subject and apostasy of tongues involves five issues:

1. What are the purposes of tongues?

God's purposes for tongues were to:

- a. Confirm that the Holy Spirit was being poured out on all flesh to fulfill the Joel prophecy (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16, 17), in the sequence of Acts 1:8. God used biblical tongues in the first century A.D., beginning on the Day of Pentecost, **as a sign to the Jews** that the administration of God's Kingdom was transitioning from the Jewish to the church economy, composed of people from all nations. This transitional outpouring happened as the gospel began going forth to the entire earth, beginning with the Jews and Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Tongues confirmed that the period had come when Christ as the Seed of Abraham would bless all the earth's people groups (nations). (Genesis 12:3; Acts 2.)

There were four Pentecostal experiences of tongues speaking, showing that the gospel was going to all peoples in the Acts 1:8 sequence. The first was in Jerusalem, then in Judea, then in Samaria, and finally to the uttermost part of the earth, to the Gentiles, beginning with Cornelius. The Samaritan believers did not speak in tongues until the Jewish apostles came, because there were not yet Jews present, and people had to speak in tongues according to God's plan in the sequence of Acts 1:8. Tongues speaking in Samaria had to follow the speaking in Jerusalem and Judea. (Jerusalem: Acts 2:1-42; Judea and Samaria: Acts 8:1, 2, 14-17, tongues implied; the remotest part

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of the earth or Gentiles: Acts 10:44-48; 11:13-18; 19:1-7.)

- b. Show the Jews, as a sign, that the gospel was also going to the Gentiles and that the Gentiles had an equal inheritance in God's Kingdom and Christ's church with Jewish believers. Tongues were used to confirm to the Jews that the Holy Spirit was going to the Gentiles when Cornelius and those with him were saved. (Acts 10:45, 46; 11:18; 15:8; Ephesians 2:11-16.)

Acts 10:45, 46 - And all the circumcised believers [the Jews] who had come ... were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God ...

- c. Attest to the Jews that the apostles and their message were from God, until the completion of the biblical Canon (2 Corinthians 12:12).
 - d. Warn the Jews that unless they repented and obeyed Christ's gospel to receive salvation and have Christ reign over them, they, as did the Jews of old, would receive terrible judgment from another nation that spoke a foreign language. The judgment would come because of their rejection of God and their Crucifixion of Christ. This judgment came from the Romans in A.D. 70. (1 Corinthians 14:21 with Isaiah 28:11, 12.)
2. Do the tongues people obey God's safeguards regarding the speaking in tongues and, thus, obey God?

Most all the people in some tongues-speaking churches speak in tongues simultaneously, including the women. **When ENTIRE church or home-meeting congregations speak in tongues, or when women speak in tongues with men present, a flagrant disregard for God's Word is enacted and a corporate lack of love is shown for Christ, God, and Their Word! (John 14:15). WHEN THIS HAPPENS, FALSE WORSHIP IS OCCURRING!** Those who disobey the safeguards live in disobedience to God. Those who disobey over long periods are apostate and live sinful lives. Because such activity occurred in the Corinthian church, God gave rules regulating the speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 12; 13; 14). We call them safeguards to have people obey God. These safeguards are:

- a. Only three people in sequence are allowed to speak in tongues in any church meeting, whether in church buildings or homes. They could only speak if interpreters are present.

1 Corinthians 14:27-29 - If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret [translate]; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

- b. Women are not allowed to speak in church or home-church meetings with men present. They are not allowed to speak because they would be teaching men God's Word and exercising authority over them. Women are not allowed authority over or to teach men.

1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 - Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

1 Timothy 2:12 - But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

- c. People are not to be taught that they should seek after the speaking in tongues because God has not given any such injunction. There are no biblical examples of God's people evangelizing people to speak in tongues, as there are to evangelize to believe the gospel. The Bible knows nothing of people seeking after tongues. However, people can desire the greater gifts such as prophecy. **People who encourage people to speak in tongues, or who seek after tongues, are working their own plans; they are not working God's plans.**

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God gave gifts to believers that were likened to functions of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). **All people were not to have the same body function or gift. Some were to be the eye, others the foot, and others the hand. Thus, all were not to have the gift to speak in tongues.** The gifts are given to new believers as they first believe and are being baptized into the body of Christ, even though their development follows (1 Corinthians 12:13). As believers, we are not to seek after gifts, but instead to recognize and develop them.

Thus, the Bible teaches that all believers were not to have the same gift; thus, all were not to speak in tongues. The questions in the following Scriptures, **requiring a negative answer** according to the Greek text, show this teaching.

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 - All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way. (Underline emphasis added.)

Because all were not to speak in tongues, tongues have nothing to do with the doctrines of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Spirit, or the power to live the Christian life and carry out ministry.

3. What are the doctrines that tongues people believe incorrectly?

Tongues people have doctrines associated with tongues that have nothing whatever to do with tongues. From a doctrinal perspective, the following teachings have nothing to do with tongues as taught among tongues-speaking people.

a. **Baptism by or with the Holy Spirit** - The baptism of the Holy Spirit is experienced by every person at the time one **first** becomes a Christian. **There is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit.** The baptism of the Holy Spirit places people into the body of Christ, His church. It has to do with the severing of sin so that it no longer has complete control over the new believer's life as he believes in Christ as Savior (Romans 6:1-13). The baptism allows believers to walk in newness of life. All references to the baptism by the Holy Spirit refer only to the time when a person becomes a Christian. There are no references in Scripture to any other spiritual baptisms, and there are no references that refer to a time subsequent to salvation. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:1-13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12.)

There are many references to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. None of them tie the baptism to a second blessing or to the speaking in tongues. The baptism always refers to believers being placed into the body of Christ, beginning on the Day of Pentecost. (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Romans 6:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12.) In the first century, some new believers spoke in tongues, as they were gifted by the Holy Spirit after believing, just like others who began to teach or preach. But not all spoke in tongues.

b. **Being Filled with the Holy Spirit** - "Being filled with the Spirit" means that the Holy Spirit controls the believer's life, using God's Word, as the Word richly indwells him, causing him to be faith-obedient in a manner similar to much wine controlling the drunkard. This filling occurs at salvation and as often as the believer is faith-obedient to God. (Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16, 17.)

c. **Spiritual Power** - Spiritual or resurrection power is what God provides because of our faith-obedience to keep His commandments out of our love for Him. It is what God does in us as believers because of our faith in Him to act according to His Word. (Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 3:8-11.)

d. **Spiritual Maturity** - Spiritual maturity is measured by our faith-obedient response to God, out of our love, in comparison to Christ's response if He were acting in our place. It is being proficient in doing the works that God is working in us by the leading of His Holy Spirit. (John 5:19, 20; 14:8-20; 1 John 2:6.)

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4. Do people speak in tongues in a manner that is biblical?

Biblical tongues were always foreign languages and never the ecstatic utterances that are practiced today — showing positively that modern tongues are not from God. The tongues used on the Day of Pentecost were foreign languages unknown by the apostles who spoke them. They were understood by their hearers. This is true for every instance when tongues were spoken in the New Testament.

5. Are there really tongues today because there has not been significant tongues speaking (or miracles or healing ministries) since the first century until about 1830 A.D?

History has shown that there have not been significant accounts of anyone speaking in tongues since the first century A.D until now (See Endnote #3³). Because this is true, tongues can have nothing whatever to do with the quality of the Christian life such as being filled with the spirit, spiritual power, or spiritual maturity.

Tongues-speaking people explain the 1800-year hiatus of tongues speaking with the teaching that the Bible's references to early and late rains is to tongues being spoken in the first century and in these endtimes (Deuteronomy 11:14; Jeremiah 5:24; Joel 2:23). They believe that the early rains refer to tongues in the first century and the late rains refer to tongues in the endtimes. However, the context of these passages have nothing to do with tongues. They refer to actual planting seasons and the rains that are associated with them. **There is no biblical basis for the teaching that tongues (and miracles and healings) ceased in the first century and then suddenly reappeared after A.D. 1830.**

Tongues have strong support among their people because of their apparent physical and spiritual evidence. THEIR EXPERIENCE APPEARS TO ESTABLISH THEIR DOCTRINE, INSTEAD OF IT BEING THOROUGHLY DEVELOPED FROM SCRIPTURE. HOWEVER, THE DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE, NOT EXPERIENCE, DETERMINE GOD'S TRUTH THAT GOVERNS OUR LIVES.

The Bible does not verify that tongues have any meaning for people beyond the first century. Tongues are used only in Mark, Acts, and 1 Corinthians. Mark and Acts teach a church in transition. First Corinthians teaches about a church with spiritual problems, including the misuse of tongues. **There is no biblical reference that any other church spoke in tongues. The majority of the New Testament that speaks of the mature spiritual life and all of the Old Testament have no reference to tongues, giving them little or no importance for living the Christian life.**

Because of the doubtful existence of tongues today, people who pray in unknown tongues, even with an interpreter, can not truly tell whether their prayer is from God, demons, or other sources. God gives no new revelation today (after the completion of the Canon of Scripture), only illumination of the existing Scriptures. Everything else from God occurs in happenings that we evaluate by faith in the Scriptures to see whether or not they are from God. Ecstatic utterances certainly are not from God because all tongues in the Bible are foreign languages known by people.

Tongues were associated with prayer to a limited degree in the first century Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 14:13-17). This single passage teaches that such a practice is unfruitful to the mind. It is the only reference that associates prayer with tongues in Scripture. The Bible gives no injunction to pray in tongues. Because the weight of Scripture does not emphasize tongues in prayer, it is not necessary and may be of little importance or value.

The Bible teaches that when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with (1 Corinthians 13:10). The Bible implies that when the perfect comes, childish things are put away, no longer needed. It does not define what is meant by "the perfect." However, the perfect is most likely the completion of the biblical Canon, which occurred with the book of Revelation. The context of the passage refers to new revelation of Scripture. When the perfect came (the completion of Scripture), the divine revelation of **new** Scripture, such as from the gifts of prophecy and of knowledge, stopped. Tongues also stopped by themselves at this time, according to the passage. These gifts are no longer needed and have ceased. (1 Corinthians 13:8-11.)

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In the transitional period of the first century, the Bible teaches that we are not to forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39). However, now that the Canon of Scripture is complete and the destruction of Jerusalem has occurred (A.D. 70), this command is no longer valid. It was needed until the transition and Canon were completed, when "the perfect" came. The Canon was completed in the first century.

A major reason that people are on the earth is to become spiritually mature. This objective requires them to live by spiritual power with faith, love, and hope in godly and "holy" living. **Because people have not spoken in tongues for nearly 1800 years and never did in Old Testament history, and because the Lord Jesus never did, it is not possible that tongues can refer to spiritual power or to spiritual maturity.**

Tongues today do not represent spiritual power, but instead a departure from biblical faith. They cannot represent spiritual power or the filling of the Holy Spirit because not everyone is to speak in tongues, and prophesying is considered more important than speaking in tongues. The Bible implies that all those who prophesy do not speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28-31; 14:1-5, 19). **The Bible does not associate tongues with spiritual power or with the filling of the Holy Spirit.** The apostles, on the Day of Pentecost, spoke in tongues because they were believers who were filled with the Spirit. They were filled with the Spirit, because they were obedient to God, not because they spoke in tongues (Acts 2:1-4).

As far as this author knows, there is not a single book published that develops the doctrines of the charismatics in detail from the **composite** of Scripture. The doctrines of the charismatics are based on experience and apparently on only a few Scriptures, without considering the Bible as a whole. **The Bible does not support or teach the doctrines of the endtime charismatics.**

The Lord Jesus, as the most mature person on the earth, never spoke in tongues, even on the Cross, and He lived by God's power. We are told we are to live as He lived (1 John 2:6). Thus, there is no injunction to pursue tongues.

Christ taught that He could not glorify Himself because doing so would have no meaning. However, He taught that the Father could glorify Him, and He could glorify His Father from His faith-obedience. Christ said that the Holy Spirit would glorify Him. The Holy Spirit is subordinate to both Christ and the Father. Thus, the Holy Spirit will not glorify the Holy Spirit, because this is against God's teachings. The Holy Spirit will never lead anyone to evangelize (promote) tongues, even in the early church, because this action would bring glory to the Holy Spirit. This does not happen when the gospel is preached, because Christ is glorified. **Churches that "push" the Holy Spirit and tongues are not acting under the Holy Spirit's leading and thus are disobedient to God's Word.** If this activity is a regular practice or greatly emphasized, the church is in apostasy. (John 8:50, 54; 16:13-15; Hebrews 5:5.)

The apostasy of tongues is occurring worldwide. It appears to be expanding in churches and countries where there is insufficient understanding of biblical doctrines. Tongues-speaking people believe they are doing right, but they have an experiential, not a biblical, verification of their doctrines. **They appear to treat "the experience" with equal or greater authority than Scripture. They do not accept THE BIBLE ONLY as their authority. Thus, tongues-speaking people are in danger of adding to Scripture, against which the Bible warns (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18).** Because the scope of an apostate movement is worldwide with many associated false doctrines and experiences, there is most probably a power behind it that is not from God. It is no longer an individual matter.

Satan may be using tongues to influence the church to go into apostasy, and thus, cause God to bring His endtime judgment on His own people before they can complete His chosen works. Tongues certainly have divided the church, instead of bringing doctrinal unity in her life and ministry. They separate the church into "the haves" and "the have nots." They declare two levels of Christians. People who depend upon tongues hinder themselves from progressing to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity develops from obeying God's three activities that have nothing to do with tongues.

In summary, the following implications must be true for the false modern day tongues movement to be valid; **the Bible teaches the contrary on every one:**

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1. God uses tongues **after** the first century A.D. Tongues are used for Christian living and power, instead of simply being signs to the Jews that God's program was transitioning from the Jews to the church, which included the Gentiles.
2. All believers have the same function in the body of Christ; thus, all are to speak in tongues.
3. There are two baptisms of the Holy Spirit: one for initial salvation, and the other for the second blessing and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.
4. The second baptism of the Holy Spirit brings the filling of the Holy Spirit; that is, it brings the power for living the Christian life. Speaking in tongues attests to having this baptism.
5. There are two levels of Christians: the haves and the have nots. The first have the power for Christian living; the second do not.
6. The church through the centuries, for over 1800 years, has been without this power. The Bible teaches this concept through its teaching of the early and late rains. Thus, there have been no Christians with spiritual power and maturity during this 1800 year period.
7. The Bible teaches that people should evangelize and seek after tongues.
8. Tongues can be ecstatic utterances, instead of (always) foreign languages as used in the Bible.
9. In church services, all people, including women, are allowed to speak in tongues simultaneously.

Both God and Satan most likely use tongues as the endtimes are unfolding. God uses them as He allows Satan to bring tests to determine whether His people will obey His safeguards and thus avoid disobedience through tongues speaking and accepting associated incorrect doctrines. Satan uses them to entice people into a false system of power and worship, away from true obedience to God. This allows him to build his forces at a faster rate and gain more control.

Tongues speaking people must be careful that they do not accept the false idea that their speaking in tongues is a sign they are believers or Christians. All tongues today are false and are not from God. Thus, if people speak in tongues, they may not be Christians.

These teachings and many publications about tongues show that the modern charismatic tongues movement does not align with Scripture (See Endnote #4⁴). Thus, because it does not, it is a movement that is not of God. Instead, it results in churches that are in apostasy, having departed from biblical faith. Because this apostasy is worldwide, it invites God's endtime disciplinary judgment.

If tongues-speaking churches or individual believers, and those of allied doctrines, want to be obedient to God and be able to work with other churches, they must faithfully obey God's safeguards as previously presented. If they will take faith-action steps to faithfully accomplish this, I believe that God will lead them in the next steps and take them to spiritual maturity and use them in ministry. (A similar situation is true for those who are not faithfully carrying out the Great Commission.)

SUMMARY

In summary, churches (and families) are declining spiritually today because they no longer endure sound doctrine that leads to God's best in life and ministry, and they have leadership problems. Both of these issues result in the church people having problems. The main contributors to problems in many churches is false tongues and what they are NOT doing at all or well. For example, they do not adequately teach and train their people. They are acting at too low a level of teaching and worship. As a result people do not learn adequate biblical doctrine. Leaders do not do what they say they believe. In summary, they commit "sins of omission." When leaders have sins of omission over long periods, they live sinful lives, just as they would be if they committed sins of commission, such as committing adultery. I believe that the sins of omission is

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one of the main causes of the decline of the church. Speaking in false tongues, implementing false worship is another significant cause.

James 1:22 - But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not mere hearers who delude themselves.

James 4:17 - Therefore, to the one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

The life and ministry of the church is out of balance, and her people live without accountability. The corporate and vibrant life in the Holy Spirit appears greatly diminished from what it could and should be. Churches are not effectively working together in order to put on crusades for local evangelism, as they once did.

When churches abandon their faithful and militant action of discipling and evangelizing, they very often forget their very purpose of being light to those in darkness. They lose their first love for Christ by no longer doing good deeds. As a result the sins of lukewarmness, lip service, double-mindedness, immobilization, toleration of sin, false tongues, and ecstatic emotionalism replace them. They become more interested in being healed and being well, than they are of being involved in ministry. These sinful practices begin to fill the void when God's ministries are not the prominent goals and in actual activities. This situation as a general principle is taught regarding Gentiles in Ephesians 4:17-25. These practices are symptomatic of not living godly lives and accomplishing God's work.

Because churches are no longer concerned with penetrating their communities with the gospel through their congregations, they are becoming casualties in the spiritual warfare. They have taken themselves as combatants out of the warfare. Often church leaders say they are interested in discipleship and local evangelism, but they do little about it. This is but lip service that God is against. This is like parents, as leaders, telling their children to live rightly, but they as parents are unwilling to live the example. Because church and family leaders do not live the example, the church and children have few examples to imitate. Because of poor leaders, the churches and families have succumbed to the influence of Satan. The salt of the earth has become at least partly tasteless.

Christians must not believe that they will escape God's judgment, just because they are Christians. God many times brings judgment against His own people when they are in disobedience. His judgment comes both individually and corporately. Christians are admonished to expediently get their spiritual houses in order because God's judgment is coming. God is no respecter of persons and His judgment begins with His household. Even faithful churches can gain by doing a serious self-inspection to determine how they can do better and avoid sin.

If you are a church elder, deacon, leader, teacher, pastor, or parent you can expect greater judgment if you are not doing His will by living righteously and training your people to live out righteously the church's three activities (James 3:1).

The enemy is making great progress because the church does not act with unity of doctrine, purpose, and work, according to God's overlay plan.

But what is most important, is that, regardless of any problems existing in our churches, church leadership must take up the job of warning themselves and their people of coming judgment, training their people to implement the three activities, and preparing them for the difficult times that are coming. Whether or not churches correct the listed problems, these tasks are mandatory to be accomplished with expediency. When this is done, many of the problems will go away because leaders and church people will naturally make the necessary changes.

DOCTRINAL BELIEFS

The advancing apostasy in these endtimes is largely the result of (1) not revering and honoring God; (2) believing false doctrines; (3) greatly desiring to run our own lives, having and doing what we want; and (4) having no fear of judgment, temporal or eternal, for our actions. We become prisoners of our belief structure. It causes us to live out our lives based on its premises, living righteously in obedience to God

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or sinfully in disobedience. **Today, we have religions without righteousness, doing some good without godliness, activity without truth, evangelistic approaches without the gospel, and church services and fellowship without the training and commitment to live the three activities.**

Thus, people need to believe correctly with biblical foundational doctrines. They, very importantly, determine whether or not we will go to be with God in eternity or to the Lake of Fire away from God.

Both what I believe to be the correct and false doctrines of belief are presented next.

Correct Doctrines

Teachers should teach the fundamental biblical doctrines to all Christians to build their faith and give them ability to recognize false doctrines. They should teach God's attributes, how to live the church's three activities, what to expect from the endtimes, and particularly, how to live by faith.

Although believers may choose different wording, the biblically correct fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith (a minimum set of doctrines) as I see them are listed below. These doctrines are those for which believers should be willing to die, rather than to deny them. People are exhorted to test all teachings of any belief system for correctness against these doctrines.

1. The Bible (in its original languages and manuscripts), in both the Old and New Testaments, is the inerrant and inspired Word of God and is the only authoritative source from God. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; Revelation 22:18, 19.)
2. There is only one God, and He is a perfect person in every attribute. There will never be another God. God is not made up of the sum of mankind or everything that exists, and mankind cannot evolve to become a god or gods. (Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 7:22; 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 43:10; 44:6; 45:5; Mark 12:29, 32; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5.)
3. God created the heavens and the earth, mankind and angels. Mankind and angels did not evolve. (Genesis 1:1, 27; 5:1, 2; Deuteronomy 4:32; Isaiah 42:5; 45:12, 18; John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 5:13; 10:6.)
4. God exists eternally and is a triunity consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, has always existed. (Matthew 3:16, 17; 18:19; John 1:1, 2; 15:26, 27; 16:13-15; Romans 16:26; 1 Peter 1:20.)
5. The Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven to do the Father's will. He was born of a virgin to fulfill prophecy as the coming Messiah. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in order to have a divine, and not a fallen nature as all mortal men have. (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35, 38; 19:10; John 3:17; 6:38.)
6. All people are born condemned before God and are destined to be cast into the Lake of Fire. Being born with fallen natures, all people have transgressed, or broken, God's spiritual laws. Thus, every person has sinned and has come short of God's glory. (Romans 3:9-20, 23; 5:18; 6:23; 8:1; Revelation 20:11-15.)
7. God's justice requires a payment for people breaking His spiritual laws (being sinful) that they cannot satisfy. (Romans 3:9-20, 28; Galatians 2:16; 3:11.)
8. The Lord Jesus Christ lived a perfect life on the earth without sin. His perfect life demonstrated His qualifications to die as a substitutionary sacrifice for all of mankind's sins. (Isaiah 53:5, 10, 12; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 5:8, 9; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.)
9. Christ's Death on the cross for sin, His burial, and His bodily resurrection on the third day, according to the Scriptures, completely satisfied God's justice for everyone's sin. This is the gospel of Christ. (John 1:29; 3:16; 6:33, 51; Acts 20:28; Romans 4:24, 25; 5:6, 8, 9; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21;

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Colossians 1:20; 2:13, 14; Titus 4:10; Hebrews 2:9; 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9.)

10. God's satisfied justice is applied to individuals by their living-faith in Christ's gospel, as they exercise their will and choice as God draws them to Him. Based on the Scriptures, a person must accept Christ's gospel as a free gift by the action of the will, heart, and choice. This acceptance allows God to place His justice that was satisfied by the Cross to one's personal benefit and salvation. But this act must embrace one's faith that the gospel did indeed satisfy God's justice for sin.

God saves people only on the basis of living-faith. He does not save people on the basis of works or what people do. Living-faith is faith shown to be alive by an action or a work. The Bible allows prayer, confession of the gospel before men, and/or water baptism as a public confession and witness of faith in the gospel, as an action to show living-faith. The action embodies the faith to make it live (making it living-faith) so that God can respond to the faith. (Mark 16:16; John 1:12; 3:16; 6:44; Acts 16:30, 31; Romans 1:16 with 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Romans 10:9, 10, 13; James 2:26; 1 John 4:15; 5:14.)

Once a person is saved, he remains saved forever with eternal security in God. God continues to work in the believer throughout his lifetime. At salvation, the new believer is changed into a new person by regeneration and by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He cannot be changed back. God seals the believer at salvation by His Holy Spirit as a promise for the believer to be with God in eternity. (John 6:37, 39, 40; 10:27-29; Romans 6:1-13; 8:28, 29; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 2:8, 9; Philippians 1:6; 2:11, 12; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Jude 1:24; 1 John 1:2; 5:11-13.)

11. After His death, burial, and bodily resurrection, Christ ascended into heaven and received all power of heaven and earth, over all principalities and powers. In heaven, Christ acts as our only mediator between God and man. (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:5; 6:14, 15; 1 Peter 3:22.)
12. The church is the body of Christ and is made up of all people who have believed the gospel and have become saved. She includes all people who have been called out of Satan's Dominion into God's Kingdom and have had God's condemnation removed from them. People who have not believed the gospel remain, as unbelievers, under God's condemnation. They are not a part of Christ's church, even if they attend or minister in a visible church, group, or worship service and attempt to do good works. (Acts 26:18; Romans 8:1; Colossians 1:12.)

The church's main activities are to: (a) exalt God — worship, glorify, praise, know, please, obey, seek, and honor Him; (b) live godly lives and grow in spiritual maturity in Christ in the midst of trials and testings; and (c) accomplish God's work by evangelizing people with the gospel, planting churches and discipling people to live godly lives. God's work includes building godly families, training faithful people, and reaching out to the needy with support and God's truth. People are to be thankful and rejoice in God and what He has done for them. (Psalm 85:6; 97:1; 148:1-14; 149:1-9; 150; Isaiah 61:10; Matthew 22:37, 38; 28:16-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46, 47; John 4:31; 14:15; Acts 1:8; 5:29; Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31; Ephesians 4:12, 13; Philippians 3:1; 4:4; Colossians 1:10, 18; 2 Thessalonians 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:2, 4; 1 Peter 1:2, 4, 8.)

13. The Lord Jesus Christ will come a second time at the end of the Church Period to resurrect, rapture, and reward His church for her works of faith-obedience. He will take her to the new Jerusalem to be with Him forever. (John 5:28, 29; 6:39, 40, 44; 11:24; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 10-12; 2:1; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 11:18; 21; 22.)
14. When Christ comes the second time, He will resurrect and judge unbelievers for their works of disobedience at the Great White Throne Judgment and cast them away from God into the Lake of Fire to suffer eternal punishment. (John 5:28, 29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 11:18; 19:11-21; 20:11-15.)

False Doctrines

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False teachers teach erroneous departures from the true biblical doctrines such as the following:

1. There are many gods, or people can become a god. People can live as if they are gods or are becoming gods.
2. People do not sin, they simply make mistakes as they are developing. Thus, they will not be punished. People can live the way they desire, independent of God and His ways, without fear of judgment. God is a loving God who will never punish people, causing them to suffer eternally for their sin in the Lake of Fire. People are not born under the condemnation of God. Somehow things will work out all right.
3. People can set up their own form of worship, a form that God has not established in His Bible.
4. There are many ways to God, instead of only one way through the Lord Jesus Christ and His Death on the cross for sin, burial, and bodily resurrection.
5. The Christ is an office that many people have held. It does not represent a specific person, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is only one of many who have held the office. Others in the future will also.
6. Christ made it possible to be saved, but people must still work to earn or maintain their salvation. People can earn the right to enter heaven and be with God forever by living an acceptable life and doing good things.
7. People evolve by being reincarnated in a future life where additional opportunities exist to grow in maturity.

God is against false teachers, because they mislead people. Thus, they will receive greater judgment. Many false teachers will live in the fifth-seal period of the apostasy and discipline. God's Prophets and Watchmen are to prophesy against false prophets.

CHURCH LEADERS MUST MAKE THE CONNECTION

Church leaders need to make the connection that the doctrines they believe, they must also carry out. For example, leaders who believe that people should be evangelized with the gospel, must make the connection that they must train their people to witness using the gospel. They also need to know what is effective in the training of their people. They must realize that they must carry out the ministry in a manner that, under God's leading, they are responsible for the outcome, as far as it depends upon them.

Leaders who believe that their people should live godly lives, need to make the connection that they must derive a curriculum and training that seriously and systematically brings this about. Those who believe in discipleship need to make the connection that this discipleship requires that they work in their people's lives, and the people must be allowed to do ministry as part of their training.

Because they do not make the connection between teaching doctrines and carrying them out in practice, leaders often provide inadequate biblical teaching from a pulpit ministry and have a Sunday School that does little to systematically train their people to walk with God and to accomplish His work. They often teach what to do, but not how to do it. (They may not know how to do it.) Their track records show the results.

So when the judgment comes, they will not recognize that it is they who are partly responsible for its coming. Instead they will believe that its cause is only sinful America.

Likewise tongues people, who believe that 1 Corinthians 14 teaches that only three people are allowed to speak in tongues and that no women are to speak in the churches with men present, must make the connection that they are living in sin and are partly responsible for the coming of judgment, when their entire churches or any women speak in tongues in church meetings.

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Leaders need to recognize that when their congregations regularly sing many choruses that contrive emotions and the raising of hands, they have taken early steps toward having tongues in their churches. It is dangerous to allow the continuance of contrived emotions, resulting in the raising of hands, because it is very often not true worship or godly, and it can lead to apostasy that God will judge. God does not accept contrived emotion as acceptable worship. He accepts the worship that is represented by faith-obedience to His commandments as we live as spiritual sacrifices (Romans 12:1).

Church leaders must make the connection that what they believe God wants obeyed, they must also bring into reality by the training of their people to live godly lives and to accomplish God's work. They must live in the reality that when they have long-term sins of omission, they can expect judgment. They need to expect judgment when they have driven many people away from their churches over many years (lost attendance) and have done little to train their people, even though they have the framework of church services, a Sunday School, and a missions program. The endtime judgment is coming and the true but disobedient church of Christ will experience it. The endtimes will also bring a testing on God's obedient people who faithfully do His work.

The problems discussed in this chapter occur in varying degrees and mixes in today's churches. Faithful churches may have very few of them. But, overall, the churches, in varying degrees, are moving in the direction of apostasy. Thus, they are partly responsible for the coming of judgment. For leaders and teachers, the judgment will be more severe because they carry the greater responsibility. Church leaders and family heads should assess their own situations and make any necessary corrections or adjustments.

SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT CHURCHES

Faithful churches are ones **in which God is observed to be working**, and in which believers are implementing the three activities. They believe the correct doctrines as presented earlier in this chapter as a foundation for their faith. There is an obvious momentum of the work of the Holy Spirit in these churches that can be observed in worship, bringing in new converts, disciplining others, fellowshiping with each other, and noticeably demonstrating love for each other. There is a team of workers working toward common goals. These actions cause God to glorify Himself and manifest His holiness. (The work of the Holy Spirit is not shown in contrived emotionalism, by healing services, or by speaking in false tongues. These are signs of apostasy.)

Obedient churches have leaders with hearts for God and their people. They interact with them. Leaders show their love for their people when they sacrificially train them to carry out the three activities, build godly families, and to train other faithful people in ministry. They support others in their ministries and help them accomplish them.

As faithful churches are working to implement God's best, they will exhibit the following characteristics (my perception based on the composite of Scripture):

1. The elders (with pastors) are the leaders of the church and all of them are in ministry, having been selected from the church life. There are only men elders. The gifts of evangelists, prophets, and pastor-teachers will be distributed among the elders. The elders do the main teaching and shepherding in the churches. The main job of the elders is to equip the saints for accomplishing ministry and to bring them along to spiritual maturity.

The elders know and teach biblical doctrines. They are visionary and know what God wants done and are currently leading the church people to accomplish it. They are drawing all who will respond into active ministry. They know that God wants to take the church people to spiritual maturity and all their activities are organized toward its accomplishment. Thus, the entire church is being trained in depth and in breadth to live out the three activities.

(Generally, the concept of the professional and the laity, or the pulpit and the pew, is no longer being followed, emphasized, or is greatly subdued. Thus, there is no longer a requirement, though it can be used, that pastors be seminary or Bible college graduates. The church operates as a ministry team

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with only Christ having preeminence.)

2. **Multiple** faithful leaders are heading the ministries of the church in teams. The leaders meet biblical elder and deacon qualifications. They were appointed to leadership because they were actively engaged in ministry that God was blessing. Because they are in ministry, interacting with the church people, their lives can be observed as examples. These leaders have joyous hearts for the Lord. All the leaders came up through the ranks having implemented on-the-job training where their life and ministry could be observed.

The entire church has the three activities as the prime focus of the church organization, life, and ministry. The church has functional goals for the carrying out of the ministry and worship. The congregation knows what the goals are and are working as team members to implement them.

3. **Multiple** leaders are teaching and preaching God's whole counsel, some using expository preaching, heading and actively participating in ministries — providing guidance, structure, nurturing, and training. The leaders are committed to strong doctrine and everyone being trained to live godly and to participate in ministry. The leaders are training the church people in discipleship, witnessing, evangelism, and church planting at all age levels. The church exercises on-the-job training in most ministries. The music throughout the church has good content and greatly honors God. The great hymns of the faith are utilized.

Leaders have great commitment to carry out their ministries and have objectives and plans for their ministries that God is molding. They carry the responsibility for the implementation of their ministries under the power of the Holy Spirit, allowing God to bring the results. They are living as observable examples and role models by keeping Christ's commandments and witnessing the gospel.

4. The church is penetrating the community with the gospel and by meeting needs. She reaches out to the needy, including dysfunctional families. Most of the church is witnessing using on-the-way and/or friendship witnessing as a lifestyle. Most of the church is involved in ministry either within or outside the church. Church people are faithfully living godly lives, doing what God is working in them by the power of the Holy Spirit. The church is willing to change and take steps to carry out the ministry. They are keeping God's commandments because of their love for Him and are involved in regular discipleship, evangelistic (teams), and witnessing (individual) ministries.
5. The church has a strong family orientation, has a love-based head-subordinate relationship training, and has training that prepares parents to train their children. There is a strong discipleship of children with an evangelistic outreach to them. Believers are growing spiritually as a result of their carrying out of the church's three activities. The church people are in unity with God, the Bible, and each other. Believers know Bible content.
6. The Holy Spirit is in their midst bringing in new converts and changing people. These actions are shown by water baptisms and love for each other. There is a vibrant spiritual life and fellowship among the people. Joy in the Lord and much praising of Him is observed. The people have a warmth and love that makes them approachable. The church people are a caring people for others. They demonstrate a love for each other and are building each other up. They stimulate and encourage each other.
7. The church has round-table type meetings where the entire church can share their thoughts, teachings, needs, testimonies of what God is doing, and prayer requests. Some people in the church know the needs of other people; no one is left out unless they desire to be. The church is regularly studying the commandments together and participating in ministry together. Anyone in the church will be completely supported in case of financial or medical difficulties.
8. Many churches will have a Discipleship Training Center with the purpose of training others in Christian life and ministry with the whole counsel of God. The churches with this training center reach out to other churches that are unable to have one and to the community at large. This training is used to train future elders (and pastors) to lead and train the church. There is no longer the need to rely heavily on seminaries or Bible colleges, but they are used for specific advanced training.

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Church leaders regularly evaluate their lives and ministries to determine whether or not they are effectively carrying out God's plans. They use ways of measuring their spiritual success by people growing in the Lord, being in ministry, and bringing in new converts. People are generally rallying around the leadership, and they sense the leadership is carrying out God's will with sound doctrine, implementing the three activities with sufficient commitment, and accepting them into the ministries of the leadership. People are drawn into the church life and ministry that demonstrates the leadership cares about them.

Evaluation of Ministries

We cannot always tell, as the result of our ministries, what the response is to our training of our disciples. Very often it may take many years before some people and children become "turned on" to the following of Christ through His Holy Spirit. We can ask the parents questions about how their children are responding and about what they would like us to do to help. We can determine whether or not our doctrinal teachings are getting across and whether the people and children are actually implementing them by asking them questions. We can ask them to repeat the teachings or biblical concepts. We can have them describe how they would address the solutions to case-study situations. The people can be given self-check true-false or multiple-choice quizzes. They can give their scores anonymously. We can test our people in Scripture memorization. Perhaps the greatest way we can tell of our progress is to observe the work of the Holy Spirit blessing the ministry in various ways.

Remembering that our prime goal is to take people to spiritual maturity by their exalting God, living a godly life, and accomplishing Christ's ministry, a few criteria for success of our ministries might be the observation in others of:

1. They are faithful to be regular attendees to the training and are active in the church life.
2. They have a great thirst to learn the Bible and about God and Christ. They are studying the Bible on their own.
3. They have a great desire to be in ministry and to help you with yours.
4. They have the desire to pray, even in a group, and they read their Bibles.
5. They ask many questions, having studied the materials and teachings.
6. They have a lifestyle change and a change in attitudes and behavior — they think differently about things and what is now important to them.
7. They are planning to serve God and to live godly throughout their lives. They have the faith that God will take care of them as they are obedient.
8. They are able to give testimony of what God is teaching them, how they apply God's Word to their lives, witnessing to others, and what God is doing in their lives as a result of their faith-obedience. They have a sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit when interpreting Scripture.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND BASIS FOR CHURCHES WORKING TOGETHER

Regardless of the present circumstances in our churches, church people should confess their sins and concern themselves with doing right, doing God's best, and preparing for present ministry and the endtimes. Doing right and God's best includes to train the church ardently to live the three activities using God's whole counsel. It means to learn to live as Christ lives in the servant role — doing the will of Him who sent us and accomplishing His work, instead of just having church services and programs. Leaders should spend much time learning to do what is right and not worry about what they are doing wrong. If they are doing right, the wrong things will disappear. Whatever has been the past, let's make the future the best possible. The next chapter shows how.

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Churches can work together, even with differences, if they will:

1. Agree on the overlay and be willing and committed in implementing it.
2. Believe the correct doctrines as presented earlier.

The overlay is the only basis for harmony because it is God's prime objective and purpose for His church. The doctrines are necessary upon which to found Christ's true church. This overlay is that God's primary objective is for the church to become spiritually mature in Christ by exalting God, living godly lives, and accomplishing God's work amidst trials, testings, temptations, persecutions, and martyrdoms, using the Romans 8:28 Faith-Process. Living godly lives requires God's people to obey His commandments from love and to accomplish His work according to purpose.

This means that:

1. Tongues people must agree to obey the safeguards.
2. All the churches must agree to train their people ardently to live godly lives and be involved in discipleship and evangelistic ministries using the Romans 8:28 Faith-Process.
3. At this time, all the churches should prepare their people for the endtimes by agreeing to implement the whole-counsel curriculum in chapter 8 (or one like it), for adults and children, using both the auditorium and round-table approaches.

If the churches will do these, they will avoid the coming judgment, prepare their people for the coming endtimes, and help to bring another revival. If the churches will commit to these doctrinal bases, they can work together, even with other differences.

WATCHMAN EXHORTATION

But this Watchman warns, that if the churches wait and do not accomplish this work with a spiritual warfare and immediacy attitude, it may be too late to be prepared for the coming of the fourth-seal war. It is important that all churches take up the needed tasks. But if they do not, then groups of Christians and families can.

The next chapter presents a plan and minimum curriculum (God's whole counsel) for carrying out the Great Commission and making wise preparations for the coming intense spiritual warfare. **It shows that we need now to proclaim the Watchman Warning and train our people for intense spiritual warfare. This plan (or one like it) now should be carried out regardless of what else we do or what organization we may have. We should train our people to live righteously by faith and to carry out ministry using a well-chosen curriculum. We may no longer have time to do complete and large programs. What we do must be done expediently with great commitment — the time left may be very short.**

ENDNOTES

1.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Faithfulness - God is faithful to act by His character, do what He says, stand by the righteous, and to inflict judgment on unrepentant sinners. Great is the faithfulness of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 36:5; 40:10; 89; 91:4; 100:5; 119:75, 90, 138; 143:1; Lamentations 3:23; Romans 3:3.)

Glorious - The totality of God's greatness, attributes, and character qualities is His glory. Believers can get a glimpse of it. (Psalm 19:1; 72:19; 104:31; 138:5; Isaiah 35:2; Matthew 6:13; Romans 5:2; 6:4.)

Grace - The fact that God through the Cross was willing to forgive all sin and bring us into

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fellowship with Himself, demonstrates God's grace and mercy. Grace brings God's best to those who do not deserve it. (Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 15:11; 20:24; Romans 3:24; 5:2; 2 Corinthians 4:15; 8:9; 9:8; Ephesians 1:7; 2:7-9; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 5:10.)

Holiness - God's holiness is His perfect moral excellence. He is without sin or error. His holiness demands that everyone live holy lives or face judgment, for breaking His spiritual laws. (1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 22:3; 99:9; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8; 15:4.)

Immensity - He fills the entire universe with His presence. (1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:24.)

Immutability - God never changes. He can be relied upon to always act the same way, according to His spiritual laws and character qualities. He cannot improve or get worse. (1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17.)

Justice - God's holiness and righteousness require that His justice be satisfied for sin, the transgressed laws of God. Only His perfect righteousness can satisfy this justice. (Job 36:6; Psalm 89:30-37; 111:7; Isaiah 42:1-4; 51:4; Amos 4:2; Jeremiah 4:2; 23:5; Matthew 12:18; Luke 7:29; Romans 3:21-30.)

Light - God provides His light to guide our lives in truth and righteousness. He is the light Himself. His light is His presence, righteousness, and commandments we are to keep. His light is to guide our paths into righteous living and in intimate relationship with Himself. (Psalm 27:1; 36:9; 37:6; 44:3; 78:14; 89:15; 119:105, 130; Proverbs 6:23; 29:13; Isaiah 9:2; 60:19, 20; Matthew 4:16; John 1:4-9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 36, 47; there are many others.)

Long-suffering - God has long-suffering, with kindness, patience, and forbearance, to withhold His judgment for sin, so that many will be led to repentance, as He continues to draw people back into a personal relationship with Him in salvation and in spiritual growth. He does not desire that anyone go to the Lake of Fire. (Romans 2:1-8.)

Love - God is love. His love acts sacrificially on the behalf of others. The fact that the Father was willing to lose fellowship with His Son on the Cross to satisfy His justice demonstrated His great love for mankind. This kind of love may not be known by any other way — than sacrifice and at high cost. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8, 12.)

Lovingkindness - He acts to help those who love Him and keep His commandments and will. God gives lovingkindness to afflicted believers. From His lovingkindness, He provides salvation and help to those in need. God acts in lovingkindness toward His repentant subjects who turn toward Him in obedience from their sin. (Psalm 5:7; 6:4; 25:7, 10; 31:7, 16; 33:5, 22; 36:7, 10; 40:10, 11; 59:17; 61:7; 63:3; 64:3; 66:20; 69; 85:10; 86:5, 13; 89:2; 95:18; 106:1; 118:2; 119:76, 88; 136.)

Mercy - God's mercy provides for us when we do not deserve anything, have sinned, and are in great need. He brings us salvation and provides for us by His mercy. When we deserve judgment, He holds back and gives us another chance. (Luke 1:54, 78; Romans 9:16, 18; 11:32; 15:9; 1 Corinthians 7:25; Ephesians 2:4; Philippians 2:27; 1 Timothy 1:2, 13; 2 Timothy 1:2, 18; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 1:3.)

Omnipotence - God's great power created the entire universe, the earth, people, and angels. He has infinite power to do anything without any effective resistance. (2 Chronicles 20:6; Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 115:3.)

Omnipresence - God is everywhere present throughout all universes. He deals with each person in the world at the same time, even though there are billions of people. (Psalm 139:7-12; Proverbs 15:13; Hebrews 4:13.)

Omniscience - God has always known everything that can ever be known, past, present, and

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future. Thus, there is nothing new He can ever learn. (Job 37:16; Psalm 139:6; 145:3; Isaiah 40:28; 55:9; Romans 11:33; 1 John 3:20.)

Provider - God provides life's necessities to His own people, as they obey Him and do His will. He also makes provision for all people during times of prosperity and testing. But His provision is withdrawn from those in disobedience, when His judgment comes. (Genesis 22:14; 45:11; 50:21; 1 Kings 17:4, 9; Nehemiah 9:15, 21; Psalm 78:20; Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 10:13.)

Righteousness - God's thoughts and actions are always done in perfection against perfect spiritual laws and without sin or mistakes. He always thinks and acts in a right way. (Psalm 11:7; 111:3; 112:9; 119:142.)

Self Existence (Eternal Life) - Self existence is God's independent eternal life within Himself, whereby He has existence throughout all eternities of past, present, and future. This self existence and eternal life is independent of any outside entity. Because of self existence, God has always existed and will always exist. As such, He is able to impart eternal life to others as they draw life from Him. (Genesis 21:33; Psalm 9:7; 41:13; 102:12; Job 36:26; Isaiah 40:28; 57:15; Daniel 4:34; John 5:26; 1 John 5:11.)

Sovereignty - God has self rule and can do anything He wants, in accordance with His character qualities, without any effective resistance. (Exodus 15:18; Deuteronomy 10:14, 17; 1 Chronicles 29:11, 12; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Psalm 135:5, 6; Luke 1:37; Acts 17:24-26; Hebrews 6:13.)

Spirit - God's substance is spirit which is invisible, indivisible, and everywhere present. He does not have a physical body as humans have. He cannot be discerned by our physical senses. (John 1:18; 4:24; 5:37; Romans 1:20; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16.)

Truth - God has the knowledge of all the absolute truth and laws that make and run a perfect universe in every respect. He also is truth. He is the only source of how to live perfectly without sin and without breaking spiritual laws. All of His commandments, concepts and laws of interpersonal relationships constitute part of His truth. (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 31:5; 86:11; 108:4; 117:2; 119:142, 151; Isaiah 65:16; John 14:6; 17:17; Romans 3:8.)

2. GIFTS AND MINISTRIES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

In order to form and establish the early church, God appointed apostles, prophets, and teachers with ministries with the gifts of healing, helps, administrations, and tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28). But once the transition from the Jewish Period to the Church Period was completed in the first century, many of these functions were no longer needed.

To operate the church, God appointed elders to lead and oversee the church, and deacons who would lead the rest of the ministries. For these ministries, God gave several motivational gifts. These motivational gifts represent the reasons or purposes for doing ministry. Thus, they represent the "source" for what people do. These motivational gifts were prophecy with faith, serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy (Romans 12:6-8). These gifts are with us today.

As a result of the ministries (as a result of the embodiment of source), the Holy Spirit brought several manifestations in the early church that included wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, effecting of miracles, a prophecy, distinguisher of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Tongues and the miracle gifts were used to show the Jews that the administration of the Kingdom of God had been taken from them and had been given to the church. They were for a sign that the Holy Spirit was now being poured out on all flesh (people from all nations, no longer just the Jews), and they were used to authenticate the apostles as God's chosen ministers. They were used to administer the motivational gifts (embodiment of source), so that the Holy Spirit could bring the intended results as people ministered as apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and pastors and teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11).

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However, when the Canon of Scripture and the transition of the church were completed in about A.D. 96 with Revelation, many of the gifts of ministry were no longer needed, and they departed from the church. These included the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and tongues, and also the miracle gifts, including the gift of healing. The church has been without these gifts for over 1800 years. But many imitations have returned with the false prophets in recent times, showing that the endtimes are here (cf. Matthew 24:24).

3. Burdick, pp. 32-39; Vander Lugi, pp. 9-17.

4. Baxter, Ronald E., Charismatic Gift of Tongues, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981.

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Burdick, Donald W., Tongues to Speak or Not to Speak, Chicago: Moody Press, 1969.

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