

# The Planter

I had a dream of writing this message of "The Planter." I began by talking about sowing seed in the natural and the "Parable of the Sower" that Jesus gave us (Luke 8:4-18; Mark 4:1-23; Matthew 13:1-23). Here we learn that some seed is lost due to it being sowed by the way side, and interpreted as the devil coming and taking the Word of God out of the hearts of people lest they should believe and be saved. The next group are people who are like stony soil, that although they receive the Word with joy and believe for a while, they have no depth and in time of temptation or persecution because of the Word of God as it applies to their life, they stumble and fall away. The next group are people who are like thorny ground, who having heard and received the Word of God start to grow, but then are choked out because of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures and lustful desires of this life. The fourth group are those people who have an honest and good heart, who not only hear and receive the Word of God, but hold onto it and obey it, and are willing to endure the temptations of life and the trials that come because of the truths of the Word of God, and reject everything that would hinder the application of the Word of God in their life as revealed to them, and therefore they bring forth fruit unto perfection.

We learn from this that we must teach and warn God's people about what can hinder or destroy their faith. That they must be willing to endure and embrace the cross daily if they are to grow and succeed and prosper in God.

In Matthew's account it is significant that it begins with "The same day," revealing that in the context of Jesus teaching on that particular day He was teaching them that not only the Word of God was seed that is sown, but their every word, every idle word was important, and therefore would have to be "accounted for in the day of judgment" as it can produce bad fruit (Matthew 12:36).

The Lord goes on when told that His mother and brethren were asking for Him that all of His disciples were his mother and brethren, everyone who does the will of His Father in heaven "is my brother, and sister, and mother" (:47-50). This is important, for also in Matthew's account it is recorded that He is talking about sowing seed and producing fruit for the one singular kingdom of God, where all of us are to be one, to be united in spirit, together building the one kingdom of God, His kingdom, not ours, for which He prayed profoundly right before Gethsemane and Calvary (Matthew 13:11,19; John 17). The importance of this unity will be seen more as we go on in this message.

Now as we think of planting, we must realize that plants have either come from seeds we have sown, or from plants that have already sprouted and started to grow, and may need transplanting.

As we consider the Word of God, we find scriptures that reveal to us what we all, as "the planting of the Lord," are to be planted in.

First we are to be "rooted and grounded in Him," the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority." (Colossians 2:6-10 NASB)

And we need to notice that with this instruction of our planting into the Lord Himself, we are warned not to be taken captive by Satan using worldly philosophies and deceptions that have no validity. This is a big challenge for the church to teach some apologetics, to children in our government schools today, especially to anyone who is planning on entering college.

I make this remark after having been taken captive myself upon resuming college after having accepted the Lord in the military, but not taught the Word of God either then or later in the Church. Thank God He set me free after my professional training, but what a waste from sin and the sad consequences of living with a humanistic philosophy. And that is what is taught in all government schools today. The demonic and dominating religion of Secular Humanism being forced upon all government schools, to the exclusion of the founding religion of Christianity, is resulting in our schools and consequently our culture becoming increasingly ungodly, perverted, and wicked.

Next, we must plant believers in the love of God. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is great, and we should pray this for the church and ourselves.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family ["the whole family" KJV, the emphasis is just one family] in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

(Ephesians 3:14-21 NASB)

The next thing we must plant believers in is the understanding of the cross. We must teach the cross, preach the cross, and live the cross. We must teach the crucified life if we are to experience the resurrected life. We read:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, [then] we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [Gk.: inactivated], that henceforth we should not serve sin."

(Romans 6:3-6 KJV)

Now that we have considered a little about sowing and reaping, then planting believers firmly in Christ and His love, of our identification with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection, what about "Church planting?"

The term is never used in scripture, but we find every Church organization and group talking about "Church Planting." And as we examine their work, we find that all of the "Church Plantings" are very different from each other. They are structured differently, use different methods and means, practice very different customs and teachings, and therefore produce very different results. Who or what is right?

The place we should look first to is the example of the first apostles, that became part of the first church when the Lord started it on the day of Pentecost when he breathed upon the 120 out of heaven and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). It was preceded by years of teaching, and then instruction from the Lord to wait for the "promise of the Father," the Holy Spirit, and then days of united prayer (Acts 1). After the disciples sharing the faith and Peter's preaching, the Lord added about 3000 souls to the group, the church, and continued to do so for days and then years, but what were the apostles doing? They were teaching the "apostles doctrine," the particular truths that the Lord had given, and was revealing to them, for the people. They were also having the people gather together for fellowship, to share their food, and for prayers.

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”  
(Acts 2:42 KJV)

But what we must realize is that these first apostles never started one church for a long time. They recognized the unity of all the believers, and the fellowship of all the united believers was not divided but recognized as one, and simply referred to as “the church [Gk.: ekklesia, ecclesia: the called out ones] which was at [or in] Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1, 11:22).

Notice here and every time the term is used, it is singular, although they were gathering in many different places such as at the temple before the persecution scattered them, and various homes (Acts 2:46-47; 5:11,42; 8:1-3; 12:1, 5, 22).

Some of the believers, and after the persecution, all of the believers except the apostles, were scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria, “sharing the good news of the Word” (Acts 8:1-4). Then when Philip, the only evangelist recorded in scripture, preached Christ to the city of Samaria confirmed by many miracles and deliverances from evil spirits,

[12] “they believed Philip announcing the good news concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”  
(Acts 8:5-12 lit.)

[14] “Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them, they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.”  
(Acts 8:14-17 NASB)

[25] “So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and announced the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.”  
(Acts 8:25 lit.)

The apostles also had been responsible for seeing that all the people were fed properly, and as “the number of the disciples was multiplied,” they had the people select seven qualified men to oversee that work, and they laid their hands upon them and ordained them as “deacons” (servants) to oversee that ministry, so that they could give themselves “continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6).

As we continue looking at the activity of the first apostles, we later find Peter moving about, healing the sick, raising the dead, fulfilling his calling in being the one chosen to first bring the gospel to the Gentiles, as he had to the Jews (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 9, 10, 11; 15:7-8).

In all this activity, we don't see Peter or any of the other first apostles referred to as “planting the church,” but we do when we study the activity of Paul.

It is from Paul's ministry that most of us have been taught that apostles went about “starting” or “planting” churches. But what was the nature of these “churches” and how did Paul work? This is most important if we are to understand the ministry of a true apostle of Jesus Christ today!

Here we can gain much insight from his first letter to the believers in Corinth, Greece. We read:

[1:1] “Paul called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift [they had all the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit and yet were carnal]; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[9] God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

- [10] Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions [Gk.: schismata, schisms, tears] among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions [GK.: erides: strifes, wranglings] among you.
- [12] Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
- [13] Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?  
I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.  
For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

(1 Corinthians 1:1-18 KJV)

Now we must note that all of the believers in Corinth were united in one, single church, although they met in many different homes such as Chloe's and Stephanas' and also they all came together for their larger love feasts, and ministering to one another (1 Cor. 1:11, 16; 16:15; 11:20; 12 – 14). We must note that they were not divided as they all met together on occasion, not separated into many structured, set, individual congregations, but Paul is still going to call them carnal, as they were wrangling among themselves over what apostle they were to follow or prefer. (Apollos identified also as an apostle, 4:6, 9) They, therefore, were being ministered to by all the apostles that came through the city of Corinth, and Paul exposes the thinking and spirit of sectarianism before it causes division. Paul's arguments are plain and simple, yet profound, recognizing the obvious unity of the faith of all believers, our faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, not anyone else. He makes it plain that the faith is one of having our mutual fellowship in the Lord, not in doctrine.

Paul addresses this further when he writes:

- [3:1] "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.  
For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions [this word is not in Panin or other manuscripts], are ye not carnal, and walk as men?  
For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers [diakonoi, servants] by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"
- [6] I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
- [7] So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.
- [8] Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together [Gk.: sunergoi, fellow-workers; the two apostles] with God: ye are God's husbandry [field, singular], ye are God's building [singular].
- [10] According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder [Gk.: architekton, "architect, superintendent in the erection of buildings," the one who makes the blueprints], I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.  
Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.  
If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

- [16] Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God [singular and united], him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.  
Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.
- [21] Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's [all apostles, these three specifically mentioned as ministering to this one united city church]; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."  
(1 Corinthians 3:1-23 KJV)

Here we have Paul identifying himself as an apostle, and a "church planter," having planted the church in Corinth (1:1, 3:6). But we must note the nature of the church and the different workers of God, other apostles, who would also come through the city and minister to all the same saints.

Although the Corinthian church was not divided, they were yet carnal, and Paul reproveth and warns them about their carnal behavior. Paul did not tell them that he alone was in charge of their church, but emphasized the unity of all God's fellow-laborers in building up the one true united church in each city. He abhorred the thought of division, and lists it as a work of the flesh which condemns souls to hell!

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred [NAS, enmities], variance [NAS, strife], emulations, wrath, strife [NAS, disputes; Gk.: eritheia, selfish ambition], seditions [NAS, dissensions; Gk.: dichostasiai, divisions, to stand apart], heresies [NAS, factions; Gk.: hairesis, heresies, chosen opinions contrary to the faith, also, bodies of men separating themselves because of their own beliefs – sects or parties], envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

(Galatians 5:19-21 KJV)

For a more thorough exposition of these sins, and how they are promoted by majority voting, I recommend to you my book, *The church*, Ch. 4, One Mind, One Accord, pp. 212-221. When we study and consider the three works of the flesh that deal plainly about the sins of sectarianism, namely, *eritheia*, *dichostasiai*, and *hairesis*, we find that almost all translations fail in revealing them in such a way as to bring any awareness and conviction to Christians of the nature, seriousness, practical application, and consequences of these particular works of the flesh. Therefore, the body of Christ is suffering the consequences from them, and then the world suffers as well.

We must see that being a part of contention between believers is being carnal, fleshly; and promoting division among believers in any city or location is a condemning sin. To be responsible for such division brings severe judgment. We see this being warned against in a passage of scripture that is misunderstood by those that practice divisions, and so we need to look at this carefully.

When Paul was hurriedly traveling back to Jerusalem from Greece he called for the elders of the church in the city of Ephesus to meet him in Miletus because he had some things to share with them. Ephesus was a large, important city to which he and John, the apostle, would later write a letter and message to (Ephesians; Revelation 2:1-7). In Acts 19 we read that Paul had been previously ministering daily there in the school of Tyrannus for two years. Now when we read this account in Acts 20, we must realize that these were the church elders of the entire city, the "city church," not elders as is so often misinterpreted today, as elders of a "congregational church" or "local church," one of many separated congregations in a city. There were no divisions tolerated in this age by true apostles of the Lord! We read:

- [Acts 20:17] "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and

temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

- [22] And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.
- [25] And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel [or purpose; i.e. "apostles' doctrine"] of God.
- [28] Take heed [guard, NAS; Gk.: care for, provide for] therefore unto yourselves [notice the responsibility of the elders in the city was first to themselves, co-elders in the city, and then secondly], and to all the flock [one united flock, not many flocks in the city, although they would be meeting often in many different places much of the time], over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers [Gk.: episkopous; over-seers, plural, often translated bishops], to feed [Gk.: poimainein; shepherd; Latin: pastor], the church [singular] of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
- [29] For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous [savage, NAS; Gk.: burdensome, as of traditions] wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.
- [30] Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse [Thayer's Gk.: strepho + dia = to turn + rivalry; distorted] things [words, i.e. traditions, teachings], to draw away disciples after them [after themselves; to separate some of the Christians of the one flock in the city into a group or congregation under their own control].
- [31] Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
- [32] And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.
- [33] I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.
- [34] Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.
- [35] I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.  
And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."

(Acts 20:17-38 KJV)

Here in this most important passage of scripture we find a number of very significant truths concerning our subject of "church planting."

First, as we study this, we must understand that this is scriptural instruction to men called and qualified as elders of the body of Christ, men who are to see themselves as co-elders of the city or area in which they live. These are words warning us, in fact, of the deplorable condition of sectarianism that exists today, not just in the professing Church, but the possessing church as well.

Men raised, trained, and ordained in the carnal organization of men are taught to be sectarian, to compete, not cooperate. They take great pride in building their own kingdoms for themselves and their organizations, never realizing what an abomination it is in the sight of God. Most men today have no idea of how carnal they are. How at the judgment seat of Christ so much of their work will be burned up! How that many will just get in with little reward, and some will not even get in at all. Jesus requires us to build His kingdom according to His Word, not the carnal traditions of men. No wonder He said repeatedly, "Many that are first will be last" (Matthew 19:27-30, 20:16; Mark 10:28-31; Luke 13:24-30). And many others will say "Lord, Lord" and tell the

Lord of all the wonderful things they did for Him, but will be shocked to hear Him say, "Depart from me, you worker of lawlessness, I never knew you," meaning "I was not intimate with you, you turned from righteousness for your own selfish ambitions and disqualified yourself, you would not listen to me, and would not repent of the condemning works of the flesh which I warned you about in my Word." (Ezekiel 3; 18; 33; Matthew 7:13-27; Galatians 5:19-21).

For many years since the outpouring of the Spirit in the late 1940's, God has been moving to break down denominationalism, but little has been considered concerning "congregationalism." We are now entering into the last days, and God is moving to deal with all forms of segregation and sectarianism.

Church membership in scripture is always given as members of the one body of Christ in both heaven and earth. It is never spoken of as in a certain congregation. In fact, that is what Paul, a recognized and true apostle, is warning the Ephesian elders about. That some of themselves, true God ordained elders of the church, men of God ordained by the Holy Spirit, chosen to be the shepherds of God's one united flock in any city or area, will start to give themselves to selfish ambition so that they will start speaking perverse things in order to get some of the flock to follow themselves principally, and in many cases exclusively.

This is the deplorable state that the vast majority of the church finds itself in today, the sectarianism of denominationalism and congregationalism.

Before the "Latter Rain Revival" in 1948 the vast majority of congregations were part of some denomination, but then God began to break down the sectarianism in the church, and more and more congregations have been birthed into a non-denominational structure. God starting to bring His spiritual people, Christians, out of their "Babylonian captivity" into their own spiritual land as prophesied is parallel with God bringing His Jewish people out of their worldwide captivity from the nations of the world into their own physical land, Israel, in 1948, and establishing them as a natural nation once again as also prophesied many times, is wonderful to behold when we understand how both the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham have been in bondage for many centuries.

So now, let us consider the scriptures concerning church membership and "congregationalism," the dividing of the body of Christ into controlled congregations with restricting church membership which God wants to deal with in bringing His people out of Babylon.

I go into detail in my book, *The church, From Babylon to the Promised Land*, Chapter 3 under the section on "New Testament membership," which is available free on my web site, so let me condense some of the information here.

The scriptures repeatedly state that there is only one body of Christ, and it contains all the believers in both heaven and earth, and that we are all members of that one single body. (Ephesians 1:17-23; 3:3-7; 4:1-16; 5:30; Galatians 3:27-28; Colossians 1:16, 18, 24; 2:19; 3:9-15; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 10:16-17, 11:29; 12:1-31; Romans 12:4-5). This is the true church, a spiritual people. The scriptures never state that a congregation is a body, or even the whole church in any city is a body, but that the one and only body is the entire body of Christ in heaven and earth! Any other concept or teaching is error, divisive, and limits one's understanding of the necessity, function, and ministry of each and every member of the body of Christ, past, present, or future.

One verse that is excellent to teach and have believers profess expresses this so simply:

"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

(Romans 12:4-5 NAS)

And another scripture that repeatedly stresses this oneness is when Paul wrote to the church in the city of Corinth and included all other Christian everywhere, he wrote:

"Now concerning spiritual gifts [Gk. πνευματικων, *pneumatikon*, spirituals], brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.

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. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 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 by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church [the whole body, not a congregation or even a city], first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 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."

(I Corinthians 12:1-31 NAS)

Dividing God's people by carnal church membership is not just a sectarian work of the flesh, but it grieves the Holy Spirit that made us one when God saved us. It grieves the Lord Jesus Christ who died to make us one, and it grieves the Father who sent His son into this world to make us one and answer the prayer that Jesus prayed in John 17 that tells us that our oneness determines what the world believes and thus affects the salvation of billions of people.

"Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. . . . I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

(John 17:11, 20-23 NAS)

So we see, beloved, the scriptures clearly teach the oneness of the body of Christ, that membership is in the body and not in anything less. This is true revelation from the scriptures and any true apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. To limit church membership is to deny the Word of God and limit relationships and function between



members of His body and thus hinder the growth and development of individual members and His body as a whole. To sin by dividing His body is a serious condemning sin that brings judgment now and hereafter.

What is to hold believers together is peace and love, not fleshly, carnal, controlling church memberships (Ephesians 4:3 & Colossians 3:14).

This truth will be taught and practiced by any true apostolic church planter. When we look at history and what God has been doing in recent decades, we see why God used communism to drive out or kill the sectarian missionaries in China and then give revelation of how His church was to function in simple non-sectarian unity through wonderful men like Watchman Nee in raising up the house church movement throughout China. Before the take over, there might have been a couple of million believers in China, and then they began to grow and blossom into over 100 million.

As Israel is a prophetic time clock, in 1967 the nation regained control of Jerusalem, their eternal capital. It was stated by the Lord that Jerusalem would be under the control of the nations until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:24). It was then that God began to ordain more apostles in the church and revelation was given to them as to the Oneness of the Body of Christ. Two wonderful books that were widely read were *The Normal Christian Church Life* by Watchman Nee from China, and *One Body in Christ* by Kokichi Kurosaki from Japan, both available now to be read free on the web. It was then that God began pouring out His Spirit in what became known as "The Jesus Movement." It was in 1967 that I was "set apart as an apostle to plant the church" through "prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." God has been moving to enlarge and restore His church in understanding the "apostles' doctrine" and many truths lost in "Babylonian captivity," and the practical headship of the Lord Jesus Christ ruling from heavenly Jerusalem.

Many years ago the Lord gave me a word that if we wanted unity in the body of Christ, all we have to do is simply stop doing that which divides us. Not long ago when I was in a local congregation I was asked to pray about unity. When I prayed and shared the word the Lord had given me years before and which I had thought about so many times, I realized after I left the meeting that it was a real "Word of Wisdom" from the Lord. Let us heed the word of the Lord and see His church come together in unity as never before in these last days and experience His power and blessings in reaching a lost and dying world.

Now, let us consider some other truths that must be taught by anyone who is a true apostolic church planter.

One can not read the scriptures without understanding that God is Holy and that He expects, requires, and demands holiness in His people. Peter writes:

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior [Gk.: manner of life]; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

(1 Pet. 1:14-16 NAS, which Peter quotes from Lev. 11)

Paul says that in order for us to be acceptable to God and serve Him in reasonable worship that we must present our bodies to Him as a living and holy sacrifice. He writes:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

(Romans 12:1-2 NAS)

These were the two scriptural references that the Lord gave me in a dream when He told me to call the biblical nutrition I was teaching "Holy Nutrition." Later He told me to write a book about it and it is now available in print.

You see, holiness involves everything we do, everything we are, all of our ways of living. Holiness is practical! What we do with our bodies in keeping them holy and separate, free from all kinds of sin. What we

put in our bodies, what we put on our bodies, what we do with our bodies in every respect – our eyes, our ears, our hands, our mouths, our sexual organs. That is why the Lord had me write about how to dress in holiness. See: *A Woman's Dress* and *A Woman's Headcovering* and its supplement *Women's and Men's Headcovering*. About how to eat in holiness. See: *Holy Nutrition*.

Other aspects of truth that are essential in planting the church according to God's way, His scriptures, are such things as proper church order, structure, finances. That is why He had me write *The church, From Babylon to the Promised Land* which explains the truth about what is the church and the false Babylonian Church, and how we enter the church. How we function in unity by "One Mind, and One Accord," and about individual and corporate discipline. Also, proper church order for men and women is found in *The Public Ministry of Women*. All of these books are found on my web site along with various audio messages.

So we see, beloved, all of these aspects of the "Apostles' Doctrine" are taught in scripture from Genesis to the Revelations, and need to be expounded upon in these last days where the world is yielding to more and more ungodliness, and many in the Church are "departing from the faith and holding on to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

Today there are many men and women who have been seduced into error, and have become false apostles. Many men who started as men of God, but usually as Babylonian Pastors, as Paul warned the Ephesian elders, have yielded to "the spirit of the world" and because of false teaching and selfish ambition have made themselves or been made by false prophecy or false apostles into so called "apostles" who do not understand nor practice the "Apostles' Doctrine" that is so necessary and required from any true apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The church of God needs true revival and reformation in these last days, and it will come as God's people repent of their rebellion and unbelief, and seek God with all of their hearts, and submit to His authority, order, and word, and the intimate personal discipleship that every one of us needs and our Father desires. We must be committed to worship Him in spirit and in truth. If we desire to practice the truth, God will reveal it to us, but we must be willing to pay the price (John 7:16-18). God tells us to "Buy the truth and sell it not!" And the truth includes "wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." (Proverbs 23:23) Too many are like the leaders in Jesus' day who "loved the praise [approval] of men rather than or more than the praise [approval] of God" and sell the truth or refuse to pay the price to have it, and then pay the eternal consequences of disobedience and sin. (John 12:42-43, Gk., KJV, NAS)

Dearly beloved, let us go on to follow the Lord wholly, and reap a full reward at His soon coming.

May He bless you and keep you until that great and glorious day.

Amen & Amen!

Brother John P. Rothacker

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