What is the Church model?

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This paper examines the structural model Christ left the Church to follow. Most Christians believe that the natural progression is to find a religious organisation that espouses what they believe is true and then join it. But is that what God wants, and is this the precedent Christ established? We ask, is the Church to operate as an organisation or an association? Should it elect a leader? Should it offer tax deductions? Who was it that first established a religious organisation, and why? Who then took it onto the world stage? And what will be its ultimate fate? Last, but not least, we look at how we can identify the spiritual remnant of the Philadelphian Church.

We find the answers throughout the Bible, line upon line, here a little, there a little (Isa. 28:9-11). We must not only have the courage and fortitude to seek God's word regarding these matters but also have the conviction to accept scripture as our only source of truth and obey it.

1. **The Calling Out**

​The body of Christ is comprised of individuals, and not members of a specific religious organisation (Isa. 55:3; Mat. 11:28; Lk. 6:47-48; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3; 1Cor. 12:27).

The word "church" in the Greek is 'ekklesia'. It means 'to call out' or the 'calling out' of people out of this world (of darkness) into the body of Christ. And it is by the grace of God we are called by Him to be saved through faith.

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Eph 2:8-10 BSB  For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God,  (9)  not by works, so that no one can boast.  (10)  For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

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God, the Father, begins by opening up our minds to His Will, Word and truth. He grants us an understanding as to what sin is, and that the wages of sin is death.

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Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In loving kindness, God brings about a godly sorrow inside us that leads us to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). God then leads us to His Son, Jesus (Jn. 6:65; cf. 6:39).

Jn. 6:44 BLB No one is able to come to Me unless the Father, the one having sent Me, draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day.

We come to find Jesus is not only our appointed saviour, redeemer, high priest, and king, but the Passover lamb of God, who died for our sins.

Christ paid the ultimate debt; a debt we could never pay (1 Cor. 15:3).

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Col. 2:13-14 NET  And even though you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he nevertheless made you alive with him, having forgiven all your transgressions.  (14)  He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.

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Heb. 9:14-15 TCENT  how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?  (15)  That is why he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

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​We come to understand that we must undertake baptism into the body of Jesus, as an outward sign that we have acknowledged that our sinful behaviour warranted a penalty, one that we, of ourselves, could not pay. We also accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour. We see that Christ is the Passover Lamb of God and that he died to save us.

We also come to the realisation that by his unblemished sacrifice, Christ paid the bill of our indebtedness that we amassed when we once lived a life to sin. We see that if anyone wants to have a covenant relationship with the One True Everlasting God, we must do so through, and in, Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 8:5-8). For Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life.

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Jn. 14:6 BSB  Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

The undertaking of baptism also carries with it the symbolism that we are wanting to bury our former way of life that was contrary to the Will of God, and that we desire to live a new life in Christ, that accords with God's perfect Will (Ps. 19:7-11; Rev. 12:17, 14:12).

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Rom. 6:4-13 TCENT  Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.  (5)  For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection.  (6)  For we know that our old self has been crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.  (7)  For he who has died has been set free from sin.  (8)  Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.  (9)  For we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has dominion over him.  (10)  For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life that he lives, he lives to God.  (11)  So you also must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.  (12)  Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies so that you obey it in the body's sinful desires.  (13)  And do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

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Thus, we see Infant baptism as invalid; for an infant has no concept of what sin and repentance are, and what the fruits of the spirit are, which we are expected to produce. (We must also consider the fact that fermented wine and unleavened bread, symbols of Christ's body, are required to be taken by all baptised members of the body of Christ as part of our annual Passover observance).

Gal. 3:27-28 TCENT  For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.  (28)  There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Upon having been fully immersed underwater, the person then has hands laid on them by a baptised member of the faith for the receipt of God's holy spirit (Mar. 1:9-11; Acts 8:26-40; Heb. 6:2).​

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Acts 19:3-6 TCENT  So Paul said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.”  (4)  Then Paul said, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus.”  (5)  On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.  (6)  And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

Acts 8:14-17 TCENT  When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John.  (15)  These two went down and prayed for the Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit,  (16)  for the Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of Christ Jesus.  (17)  Then Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritan believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

1. **Eat his Flesh and Drink his Blood**

Christ also instructs us that those who wish to be his disciples must also eat his flesh and drink his blood.

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Jn. 6:51-58 TCENT  I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”  (52)  Then the Jews began to quarrel with one another, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”  (53)  So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves.  (54)  Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.  (55)  For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.  (56)  Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.  (57)  Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me will also live because of me.  (58)  This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as your fathers ate the manna, and died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

The command to eat his flesh and drink his blood involves ingesting his words, teachings, instructions, and way of life, internally. In doing so, we put on the new man that is Christ (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23-24; Rom.12:2; Psalm 51).

The command to eat his flesh and drink his blood also necessitates the need to observe the Passover.

Christ instituted the symbols for the Passover of the New Covenant, namely unleavened bread and wine, symbolising his body and blood himself, on the night of his betrayal (Mat. 26:27-28; 1 Cor. 5:7).

1Cor. 11:23-29 TCENT  For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread,  (24)  and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “Take and eat this bread; this is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”  (25)  In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”  (26)  For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.  (27)  So then, whoever eats this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a manner unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.  (28)  So a person should examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.  (29)  For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment on himself, since he does not discern the body of the Lord.

Anyone who eats this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a manner unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. We are called to examine ourselves before we eat the bread and drink of the cup. This involves understanding the significance and importance surrounding the keeping of the Passover, such as the correct time and day of the year it must be observed, as well as what the sacrifice accomplished, and continues to accomplish, and the frame of mind we must be in. See the paper, ‘The Passover of the New Covenant – Its Purpose and Correct Observation’. It also leads us to discover that God has His own biblical Calendar that He has ordained mankind to observe (see paper, ‘Gods Biblical Calendar’.

Our living faith then propels us to want to walk in the footsteps of Christ. Jesus has, does, and we are assured, always will keep all of God’s commandments and laws (Jn. 8:29, 15:10; 1Cor.15:24).

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Heb. 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

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Christ observed all of God’s holy days, feasts, sabbaths and new moons found in the law of God. Christ was sinless in his observance of the law (1Pet. 1:19, 2:22; Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26).

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1Jn. 1:7). Sin being the transgression of the law (1Jn. 3:4-5).

1. **Identifying the Early Church**

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The early Church (believers) were merely identified by their location (Acts 5:42, 16:13; Rom. 16:1, 1Cor. 1:2; 2Thes. 1:1).

Col. 4:15 ESV Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

They fellowshipped at believers' houses, and even beside the sea (Acts 5:42, 16:13; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15,19; Col. 4:15; Phil. 2).

Each Church is to operate autonomously, free from centralised hierarchy, and the control of one man.

Each Church also has the right to self-governance within the bounds laid down by Christ and the early disciples. We will see that this is the model that is to be observed until Christ’s return.

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The disciples and early church continued to walk in the ways of our Lord in observing the Law of God (Mat. 5:17-19, cf. Rom. 3:31; 1Jn. 2:3-6; 1Cor. 11:1; Col. 2:16; cf. Jn. 14:15, 21).

​1Jn 5:2-3 (ASV) Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments.  (3)  For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

2Jn 1:6 BSB  And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the very commandment you have heard from the beginning, that you must walk in love.

They kept the food law and observed God’s Sabbaths, New Moons and Holy Days as found in the word of God (Lev.  Chap.11 & 23; Exod. 20; Deut. 16; Amos 8:5; Isa. 66:22-23; Num. 10:10; 28:11; 1Sam. 20:5; 2 Ki. 4:23; 1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4, 8:13, 33:3: Ezra 3:5; Ezek. 45:17, 46:1-6; Isa. 1:13, 66:23; Hos. 2:11; Neh. 10:33; Col. 2:16; Acts 11:1-18, cf. Isa. 66:15-17; Rev. 18:2; 1Jn. 3:4).

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The disciples and early Church kept the weekly (Saturday) sabbath (Acts 13:13-14, 42, 16:11-13, 17:2, 18:1-3).

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The disciples and the early Church kept God’s Holy days, feasts and New Moons (Lk. 23:56; Acts 2:1, 20:16, 27:9; 1Cor. 11:20-34, 1 Cor. 5:7, 1 Cor. 16:8; cf. Col. 2:16).

1. **What Are the Offices of the Church?**

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To be regarded as an Apostle of Christ, it was accepted that one had to have been given the call of God personally by Christ, taught by him directly, and seen him alive after his resurrection (Acts 1:17, 22, 25). The other office made available to the Church was elder and deacon (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

It was commonly understood that there were to be multiple elders in each respective Church, (given the eligibility). It is for this reason that when elders are referred to, it is usually in the plural (Acts. 11:30, 14:23, 15:4, 15:6, 15:22-23, 20:17, 20:28; 1Pet. 5:1).

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Titus 1:5 ERV I left you in Crete so that you could finish doing what still needed to be done. And I also left you there so that you could choose men to be elders in every town.

Elders of a Church are there to assist the brethren. They help keep the peace (Acts 15:1-2), pray for others (James 5:14), teach others (1Pet. 5:1-4) and lead by example. They should be able to feed the flock of God with a ready mind, and not for power, authority, control or monetary gain (1Pet. 5:3). It is not to be viewed as a glorified position, but as a serious undertaking before the Lord. Rather than seeking to be clothed in vanity, pride and the authority to exercise lordship over others, we should instead clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 13:14).

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​Elders are not granted the power and/or authority to oversee state, national, or international geographical areas. Nor was an elder given authority over another elder (cf. 3 Jn. 1: 9-11). Thus, this invalidates the concept of a 'governing body' or Board of Directors as having authority and oversight over the Church as a whole.

Elders were sometimes referred to as bishops, pastors, or overseers of the flock. Thus, the same rules apply in relation to the role of pastor or bishop as they do to the role of elder.

​When important decisions had to be made, everyone was part of the process.

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Act 15:22 EMTV  Then it seemed best to the apostles and the elders, together with the whole church, to send men being chosen from them to Antioch, together with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers. (Emphasis added)

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Not one letter written by the apostles to the early Churches singled out one person and addressed them as the sole leader of any church, anywhere, at any time. They addressed letters to the entire Church as a whole (Rom. 1:7; 3Jn. 1:9; 1Cor. 1:2).

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Rom. 1:7 ESV To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Our Lord instructs we should not even assign ourselves spiritual titles such as 'Rabbi' or 'Father.' One reason is that denotes spiritual superiority and sovereignty over others.

God placed His Son, Jesus, as the head of the church, and we are all to look to him as our leader and listen to him (Jn. 18:37; Mt. 17:5; 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18).

So, there are many parts, but only one body (1Cor. 12:20), and Christ is the head of the body (1Cor. 11:3).

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Let's not forget, the disciples, **BEFORE** they were converted, when they were amongst themselves, argued as to which of them was greater (Mk. 9:33-35). When left to themselves, their carnal mindset sought to establish a pecking order, i.e., a hierarchical order. Jesus, as we see, continually shut down this thought process, and instructed his followers that it will not be so among us (Lk. 22:24-27).

Mat. 20:25-28 LITV  But having called them, Jesus said, You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship over them, and the great ones exercise authority over them.  (26)  But it will not be so among you. But whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.  (27)  And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your servant;  (28)  Even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Christ came as a servant; one who serves, not one who is served (Isa. 42:1; Phil. 2:7; Mar. 10:43-45; Jn. 13:1-5). We are to instruct and build each other up as brothers and sisters in the faith. Scripture tells us to serve and submit to one another (Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:3; Rom. 12:10; Eph. 5:21; 1Thes. 5:11; Gal. 5:14).

Rom. 12:10 (ESV) Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour.

Arguing, playing politics, stacking boards, bullying or dominating people, removing people from positions who could not manipulated, seeking leadership and/or being unwilling to relinquish leadership, power, control, etc., all come from a carnal mindset. It is the spirit of this world.

1. **Make him King**

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There was a time in Christ's ministry that he perceived that the people were about to come and take him by force to make him king. But Christ withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

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Jn. 6:14-15 (ESV) When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" 15 Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

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Christ was not willing to accept the role of a King or leader of Israel, as a man, by the people, in this age. Neither did any of his disciples ever bring up the issue as to whether one of them should be appointed leader of the Church after Christ's ascension.

Christ could have easily placed the leadership of the Church in someone else's care, similar to when he placed his earthly mother in the care of John, just before his death (Jn. 19:27). It wasn’t an oversight by Christ that he did not leave one of his disciples in charge; it was done that way on purpose. It was to prevent men from arguing and contesting over the leadership as to who was the rightful leader. It was also to ensure that Christ alone was seen as our only leader here on earth. Jesus said that building or edifying the church is something he would do personally. Christ said: “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18).

Yet, despite these proofs, there are still men in the churches today who have appointed themselves the position, supposedly, the role of ‘leader of God’s Church’. And in doing so, have assigned themselves titles befitting of that position and responsibility. Some of those titles include Pastor General, Co-ordinator General, Chief General, Pope or President.

No one other than Christ can lay claim to the position of head of the Church on earth or in heaven (cf. Isa. 9:7; Phil. 2:9; 1Cor. 3:1-9).

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Mat. 28:18-20 NET Then Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven **and on earth has been given to me**.  (19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Emphasis added)

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​After the great commission of making disciples of all nations, through baptism, our Lord also said, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you". By issuing that statement, Christ was emphasising that he is not only the head of the Church, but remains the only leader of the Church here on Earth.

We must not be deaf to Christ's words to simply follow him (Mat. 4:19, 8:22, 10:38,16:24, 19:21; Jn. 10:27, 12:26).

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Christ also said, “*And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Christ is with each one of us. His abiding presence constitutes the continual role of our leader.

And 'always' does not mean only once he returns. Christ’s ascension into heaven did not annul his position as leader of the Church on Earth; it magnified it.

1. **Wanting to Be a Leader in the Early Church**

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We read that the Apostle John, in one of his letters, draws attention to one person who saw himself as a leader. It revealed how easily power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

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3Jn 1:9-11 GW  I wrote a letter to the congregation. But Diotrephes, who loves to be in charge, won't accept us.  (10)  For this reason, when I come I will bring up what he's doing. He's not satisfied with saying malicious things about us. He also refuses to accept the believers we send as guests. He even tries to stop others who want to accept them and attempts to throw those people out of the congregation.  (11)  Dear friend, never imitate evil, but imitate good. The person who does good is from God. The person who does evil has never seen God. (Emphasis added)

Similarly, to Diotrephes, many of us have also witnessed leaders of churches who have refused entry to some people, as well as barring others from fellowshipping with the group for questioning a false teaching or a doctrinal discrepancy. Some leaders have even kicked out persons, without even disclosing the reason why. The congregation is then warned not to talk to any who were unceremoniously removed. To our shame, many Churches operate under the delusion their inquiries and handling of issues are godly and righteous when in reality they are nothing more than a kangaroo court.

Spiritually, this rejection of John still takes place today by those who make themselves the leader of a Church or are appointed to that position. These 'leaders' still refuse to accept John (or any of the other apostles, even Christ himself), by their refusal to listen to their instructions as to how the Church is to function.

2Ti 3:16-17 MKJV All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

The Apostle Paul states we are all God's fellow workers (1Cor. 3:9). We should recognise that by following a man or an organisation we are still of the flesh.

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1Cor. 3:2-5 (ESV)  I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,  (3)  for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?  (4)  For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?  (5)  What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. (Emphasis added)

1Cor. 3:11 ESV  For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1. **Kingdom Not of This World**

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Christ, when he was on trial, said plainly, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" and "...*my kingdom is not from the world*".

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Jn. 18:36 (ESV) Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” (Emphasis added)

Many of God's people have failed to grasp that once we incorporate a Church, it now becomes part *of this world* and *from the world*. It is now party to a contract, be it, a (working) relationship with this state, and in turn, under the authority of Satan, who is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

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1. **Thy Kingdom Come**

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The model prayer Christ gave is yet another example that the Church is not to establish a centralised power base with a hierarchical power structure (Mat. 6:10; Lk. 11:2).

Note, it begins off with, "... ***Thy*** *Kingdom come,* ***Your*** *will be done*...".

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"*Thy Kingdom Come*". This implies a choice. We see from Cain that man would establish his own version of the Kingdom of God that would compete for the hearts and minds of men with respect to eternal salvation. And how would one make the distinction between the Kingdom of God that our Heavenly Father is about to introduce and the one that man has already done so? The answer: Truth; which by necessity, incorporates His timing (2Sam. 7:28; Ps. 119:160; Jn. 17:17; cf. Jn. 15:3; Eph. 6:12).

The model prayer is to govern our thinking all the way to at least the return of Christ. That means the only kingdom we should be looking forward to is the one that God alone will implement, most notably, when His Son returns.

Christ is instilling in us, that a working model or organisational representation of the Kingdom of God **cannot** be established before his return.

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Mat. 12:50 ESV  For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

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If we try to supersede God's timing in this matter, we then no longer abide and submit to the Father and His "Will be done". We now follow our own will, becoming self-willed (cf. Acts 13:22; 1Jn. 2:17; Esp. 6:6).  Inessence, it is the same spirit of pride and rebellion that Satan displayed when he sought to raise his throne above all the angelic beings, that includes Christ, and make himself like the One True God, the Most High.

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Isa 14:12-14 BSB  How you have fallen from heaven, O day star, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the ground, O destroyer of nations.  (13)  You said in your heart: “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of assembly, in the far reaches of the north.  (14)  I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

We see that in the same way, all religious organisations, associations etc., attempt to ascend to the throne room of heaven. Many have claimed they are the ones that people must join, seeing themselves as having power, authority and legitimacy from on high. In doing so, they have literally attempted to raise the thrones they have made for themselves above the stars of God, including Christ. In creating their own kingdom, along with establishing their own ruler on earth, with doctrines and calendars to match, they have made themselves like the Most High in executing power and defining truth. It is truly one of the greatest deceptions Satan has pulled over the Church.

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We should also see the correlation between wanting to establish a working organisational model of the Church now, to that of Korah's rebellion (Num. Chap. 16).

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Jud 1:10-11 CEV  But these people insult powers they don't know anything about. They are like senseless animals that end up getting destroyed, because they live only by their feelings.  (11)  Now they are in for real trouble. They have followed Cain's example and have made the same mistake that Balaam did by caring only for money. They have also rebelled against God, just as Korah did. Because of all this, they will be destroyed.

Like Korah before them, in wanting to overthrow God's servant, Moses, who was a forerunner of Christ, those who participate and/or promote religious organisations are guilty of the same sin, and thus, can be characterised as being part of the spiritual household of Korah.  It is worth reading the entire letter written by Jude, as he addresses this great falling away from the faith, and our need to keep the faith and defend it.

Do not be deceived; the day of Christ has not come, that is, operationally, when we are gathered together under one centralised working model of the kingdom of God. Fundamentally, that is the message religious organisations try to convey.

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2Th 2:1-3 BSB  Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers,  (2)  not to be easily disconcerted or alarmed by any spirit or message or letter seeming to be from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord has already come.  (3)  Let no one deceive you in any way, for it will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness—the son of destruction—is revealed.

1. **The Call to Patiently Endure**

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When we incorporate a Church with the State so as to be able to claim legal indemnities and other benefits for example, or when we elect a leader or establish a centralised (global in some cases) hierarchy, to say that lacks faith, is putting it mildly. By doing this, the Church is repeating the same sin that Ancient Israel committed while waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain (Exod. 32).

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Exod. 32:1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”

​We see Moses' authority and pivotal role as the leader his did not last long once he left the presence of the congregation. In his absence, Ancient Israel began to stir and demanded that an image of God be made that they could see and identify, going before them, to give them confidence and courage. To accomplish this, Ancient Israel sought Aaron, who was a representative of the ministry.

Aaron told everyone to bring their golden earrings and give them to him, which they did. He then fashioned a golden calf (Exod. 32:2-4). The intention of the calf was not to be viewed as another God per se, merely a symbol of Him.

Earrings attach to one's ears, hence they represented what they heard and understood. Thus, the golden earrings that Ancient Israel provided symbolised their version of hearing the word of God and His commandments (cf. Ps. 12:6,19:9-11; 119:127; Rev. 21:21). The problem was their gold, (i.e., understanding), was from Egypt, and was refined by man, in a fire that man had lit. It was not the pure gold of the word of God that the Lord tells us to buy from him (cf. Ps. 12:6,19:9-11; 119:127; Rev. 21:21).

Rev 3:18 (ESV) I counsel you to buy **from me gold** refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. (Emphasis added)

Prov. 23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Similarly, in waiting for Christ to return from the figurative mountain of God, the Church has also sought out the ministry to make for themselves figurative ‘god’(s) made out of gold that would also go before them.

Today, the golden calf the ministry has constructed, at the behest and support of the congregation of spiritual Israel, is what we have come all to know as **religious organisations**.

Just like Ancient Israel, the Church wants something that they too can see, giving them confidence, surety, security, and a focal point of operations. In doing this, the Church did not want to make or establish a new God. They merely wanted an image of God’s Kingdom and Christ's presence leading them on earth.

In the construction of their symbolic golden calf, the Church has also used the same impure gold, specifically, a corruption of the word and commandments of God and the teachings of Christ that we acquired from our time in spiritual Egypt and the world at large, and inherited from our spiritual forefathers.

1 Cor. 3:11-13 For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using **gold**, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw 13 his workmanship will be evident, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed **with fire**, and **the fire** will prove the quality of each man’s work. (Emphasis added)

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1Pe 1:17-19 BSB  Since you call on a Father who judges each one’s work impartially, conduct yourselves in reverent fear **during your stay as foreigners**.  (18)  For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver **or gold** **that you were redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your forefathers**,  (19)  but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot. (Emphasis added)

Congregations have also contributed their time, tithes, and offerings to its construction. The ministry has figuratively melted down, moulded and engraved their idol according to their own beliefs and doctrines (cf. Exod. 32:4).

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1. **​In Spirit and In Truth**

The true Church of God is not identified with any organisation or denomination; it is made up of individuals who have been called out from among them to worship God in spirit and truth, for this is the type of worshippers God is seeking.

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​Jn. 4:19-24 (ESV) The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.  (20)  Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”  (21)  Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.  (22)  You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.  (23)  But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.  (24)  God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Christ says those who would worship God would neither worship on '*this mountain nor in Jerusalem*'. This is very interesting because biblically, mountains are symbolic of kingdoms, governance, power, strength, and immovability (Isa. 2:3; Rev. 17:9).

Added to this is that Christ only addressed her as, 'woman'. Thus, we may conclude that Christ is also getting us, the Church, to consider what is being spoken of from a spiritual standpoint. Biblically, a woman is a symbol of the Church (Gen. 37:6-10; Pro. 31; Jer. 6:2; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23; Rev. 12, 19:7).

Thus, the spiritual message we can construe is that those whom we follow(ed) and look(ed) up to as spiritual guides, ‘*our* *fathers*' so to speak, all worship(ed) on their own religious mountain, i.e., religious organisation. Christ is showing us that we are not to get caught up in that type of thinking, where we debate as to which mountain, which in this case, symbolises an organisation, we are to belong to and worship with.

Christ tells us that a reason he came was to create division, namely with the sword of truth (Mat. 12:34; cf. Rev. 6:4). He would cause a separation between us, and our (spiritual) fathers, i.e., leaders of organisations that includes their ministry.  This then expands to include Churches (symbolic of daughters) as a whole. One of Christ’s roles is to separate us from our spiritual mothers, namely, the harlot religious organisations we were either born into or joined.

Lk. 12:51-53 ESV  Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.  (52)  For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.  (53)  They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

 God is spirit, and those who worship Him, MUST worship in spirit and “in truth”. Christ is making it plain that the true worshippers will be outside the bounds of religious organisations because they (organisations), “*are of this world*”, and “*from this world*”. They are purely the construct of man, established on a Babylonian-Egyptian hierarchy, having elected one of their own, in place of Christ, to be head of his Church on Earth. God does not ordain these structures, nor do they play any part in His plan of salvation, as we will discover.

Most organisations today, in relation to how they determine God’s calendar, have chosen to still worship, as it were, on the mountain of Jerusalem. Many organisations use what is referred to as the Hillel Calendar. Another calendar, which has gained some traction, is known as the ‘temple calendar’. Both calendars determine the first of each month according to the astronomical sign of the new moon, according to the ‘physical mountain’ of Jerusalem.

Thus, this decision, in some instances, requires some to forego or postpone their local astronomical new moon so as to have the same calendar day for the first day of the month as Jerusalem. This, by necessity, creates two calendars. There are now those who observe the local astronomical new moons for the determination of the first day of the month and those who don’t. This is simply another ‘golden calf’ or ‘god’ the congregation demanded of its ministry to ‘*make*’.

They do not understand that God’s calendar is to be observed the same way, by everyone, everywhere. God established only one calendar for all humanity, and there are no choices or options in this matter. There aren’t multiple versions of the truth, faith, or body of Christ.

Eph 4:4-6 (ESV)  There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the **one hope** that belongs to your call—  (5)  **one Lord**, **one faith**, one baptism,  (6)  one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Emphasis added)

The body of Christ is no longer tied to the physical temple in Jerusalem. As members of the body of Christ, we are the Temple of God (1Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). Therefore, each person not only has the right, but the duty to determine the start and end of each day, weekly Sabbath, **and** the start of each month by their local astronomical signs.

1 Cor. 3:16-17 KJV  Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?  (17)  If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

If any person defiles the temple of God, which we are, by observing a false calendar, such as the ‘*Temple Calendar’* or ‘*Hillel Calendar’*, God shall remove that person. See the paper, [*'God’s Biblical Calendar–Understanding how to determine God's day, months and the first day of the year*](https://editor.wix.com/html/editor/web/renderer/render/document/87573a6c-7825-47b5-97b8-654bf454de25/determining-the-biblical-new-moon)*'*.

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1. **These Are Your Gods, O Israel**

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As soon as the golden calf was constructed, the congregation of Ancient Israel said, ‘*These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’*

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Exod. 32:4 ESV  And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” (Emphasis added)

​In like manner, the congregation of spiritual Israel, pay similar homage to their idol, that is, the organisation, and the doctrines and calendar it has created. It tributes its leadership, doctrines and calendar are what led them up out of the land of spiritual Egypt and spiritual bondage.

​The leader of their organisation is merely an “image” or “replacement” for Christ that the people yearn for, be it, consciously or subconsciously. Thus, their leader becomes someone they can see, talk to, hear, and touch. He is the one who goes before them, with whom they have put their faith and trust to secure victory.

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Aaron, (representing the priesthood) compounded the sin by building an altar before the golden calf and then proclaimed a feast the next day.

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 Exod. 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.”

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​The ministry today, in just the same way, when they gaze upon the organisation they have built, is moved to build a figurative altar before it, where people are not only expected to lay their tithes and offerings before it but also their loyalty.

And in a similar manner, the ministry today also takes it upon itself to proclaim when a feast to the Lord is to be observed, rather than adhere to the Word of God. Thus, as a consequence of this idolatry, God will not allow His holy Calendar to be used in conjunction with any golden calf. See the paper, 'God’s Biblical Calendar–Understanding how to determine God's day, months and the first day of the year'.

1. **Yearning For Egypt**

It wasn’t long even after their exodus from physical bondage that the nation of Israel opposed Moses and wanted to appoint their own leader to take them back to Egypt.

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Num. 14:3-4 NET Why has the LORD brought us into this land only to be killed by the sword, that our wives and our children should become plunder? Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?”  (4)  So they said to one another, “Let’s appoint a leader and return to Egypt.” (Emphasis added)

We can draw parallels to the way physical Israel refused to follow Moses and how spiritual Israel, the Church, refuses to follow Christ today.

The Church has done exactly the same as their forefathers did, in that they have appointed for themselves a leader, and in doing so, returned to spiritual Egypt. But what does that mean?

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When we look at the spiritual state of Churches today, we see that they have more or less taken on an Egyptian identity. Just like Egypt had a Pharaoh to rule them, Churches elect a leader to oversee their operations. They also use a similar hierarchical power of control and order. Pharaoh was considered a god, and in like manner, a great deal of Churches believe that their leader is the closest thing to a deity, with many professing their leader is the last great prophet. In most cases, their authority, legitimacy, and power are viewed as being given directly by God. And like the Pharaohs of old, the words of their Church leader are considered the absolute authority. Thus, questioning the leader was akin to questioning God.

And like the Kings of the past, leaders today also like to build monuments and legacies highlighting their achievements. A great deal of time, effort, money and resources go back into expanding the organisation (i.e., kingdom), they have set up and/or over-see.

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1. **Tax Deductions for the House of God?**

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Let's be clear; God does not want His Church to seek a tax-exemption status from the state or be able to claim deductions on tithes and/or offerings. The House of God is a house of prayer, not a house of business.

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Mat. 21:13 (MKJV)  And He said to them, It is written, "My house shall be called the house of prayer"; but you have made it a den of thieves.

We, as the Church, spiritually, make up the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1Cor. 10:17, 12:27; Eph. 4:12; Heb. 13:3). From Christ's example, the Church should uphold and demonstrate the utmost reverence for God in His House. We are not to profane God's Temple with money dealings, such as claiming tax exemptions or tax deductions on tithes from the state. Christ did not lay down his life so we could profit from him.

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Satan is at the ready to offer financial incentives in the form of tax deductions or exemptions to anyone who is willing to betray Christ to him via the State. This deception is so calculating, so subtle, that those claiming the deduction see it as a benefit of following him, and are blind to the severity of its betrayal.

This mindset is spiritually more inclined to Judas Iscariot, as it has nothing to do with our Lord and Master.

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Mar. 14:10-11 KJV-BRG  And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.  (11) And when they heard it, they were glad, **and promised to give him money**. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him. (Emphasis added)

It should be disturbing to us to see how unmoved the church is with regards to selling out Messiah, and everything he lives and died for, to the state, and all for the lordly price of a few pieces of silver in deductions (Matthew 26: 14 and 15, compare, Zachariah 11 verse 13). Do not be deceived; God is not mocked (Galatians 6 verse 7).

Our Heavenly Father does not look favourably on us having that type of friendship with the world (2 Cor. 6:14; 1Pet. 5:8; Mat. 6:24, 7:13-14).

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Jas. 4:4 (ERV) **You people are not faithful to God**! You should know that loving what the world has is the same as hating God. So **anyone** who wants to be friends with this evil world becomes God's enemy. (Emphasis added)

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Christ, who is at our head, established the Church. Thus, no man has the right to go beyond what Christ established, and take control and register his spiritual body with the state (1 Cor. 11:3).

Every one of these 'plants' that our heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted (Mat. 15:13; Ps. 127:1).

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1. **God's Kingdom Does Not Come with Observation**

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The Pharisees questioned Christ as to when the Kingdom of God would appear.

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Lk. 17:20-21 (LSV) And having been questioned by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God comes, He answered them and said, “The Kingdom of God does not come with observation; (21) nor will they say, Behold, here; or behold, there; for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.” (Emphasis added)

Christ stated, '*The kingdom of God does not come with observation"*. It is not, and cannot be, an incorporated body that one can point to and say, "Behold, so and so organisation is "THE" Church and it’s headed up by Mr so and so'.

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What we should take away from this statement, at the very least, is that no Church organisation may claim it is an operational representation of the Kingdom of God now and that somehow, it is merely holding the reins until Christ returns.

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Scripture tells us that God does not dwell in temples made with hands.

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Acts 7:48-51 MKJV  But, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says,  (49)  "Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. What house will you build Me, says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest?  (50)  Has not My hand made all these things?"  (51)  O stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so you do. (Emphasis added)

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1. **Christ Refused Power and Authority in This Age**

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The devil showed Christ all the kingdoms '*of this world*' and their glory and offered them all to him on the condition he fall down and worship him.

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Mat 4:8-10 (ESV) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.  (9) And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”  (10) Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” (Emphasis added)

Satan offered Christ a shortcut to power, position, and glory without having to go through any more trials, perfecting, or even death (Heb. 5:9).

Christ rejected every opportunity for sinful gain, power, or advancement in this age. We, like Christ, must also wait on our God to commence His Kingdom. Upon our resurrection and conversion, will likely be when our place and position will be revealed to us. Even Christ said to the mother and her two sons born to Zebedee that to sit at his right and his left hand is not his to give, but to those for whom it was prepared by his Father (Mat. 20:20-23).

What many people don't realise is that the temptation to offer Christ the Kingdoms of the World did not end there. The devil still offers up the same temptation to the Church, the body of Christ, to this very day. Though today, we no longer refer to them as kingdoms; they are more commonly referred to as religious organisations.

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For many, the temptation to be part of a kingdom (i.e., religious organisation), and in some cases, exercise power and authority in them now, is just too hard to resist.

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Rev. 14:12 ESV Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God **and their faith in Jesus**. (Emphasis added)

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The Church, as the body of Christ, should understand that we, too, will be tested similarly to that of our Lord. We, like Christ, have been called to resist accepting power and authority from Satan, in this age. We have been called to patiently endure, keep the commandments of God, and keep our faith in Jesus. The only office we should be looking forward is in the kingdom to come, with Christ.

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Satan has deceived the Church into thinking it can and/or should establish an image of the Kingdom of God now, one earth, without having to wait on the Lord God to send Christ. Like Jesus, we are all being tested as to whether or not we, too, are willing to wait patiently on God's promises and timing.

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Psa. 110:1 (ESV) A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” (Emphasis added)

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1. **Moses Walked Away From Riches**

Moses, too, was a perfect example of one who was willing to walk away from the riches, power and prestige that Egypt (a symbol of religious organisations) offered.

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Heb. 11:24-27 BSB  By faith Moses, when he was grown, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.  (25)  He chose to suffer oppression with God’s people rather than to experience the fleeting enjoyment of sin.  (26)  He valued disgrace for Christ above the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his reward.  (27)  By faith Moses left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible. (Emphasis added)

By faith, when Moses was grown, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It appears that there may be more to this statement than meets the eye.

Once we accept that Pharaoh (and Egypt, which he ruled), are symbolic of religious organisations today, his daughter is symbolically represents a branch or off-shoot of that organisation. It parallels the woman who rides the beasts and is referred to as the Mother of harlots (Rev. 17:5). Her daughters, in like manner, are merely off-shoot religious organisations. They too use, like their mother, also use a Babylonian centralised hierarchical power structure, electing one man to rule over their entire Church-in place of Christ, and using man-made calendars, etc.

To differentiate one daughter from another, they merely register different names for their organisations and titles for their leaders, such as President, Pastor General, Co-ordinator General, etc. And like their mother, many leaders are given extraordinary power and do so as they see fit, with little, or no oversight.  Thus, they are rightly referred to as harlots.

Today, if we are to spiritually modernise the statement, 'By faith when Moses was grown, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter', we could deduce that Moses was an example of someone, who, once they had spiritually matured, began to walk by faith, and as a result, was no longer willing to be identified as a member of his former religious organisation.

Today, when two people meet and discuss religion, the first thing that is established is what organisation each one belongs to. This is to identify their brand or mark. Moses, as we see, wanted none of that.

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It was also by faith that Moses left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. How many people would be willing to do the same today? It has gotten to the point where people in organisations are literally brainwashed into believing that they cannot make it on their own outside the walls of their respective organisations. That if they dare leave the organisation, they are somehow no longer part of the body of Christ; that their salvation is lost, and can only be found by returning and submitting to the organisation and its leader, who is considered the closest thing to Christ. Thus, rejecting the leader is seen as rejecting Christ.

Many of those who have been kicked out or removed from religious organisations are viewed as nobodies, lost, without identity, and in some cases, a disgrace. Yet Moses shows us that he valued disgrace for Christ above the treasures of Egypt, for he looked ahead to his reward.

1. **The Wealthy Young Man**

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Similarly, to Ancient Egypt, many organisations today have riches or treasures that attract a lot of people to them. They build walls to insulate themselves and have an abundance of spiritual food on offer in the form of booklets, magazines, sermons, videos, teaching lessons, etc., that no one ever has to go hungry or go searching for again. All the hard work is done for them, and delivered to their door, literally. We also note that some organisations pay their ministry handsomely.

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The treasures of some religious organisations also extend to owning grand halls, media networks and other social programs, e.g., schools.

Some view the sheer number of people that belong to the organisation as a reflection of its wealth. For this reason, they attract people who long for a sense of inclusion and community. Some join in with their Feasts and festivities, despite the fact they do not agree with their doctrines.

In many ways, being asked to leave any or all these riches parallels the young, rich man with whom Christ asked to sell his property and come, and follow him (Mar. 10:17-22). Interestingly, Luke notes him to be a 'ruler' (Lk.18:18-23).

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Mat. 19:16-24 (LITV) And, behold, coming near, one said to Him, Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?  (17)  And He said to him, Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One, God! But if you desire to enter into life, keep the commandments.  (18)  He said to Him, Which? And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor bear false witness, 19  honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (20)  The young man said to Him, All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?  (21)  Jesus said to him, If you desire to be perfect, go sell your property and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me.  (22)  But having heard the Word, being grieved, the young man went away, for he had many possessions.  (23)  And Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven.  (24)  And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. (Emphasis added)

Symbolically, the wealth or property spoken of today could be the stake people have in their organisation. It could be in the security, community, and *confidence* it provides. Many have invested years, even decades, in building relationships, friendships, reputations, positions of power and authority, as well as a wealth of knowledge in relation to what their organisation preaches. Sadly, there would not be many who would be willing to part with all these to follow Christ. The thought of having to start all over again, of having to question everything they know, to learn and unlearn things, often in isolation, and on their own, for many, is too high a price to pay.

No doubt, there will be those who will read this study and, having learnt what organisations symbolise, will be grieved, yet still go their own way.

Christ tells us our focus should not be to store up treasures for ourselves on Earth. Instead, he tells us to store up treasures for ourselves in heaven, where they can’t be destroyed or stolen. Our hearts will be where our treasure is. We cannot serve God and wealth (Mat. 6:19-24). Interestingly, the word wealth (SGD 3126) is most often translated as mammon. It means *confidence*, (figurative wealth, personified), the same type of confidence people have in their organisation.

1. **Abraham Looked Forward to Spiritual Jerusalem**

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Abraham, upon hearing the call, obeyed to go forth to a place in which he did not know where he was going. By faith, he resided as a foreigner, in a land of promise, living in tents.

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Heb. 11:8-10 LITV Having been called out by faith, Abraham obeyed to go forth to a place which he was going to receive for an inheritance; and he went out not understanding where he went.  (9)  By faith he resided as a foreigner in a land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the joint-heirs of the same promise; (10) for he looked forward to a city having the foundations of which the builder and maker is God.

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Even after Abraham arrived in the promised land, he remained a tent dweller. He didn’t establish his own city or take one over. He did not require people's tithes and offerings to be given to him, and then spend them as he saw fit. That's what was taking place in Babylon and Egypt. These are just some reasons why God called Abraham out of Babylon and calls us out of spiritual Babylon/Egypt today.

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We should make a note that once Abraham reached the promised land, he never entered another city built by a man again. That has profound spiritual significance for us today.

Abraham, along with his son and grandson, all lived in tents. Even our Lord did not have a permanent place he called home once he commenced his ministry (Mat. 8:20). It is to demonstrate that we are to be content merely being spiritual sojourners in this world and that we are to resist establishing any sort of religious governmental headquarters, i.e., organisations, associations, etc. Where two or three are gathered together in his name, Christ is in their midst (Mat. 18:20). As we can see, it is not dependent on being a member of any organisation.

1. **Nimrod**

Let us also contemplate that out of all the mighty leaders that led the many cities in Ancient Babylon who sought to 'make a name for themselves', history does not recall any of them, apart from Nimrod. He is only mentioned because he is the father of what we know today as organisations on a grand scale.

Nimrod developed a brand of theology that would go far and wide, hunting men down, so to speak. He captured and subjugated a great many people to his religion. This was in direct violation and opposition to the Lord.

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Gen 10:8-12 (BSB)  Cush was the father of Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one on the earth.  (9)  He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; so it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD.”(10)  His kingdom began in Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.  (11)  From that land he went forth into Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah,  (12)  and Resen, which is between Nineveh and the great city of Calah. (Emphasis added)

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​The name Nimrod literally means ‘rebel’ or ‘to rebel’. Thus, it is safe to say, he was the first man to lead humanity in a worldwide Church of (rebellion against) God. His method and style of holding mankind in spiritual captivity became the model for all others to follow. We could say he became a ‘giant’ amongst men, in status, power and influence.

Nimrod may have seen the construction of most or all the cities he established, but it appears scripture is pointing to the fact that it was his method and message of lawlessness against the Most High that is the true focal point.

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It also appears Scripture wants us to view Nimrod as more than one man. We could deduce that we are to look at Nimrod as the symbolic figurehead of a specific type of spiritual movement.

Thus, the spirit of Nimrod appears to be leading all those today who continue in his worldwide quest to subjugate man to a centralised hierarchical religious ideology under one man. To put it bluntly, his kingdoms have now mutated into what we know as religious corporations, organisations, associations, etc.

It is evident that Nimrod’s system would last all the way to the end of this age, culminating in the religious ‘Beast’ system of Revelation chapter 13 operating today.

Symbolically, Nimrod’s rebellion has not only continued, but it has reached the point where it has enveloped the entire world. His seed number in the tens of thousands; all of whom perpetuate his method of hunting men down and holding them captive. Collectively they can be viewed as one man. There are many examples where a body of people is viewed as one man, figuratively, in scripture (cf. Num. 14:15; Jud. 6:16, 20:1,8,11; 1 Sam. 11:7; 2 Sam. 19:14; Ezra 3:1; Neh. 8:1).

This may well help reveal the true identity of the ‘man of lawlessness’. The man of lawlessness may not be one man after all, but a representation of all those who follow the model of Nimrod in subduing man to his form of rebellion via his modern kingdoms, i.e., religious organisations, corporations and the like.

2 Thes. 2:3 (NIV) Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.4 He will oppose and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship. So he will seat himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

We are told ‘Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way’. This is comparable to Christ’s word,

Mat 24:4-5 (BSB) Jesus answered, “See to it that no one deceives you.  (5) For many will come in My name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.

The rebellion that is spoken of to occur may well be the uptake of Churches following the Babylonian model of a global hierarchical power structure that Nimrod first established. This involves men governing from a centralised power, and attaining power and authority over mankind that spans nationally and internationally. Sitting on top of all this rebellion is one man, the one identified as its leader, here on earth. They think to change the times and laws by following their man-made calendars and doctrines (Dan. 7:25).

Thus, each leader inherently takes on the mark of ‘the man of lawlessness’ by default. It is an apt description of any man who dares take on the role and position of Christ as leader of his Church here on earth. Their word holds more sway than the Word of God. Some would like to deny this claim, but history has shown, for anyone who dares question one of their false doctrines, it is not long until they are unceremoniously removed from the congregation. And because of this power that the leader wields, the congregation sit there in silence, fearing if they do speak up, the same fate awaits them.

And just as it is written that the man of sin seats himself in the temple of God, each of these lawless men also takes the top seat, so to speak, in the spiritual temple of God, that is, the Church. And in doing so, fulfill Christ’s word, claiming they are (the body of) Christ, having deceived many.

For those who have ears to hear, these men declare themselves to be God. They do so by the power they wield. They have the power to determine who stays or goes, what is considered true and what is not, and what is to be obeyed and adhered to and what is not. This power and authority is reserved for God.

1. **The Babylonian Influence**

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Hopefully, we have started to grasp how establishing a working representation of the Kingdom of God, now, is nothing more than playing right into the hands of Satan.

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When we delve into the origins of religious organisations, we actually find they originated in Babylon. We will see that the building of these (spiritual) towers has not stopped. In fact, one could say business is booming.

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Gen. 11:1-4 ESV Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.  (2)  And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.  (3)  And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.  (4)  Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

We see just as the people then were of one language, today it is reflected in the way (mainstream) Christianity uses the Bible as their source of religious language. Every organisation uses the same scriptures, words, phrases, themes etc., such as faith, Sabbath, obedience, Law, and baptism, though each one applies its own interpretation and application.

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The people, in wanting to seek a flat plain in the land of Shinar, are akin to splinter groups today that seek a fresh start, a clean slate, so to speak. There are many reasons for this, such as being disgruntled as to how their former organisation was being led, or the person leading it, or how its funds were being (mis)managed, and/or the lack of transparency, or how badly people were being treated. The list goes on and on.

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The people of Babylon said to themselves, '*Let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly*.' Similarly, people today still turn to themselves, rather than turning to God for His guidance, instructions, and commandments. And to this very day, people are still making their own doctrinal bricks, with inferior human reasoning, burning them thoroughly, so as try and make their doctrines eternal.

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Once a group today has made enough doctrinal bricks, they again turn to themselves and say, let us build for ourselves a city, that is, an organisation. The towers that they wish to build all the way into heaven (i.e., the throne room of power and authority of God), is nothing more than a power grab for the authority of God here on earth. Upon reaching heaven, figuratively, they also believe they become the vehicle in which people are able to attain eternal life, specifically, the first resurrection.

And to this very day, these same people are still trying to make a "*name for themselves*". The most common way today of doing this is by registering their organisation with the State. This usually involves choosing a name that implies they are the 'Church of God' or the 'body of Christ', magnifying their legitimacy in the eyes of others.

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We also note that just like the people of Ancient Babylon, people today still do not want to be dispersed over the face of the earth. Like their forefathers, people today go about and elect their "mightiest hunter" to be their leader. They then follow suit and establish a centralised power base. Soon enough, everyone falls in line and concedes to submit to the leader's authority. If anyone disagrees with the leader or questions his decisions, it is not long before they find themselves removed unceremoniously.

We read in Genesis that the Lord had to come down from heaven to see the city and the tower "that the people had started building".

Gen. 11:5-9 (NET)  But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the people had started building.  (6)  And the LORD said, “If as one people all sharing a common language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be beyond them.  (7)  Come, let’s go down and confuse their language so they won’t be able to understand each other.”  (8)  So the LORD scattered them from there across the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building the city.  (9)  That is why its name was called Babel – because there the LORD confused the language of the entire world, and from there the LORD scattered them across the face of the entire earth. (Emphasis added)

We note that the Lord had to come down from heaven to see the city and the tower that the people had started building. This highlights the fact that God nor His Son were part of the development or building stage of their city. What we can take from this is that no organisation then up till now has ever reached the pinnacle of heaven, so to speak, in regard to attaining recognition, legitimacy, power, or authority from the throne room of Almighty God. Even after all they accomplished, and created, they are eventually scattered to the four winds and came to naught.  Their crowns hold no claim or validity.

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The building of towers and cities still goes on today. For those who take part in spiritual Babylon, we can perceive that God still confuses their language, specifically regarding truth and salvation. That is a reason why so many organisations are not able to understand one another. They all have their own "language" so to speak, i.e., doctrines, calendars, observances, traditions etc., that they themselves understand clearly. But as soon as they talk to someone from another organisation, they have trouble understanding them! That is why, for some, listening to someone from another organisation all sounds like gibberish.

It is this spiritual environment God called Abraham to leave behind. It is no accident that the calling of Abraham begins in the next chapter.

1. **Cain – The First Anti-Christ**

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Briefly, if we recall, Cain, not long after having just killed his own brother and denied any knowledge of his whereabouts, is graciously offered redemption on the proviso he submits to God, and accepts Christ as his Lord and Saviour (Gen. 4:12-17).

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But rather than accept a sojourner's life, Cain was the first man to openly leave the presence of the Lord and establish a city (Gen.4:16,17). But this was no ordinary city. This was likely an attempt to emulate God's Kingdom, which the Lord undoubtedly had spoken to him and the rest of his family about.

There, in his own city, Cain could govern as he pleased. In his city, Cain could determine what sacrifice would be "acceptable" or not. He became the god of his universe, answerable to no one.

Thus, Cain became his own personal saviour and a saviour to all those who followed him in his brand of religion (Mat. 24:4-5).

In short, Cain was the first man to openly declare to be of anti-Christ. The spirit of anti-Christ is one who is in opposition to, or puts himself in the place of Christ. In doing what he did, Cain denied Christ as Saviour, and rightful leader of the Church, as the head of every man and woman. It is also a denial of the supremacy of the God Most High, who has provided salvation in and through His Son, Jesus our Lord (1Jn. 2:22).

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We are to be yoked to Christ, and not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. This concept also extends to include men's religious organisations. We are to remain undefiled. As the temple of the living God, we must come out from among them, be separate, and not touch any unclean thing.  If we do not to touch the unclean thing, God will receive us.

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2 Cor. 6:14-18 (MKJV) Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship does righteousness have with lawlessness? And what partnership does light have with darkness?  (15)  And what agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever?  (16)  And what agreement does a temple of God have with idols? For you are the temple of the living God, as God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."  (17) Therefore come out from among them and be separated, says the Lord, and do not touch the unclean thing. And I will receive you (18) and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (Emphasis added)

Once we reject Christ, and yoke yourselves to a city of Cain or Kingdom of Nimrod, we too, become anti-Christ, be it individually or collectively. We must remain spiritual foreigners, like Abraham, our spiritual forefather.

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1. **Remain Undefiled**

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As mentioned before, a woman in scripture is symbolic of a church, be it good or bad. Thus, we must be mindful not to be defiled by these types of religious organisations that are committing spiritual adultery with Satan, thereby rejecting Christ as their saviour. The only way to remain a spiritual virgin is to follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

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Rev. 14:4 KJV These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. (Emphasis added)

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1. ​**Do Not Make for Yourself Idols**

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The Third Commandment tells us not to build for ourselves images that are in heaven above or the earth below (Exod. 20:4). Establishing a version of the Kingdom of God, now, on earth, no matter how good one believes their intentions are, is just that, an image of the Kingdom God will implement on the return of Christ. Thus, it becomes an idol. And in doing so, takes the Lord's name in vain (Exod. 20:7), usurping the power, timing and position of both God and His Son.

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When we compare how the church functions today, compared to the people of Abraham's time, or Ancient Israel, we see that we have not progressed as far as we might like to think.

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Because so many churches today have followed the model Cain has set up, God has done what He forewarned and has taken them back to (spiritual) Shinar. The problem is they cannot see it.

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Zech. 5:1-11 (CEV) When I looked the next time, I saw a flying scroll,  (2)  and the angel asked, "What do you see?" "A flying scroll," I answered. "About thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide."  (3)  Then he told me: This scroll puts a curse on everyone in the land who steals or tells lies. The writing on one side tells about the destruction of those who steal, while the writing on the other side tells about the destruction of those who lie.  (4)  The LORD All-Powerful has said, "I am sending this scroll into the house of everyone who is a robber or tells lies in my name, and it will remain there until every piece of wood and stone in that house crumbles."  (5)  Now the angel who was there to explain the visions came over and said, "Look up and tell me what you see coming."  (6)  "I don't know what it is," was my reply. "It's a big basket," he said. "And it shows what everyone in the land has in mind."  (7)  The lead cover of the basket was opened, and in the basket was a woman.  (8)  "This woman represents evil," the angel explained. Then he threw her back into the basket and slammed the heavy cover down tight.  (9)  Right after this I saw two women coming through the sky like storks with wings outstretched in the wind. Suddenly they lifted the basket into the air,  (10)  and I asked the angel, "Where are they taking the basket?"  (11)  "To Babylonia," he answered, "where they will build a house for the basket and set it down inside."

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This scroll is spiritually in the midst of every religious organisation today. And there is no one to blame for this except ourselves. We, individually and collectively, have brought this upon ourselves, because we have followed in the ways of Cain. This punishment is just. And it will be painful indeed. The pain will be so bad it will pierce our heart. (cf. Mat. 8:12, 24:50-51, Jer. 13:25, cf. Mat. 22:1-14).

We have all spent time in spiritual Egypt and Babylon. During the time of our spiritual captivity, God used it to refine us. But we are by no means to remain in Babylon, under the yoke of man, enslaved, paying tribute, in the form of tithes and offerings to grow and expand a man's Kingdom, that is in rebellion against God.

Rev. 18:4-5 LITV  And I heard another voice out of Heaven saying, My people, come out of her, that you may not share in her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues;  (5)  because her sins joined together, even up to Heaven, and God remembered her unjust deeds.

God wants us to come out of these Babylonian-stylised religious organisations with a shout of joy, and declare that He has redeemed His servant Jacob (Isa. 48:12-22).

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1. **He Who Has an Ear Let Him Hear**

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Today, we see incorporated religious organisations battle it out amongst themselves as to which one of them thinks they have the ultimate power and authority (cf. Mat. 24:6-7). Some organisations even dare claim they possess 'the candlestick' of authority. There are not one, but seven candlesticks, each one representing a spiritual Church (Rev. 1:20).

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A sign that one has progressed and developed into the Church of Philadelphia, in spirit, is that we finally reject man's many versions of the Kingdom of God, specifically incorporated organisational structures, here on Earth. We now sojourn under no identifiable name. We fellowship with like-minded individuals who are not beholden to the traditions of man and/or any of the calendars that emanate from a man and/or an organisation. Now, we only yoke ourselves to Christ, and only follow him; we no longer allow another man to be at our head other than Christ, nor have power or precedence beside or above God the Father (Exod. 20:1-16).

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Rev. 3:7-13 (ESV)  “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.  (8)  “‘I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have **kept my word** and have **not denied my name**.  (9)  Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not**, but lie**—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.  (10)  Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.  (11)  I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.  (12)  The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.  (13)  He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

If we have ears to hear, the entire message to the Philadelphia Church is a stern rebuke to anyone who takes any part in religious organisations. Christ is the holy one, the true King, High-priest and Messiah. It is he who has the key of David, and not a man, or his organisation. Christ is the one who opens and closes, at his discretion.

Christ says to his faithful, "I know your works." This is in direct contrast to having to come down from heaven to see what the works of men were in relation to building their own cities and towers (Gen.11:5). It is this small group of believers Christ has set an open door, which no one is able to shut access to him or his God.

Christ also acknowledges we 'have but little power'. We are merely sojourners, salt of the earth. We don't have the power or reach of organisations. Yet, by remaining outside of them, we keep his word and do not deny his name, as our Lord, leader and King.

Christ, then declares belonging to an organisation is akin to the synagogue of Satan. They say they are (spiritual) Jews, specifically the body of Christ, but no; they lie to everyone, and themselves. They will come to know Christ loved those who despised the riches that Egypt offers and this what this world offers.

​Christ states, "*To the one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God*." Christ brings us full circle. We need to ensure we don't get conquered or captured by one of these cities (i.e., organisations of Cain) or the ideology or theology of its mightiest hunter i.e., leader. It has been a battle of two opposing kingdoms from start to finish.

To drive the point home, Christ says he will write the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, the new Jerusalem, on us. All this, as well as his new name. This is to distinguish between those of us who have remained brandless, so to speak, in this world, who refuse to be identified by a man's city or organisation, and thus, by default, take on the name of its leader at their head.

Christ ends by encouraging us to continue looking forward, that the city that is prepared for us comes down from his God, from heaven, up above, and not below, from the earth where men build theirs.

For those of us who are willing to leave the spiritual temples that men create, and live outside of them, with Christ at our head, our Lord makes the promise that he will make us pillars in the temple of his God, where we shall never go out (be removed) from it.

This should be of great encouragement to all those who have been removed, kicked out, or ostracised from their former association for wanting to only worship God, keep His Commandments and follow His Son, Jesus, and keep his words and faith in him.

1Jn. 5:21 LSV  Little children, guard yourselves from idols! Amen.

1. **Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead**

For those who are still in, connected to, or remotely tracking organizations via their calendar, doctrines, etc., it is time we repent and turn to Christ. Our allegiance should not be to the spiritually deceased.

​Mat. 8:21-22 (Darby) But another of his disciples said to him, Lord, suffer me first to go away and bury my father.  (22) But Jesus said to him, Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.