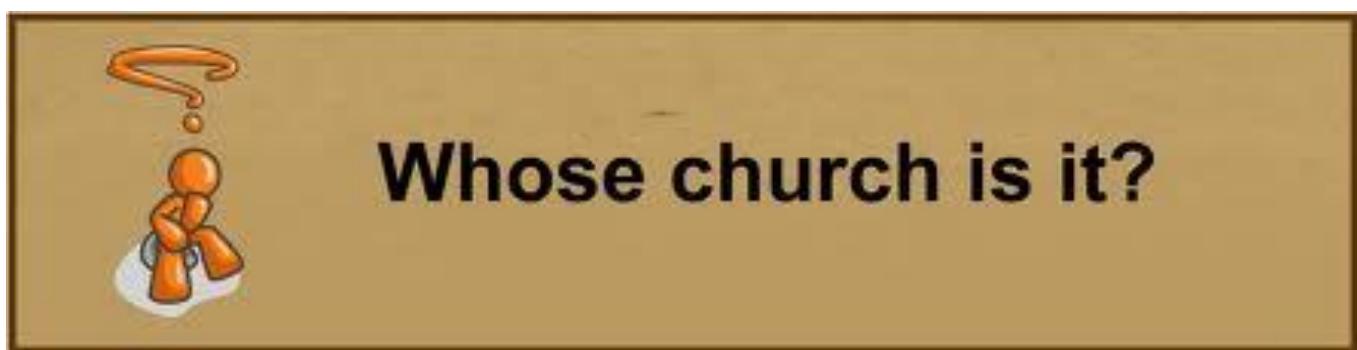




WHOSE CHURCH IS IT ANYWAY?



**THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE ONES WHO ARE
OBEDIENT TO THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THEIR
LIVES.**

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INTRODUCTION

When asking the Lord what He wanted me to write about next, He has led me to look at HIS CHURCH, not in the way of standard church history, but from His viewpoint. I will try my best to be obedient to His wishes. But any errors will be mine!

As you will soon see, the history of His church revolves around the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit's activity upon the earth, rather than what we consider the church to be.

Before I start I must give you a little personal testimony. I hope my testimony will show you that what is to come has to be of God, for it is outside my personal nature, experience and inheritance. I was brought up in a traditional Baptist church in the 1950's and 60's. (Yes I am that old! On the outside but not the inside! Well.....) My grandparents on both sides of the family were traditional churchgoers, as were my parents, as is my sister, and most have been active in church leadership. I was brought up to believe, yes, it was ingrained deep within me, that one had it all, when you gave your heart to Jesus and were water baptized (on the Baptist side) or attended church (on the Presbyterian side).

I tried giving my heart to Jesus. Nothing happened. My (younger than me) sister was getting water baptized, so I decided to as well. Nothing happened. I attended church until I was 30ish, and to all, including my wife Kathy, was a reasonable Christian. In fact, a pastor of mine suggested I should go to Baptist College and train for the ministry! If only he had known what was inside of me!

During my time at university, I went with some friends to an AOG Pentecostal meeting, hated it, and vowed and declared I would never go back! I didn't.

After a disagreement with the church, I left and went into the world, where I remained until I was 42, when we went bankrupt. At that time I was truly

desperate, not being able to look after my family, so truly gave my heart to Jesus when waiting in the queue to register for the dole (Unemployment Benefit) at the Social Welfare Office in Takapuna, Auckland, where we were living at the time.

Over my time away from the church, Kathy got involved with the things of the Spirit. Didn't like it, but couldn't really complain, could I?

After my true conversion, we went back to a traditional Baptist church. Kathy did a Holy Spirit course at another church also. I could not understand the notes and ridiculed them. Not a good move! For the next year the Lord told me to go and do the course! Had to eat humble pie! Over that year of doing the 'Word of Life' course, I came into the things of the Holy Spirit, which changed my life. We eventually joined the Abundant Life Church, where we remained until the Lord took us away from Tauranga to the city of Napier, where we now live.

In Tauranga, while working in the fields attending to the flowers on our flower farm, the Lord, in an audible voice, called me to set up Walking With Jesus Ministries, to be based on Revelation 12:11, one of the results of which you are reading now.

*11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** (Revelation 12:11)*
(Emphasis added, as the Lord gave it to me.)

I do not want to go into now all the things the Lord has done. I just want to say that I now do my best to follow the leading of the Lord, through His precious Holy Spirit residing in me. (And in you too, if you truly believe.)

What follows will be a real test of this, for as you can see from the above, it is far outside my natural nature and inheritance, to understand the ways of the Spirit.

May the Lord help me as I endeavour to bring His revelation to you.

THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO JESUS

A PEOPLE OF GODLY LIVING

Jesus did not teach theology as we understand. He simply set out the way His followers were to live in what is known as the 'sermon on the mount'. It was not a sermon as we understand it but a teaching to His disciples.....

The Beatitudes

5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:1-12)

He explained the ways of God by using illustration and parables that the people understood from everyday experience.....

Salt and Light

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-15)

Reading the teachings of Jesus in Matthew, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 give the instructions for godly living, both then and now. These chapters provide the behavioural foundation upon which our lives are to be based. Membership of the kingdom is not defined by Catholic or Protestant, Calvinism or Armenianism, Pre or Post-Trib whatever, but by how we walk with Jesus, in conforming to His image and ways.

A PEOPLE OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT TO THE FATHER AND EACH OTHER

Jesus gave one all-encompassing commandment that we are to live by.....

37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matthew 22:37-9)

Without love motivating our thoughts and actions, we are merely living an empty religion.

A PEOPLE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

We will see, as we proceed, the difference between the Jesus church and the religious church is the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."..... 25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my

name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:16-21, 25-6)

Without the Holy Spirit transforming us, leading and guiding us through life, our 'Christian' walk is merely manmade religion.

A PEOPLE WHO WOULD SHARE HIS TEACHINGS WITH OTHERS

Jesus came at a specific time in history when it had become possible to share knowledge, ideas and faith with the entire known world through travelling upon the network of roads built throughout the Roman Empire. It was now possible, in a practical way, to share the message of the Great Commission.....

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "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 of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-19)

When this didn't generally happen, except for Paul and his cohorts, Jerusalem was destroyed in AD70 and the people were forced to flee 'to all nations. God has His ways of seeing His instructions obeyed!

JESUS CRITICIZED THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT

Throughout the Gospels Jesus was highly critical of the religious establishment of His day. The Pharisees and Rabbis were criticised for legalism, pride, hypocrisy, greed, religious control, false teachings and much more. A few, sample comments follow.....

23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. 25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. 27 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. 29 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. (Matthew 23:23-9)

Could this still apply to the church of today? For, in essence, 'religion', like Jesus, never changes. The criticisms and opposition He had from the religious establishment of His day, remain the same. How would Jesus be treated if He walked into your church today?

JESUS' CRITIQUE OF THE EARLY NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH!

In the only recorded words of Jesus after His Ascension, (through the disciple John - look for the red print in your Bible!) Jesus commented on the 7 churches in Asia. I will summarize for the sake of space.....

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS (Revelation 2:1-7)

The Good: Hard work, perseverance, discernment, accepted hardship. Hate the Nicolaitans.

The Bad: Lost their love of God in their busyness.

The Result: Without repentance, rejection from God.

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA (Revelation 2:8:11)

The Good: Afflictions, poverty slander and imprisonment has made the people rich in God's sight.

The Bad: Nil

The Result: Faithfulness unto death brings the crown of life.

THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM (Revelation 2:12-17)

The Good: Live in evil surroundings, but have rejected persecution, even to death.

The Bad: Practicing false, sinful beliefs. Tolerance of wrong doctrines and teaching.

The Result: Repentance required or punishment coming.

THE CHURCH IN THYRATIRA (Revelation 2:18-29)

The Good: Increased good deeds, love, faith, service and perseverance.

The Bad: Accepting false teacher, leading to immorality and idol worship.

The Result: Those who haven't gone astray, God's acceptance. Others to be struck dead.

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS (Revelation 3:1-6)

The Good: Of good reputation for works.

The Bad: Spiritually dead.

The Result: Repent or suffer punishment, except for the few faithful ones.

THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA (Revelation 3:7-13)

The Good: Suffered hardship but remained faithful in spite of opposition.

The Bad: Nil

The Result: To be kept from the trials imposed on others.

THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA (Revelation 3:14-22)

The Good: Nil

The Bad: A lukewarm faith. Materially rich and independent, not realising they are spiritually wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

The Result: Counselled to seek God, repent, and look instead to spiritual growth. Those who do will receive the ultimate reward, to dine with Jesus.

SUMMARY

It is amazing that, round 50 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, He found it necessary to comment, through John in prison on the Island of Patmos, His comments and concerns about 'the church' (assembly - informal gatherings of believers in a geographical area)! The same problems exist today!

The church generally, was riddled with false teachings, salvation through works, idolatry, sexual and other moral failings, materialism, spiritual poverty, self-indulgence and lukewarmness.

On the other hand, the faithful churches (Smyrna and Philadelphia), plus the few faithful followers in the other churches, tended to be poor, persecuted, suffering hardships and even martyrdom. Of course, Jesus was martyred too! What a

contrast, then and now.

The deceptions the church quickly fell into were warned against by Jesus. For example, let us consider the trap of material wealth. In the case of the Rich Young Man.....

21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Matthew 19:21-2)

Even in its first 50 years, the church was hijacked by those seeking personal power and promoting worldly, manmade, religious doctrines. How is this avoided? How do true followers of Jesus follow Him?

Jesus himself gave us the answer.....

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:25-6)

And again.....

26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. (John 15:26)

THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE ONES WHO ARE OBEDIENT TO THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THEIR LIVES.

To inherit the kingdom of God we are not to follow a man (or woman), man's doctrines nor manmade organizational or physical structures and programmes, but to follow Jesus, as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, living within us.

20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come,

Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
(Luke 17:20-21)

Amen.

THE CHURCH AS BIRTHED AT PENTECOST

After His resurrection, Jesus spoke about the kingdom and informed the apostles of what was about to happen.....

3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1:3-5)

And, of course, true to his word, it did, and the people were astounded!

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:1-12)

The church was born! The church was born through the Holy Spirit!

Of course, this was too much for some. We tend to think of these ones as being of the world, but I firmly believe, in view of the opposition of the religious establishment throughout the time of the ministry of Jesus, the people who scoffed were primarily the Sadducees and Pharisees, for it was their religious world that was being challenged and transformed.....

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."
(Acts 2:13)

Peter, who 7 weeks before had denied he was a follower of Jesus, boldly stood up and quoting the prophet Joel, proclaimed.....

Peter Addresses the Crowd

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' (Acts 2:14-21)

The heart of the message and practice of the true church was succinctly set out.

1. THE PARAMOUNT POSITION OF JESUS

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36)

2. OUR REQUIRED RESPONSE

*37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.** (Acts 2:37-38a)*

3. AND THE RESULT

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38b)

In summary, the kingdom church is built upon the **FOUNDATION OF JESUS**, acknowledged by **REPENTANCE** and **WATER BAPTISM**, resulting in **HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT**.

And who is it available to? The answer to this marks, for the Jews of the time, the turning upside down of the fundamental Old Testament belief that their nation was the sole representative of God upon the earth. If you wanted to become a believing male, you had to convert to Judaism and be circumcised, as physical evidence of your Jewishness.

However, in an instant, Peter, talking under the revelation of the Holy Spirit (for this would have been anathema to him as a Jew) declared.....

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39)

And 3,000 were added to the church, replacing the 3,000 that had lost their lives on the first Pentecost when the people under Aaron built a golden calf because Moses was spending too long with God on Mt Sinai.....

28 The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people

died. (Exodus 32:28)

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:41)

Nothing in God happens by chance!

Amazingly, God's kingdom is now open to all people who fulfilled the criteria set out above!

Of the lordship of Jesus.

Of repentance.

Of water baptism.

Of Holy Spirit empowerment.

The church had changed forever! Or had it? That is we are investigating.

We have seen that the church was formed at Pentecost through the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon the people gathered together on the day of that year's Jewish Feast of Shavuot.

For those who are sceptical, as were the religious leaders of the time, I can testify that at a meeting in Africa where I ministered some years ago, a lady who could not speak English got up and testified that she had understood every word I had said, in her own language. Yes, the Pentecost tongue experience still happens today.

As we proceed through the book of Acts we can see that the early church was guided by the Holy Spirit and rapidly grew in number. The infilling, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, brought dramatic change to the people's lives and led to many miracles.....

The Fellowship of the Believers

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-7)

And.....

6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. (Acts 3:6-8)

Because of this Peter and John were seized by the establishment.....

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. (Acts 4:8-14)

They were finally let go.....

21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old. (Acts 4:21-2)

Both the miracles and the persecution continued. A heart rendering example of this was recorded in the stoning Of Stephen. After upsetting the Sanhedrin with his testimony he was dragged out to be stoned.....

The Stoning of Stephen

54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:54-60)

The church was then persecuted and scattered - by Paul.....

The Church Persecuted and Scattered

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. (Acts 8:1a-3)

SUMMARY

It is clear that the church was formed by and operated under the power of the Holy

Spirit.

The Holy Spirit empowered the people to.....

1. Understand different languages
2. Transform their lives
3. Perform healings and miracles
4. Become a vibrant community
5. Expand rapidly
6. Withstand persecution.
7. Become the light of Jesus to the world.

Nothing has changed today.....

THE EARLY JEWISH CHURCH

God often uses persecution to spread the church. This first happened in Jerusalem, immediately after the stoning of Stephen. The apostles though, remained there.....

The Church Persecuted and Scattered

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. (Acts 8:1)

Philip is an example of one of the church who was dispersed, travelling to Samaria, where the Holy Spirit's power accompanied him, making His ministry powerful and effective.....

Philip in Samaria

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:4-8)

However, as in much of the church today, people accepted Jesus as Saviour and were baptized, but were not filled with the Holy Spirit. The apostles in Jerusalem discovered this and sent Peter and John to rectify the situation, for they understood the church could not function fully without Holy Spirit power.

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17)

Problems arose when foreigners, that are 'gentiles', started accepting Jesus. Of course, their customs were different to the Jews. Peter found out by way of a vision, that the dietary laws that applied to the Jewish culture had changed. This did not meet with universal acceptance amongst the Jewish church.

Peter himself was convinced when he saw the gentiles had been filled with the Holy Spirit (before being water baptized - maybe a thought to challenge our theology!).....

Then Peter said, 47 "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10:46b-48)

The key, most persuasive argument, which Peter used to explain to the people back in Jerusalem about gentiles coming to the Lord, was that they had been filled with the Holy Spirit.....

15 "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. 16 Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" 18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." (Acts 11:15-18)

I trust you can see, the dynamic that convinced the Jewish church of the credibility of the church being extended to the gentiles was not the baptism of John which, in reality, man could do, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which could only come from God.

The Jewish Christians were spread far and wide. While, naturally, they witnessed to other Jews first, they soon found that the Greeks were interested too.....

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

(Acts 11:19-21)

As always, then and now, religion and law rear their twin heads....

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1)

Once again, the anointing of the Holy Spirit convinced the leadership in Jerusalem that keeping Jewish laws was not required.....

6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. 8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. (15:6-9)

The church in Jerusalem was founded through the Holy Spirit outpouring at Pentecost. Holy Spirit power continued throughout times of change, turmoil and persecution to validate their actions, as seen both in themselves and in the gentiles who became members of the kingdom of God.

THE CHURCH AS PROCLAIMED BY PAUL

Paul's ministry was birthed in the supernatural, when He had a personal encounter with Jesus.

3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. (Acts 9:3-7)

Three days later he was filled with the Holy Spirit and received back his sight.....

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again (Acts 9:17-18a)

Paul's ministry was birthed in the Holy Spirit.....

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

Immediately, Paul and Barnabas were guided by the Holy Spirit as to where to go.....

On Cyprus

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. (Acts 13:4)

.....and what to say and do, with startling effect.....

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. (Acts 13:8-12)

The Holy Spirit motivated, encouraged, and supported them all, even during persecution.....

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. 49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. 50 But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. 51 So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-52)

Holy Spirit enabled healings were a regular part of Paul's (actually God's ministry through Paul!) ministry.....

In Lystra and Derbe

8 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. (Acts 14:8-10)

Religion quickly reared its ugly head, both in Antioch.....

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."
(Acts 15:1)

.....and also in Jerusalem, when Paul and Barnabas went back there to consult the apostles and elders over the circumcision issue. Jesus' main religious opposition, the Pharisees, continued their opposition to 'The Way'!

5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."
(Acts 15:5)

The key element that persuaded Peter that the Pharisees were wrong in their religious arguments, based on law, not grace, was that the Holy Spirit had been given to the uncircumcised gentiles.....

6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. 8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:6-9)

Paul was continually led by the Holy Spirit throughout his life and ministry. For example.....

Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia

6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:6-10)

And again.....

9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. 10 For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." 11 So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God. (Acts 18:9-11)

Paul was insistent that water baptism must also be accompanied by that of the Holy Spirit.....

Paul in Ephesus

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. 4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all. (Acts 19:1-7)

He followed the Spirit's leading, even when he knew it would lead to hardship.....

22 "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. (Acts 20:22-24)

Even if the danger was confirmed by others operating in the Holy Spirit too.....

10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" 12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." (Acts 21:10-15)

The Lord encouraged him in his hardship.....

11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."
(Acts 23:11)

Miracles accompanied him all the way, even when he was shipwrecked on the way to Rome.....

Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. 2 The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. 3 Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. 4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." 5 But Paul shook the snake off

into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 6 The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. (Acts 28:1-6)

Holy Spirit power permeated his preaching.....

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Paul sums up well, the need for the Holy Spirit's power and guidance in living the Christian life.....

Wisdom From the Spirit

6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" — 10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the

mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

THE POST APOSTOLIC CHURCH

We have been able to follow the development of the early church through the writings recorded in the Epistles. We have seen that informal groups of believers grew rapidly, relying upon the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the operation of spiritual gifts.....

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

'Ministry' (meaning servanthood) was regarded as a function, as a role, not a formal position, enabled by the Holy Spirit to train the people to do the work of the body of Christ - in unity!

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Traditional teaching (including mine), has taught that the 'church' (we will look at its meaning and origin at a later time), gradually lost these spiritual giftings and guidance, becoming fully formalized and organised through the time Roman Emperor Constantine's conversion around 312AD, and the subsequent

development of the formal Roman Catholic Church.

While, to a large extent, this was true for the majority of the church, we will see that the Lord always maintained a spiritual light amongst a portion of His people, even during the spiritually dead Dark Ages, through to today.

A summary of the traditional teaching, drawn from my book 'Eagles Fly High' p41., follows.....

c.100 Death of the last of the Apostles, John. Authority and unity of 'apostleship' disappeared.

THE DECLINE OF THE CHURCH:

130 Laying on of hands becomes a formal ritual.

140 Ministry of the prophets vanishes.

150 Gifts of the Spirit are disappearing entirely.

160 Plurality of eldership fades away.

180 Local church autonomy diminishes as churches start to come under the control of Rome.

187 First infant baptism and sprinkling. Form over substance.

200 Ritual becoming the norm as the church had form but had lost its power.

Water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ denied, largely through Pope Stephen.

210 Doctrine of the priesthood of all believers rejected as a class of clerics developed.

225 Church membership became based on a creed rather than salvation.

240 Holiness disappeared and worldliness infiltrated the church.

350 Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion. Salvation by faith not required for membership, with many 'heathen' being forced to accept Christianity by the sword.

380 Rome became the final authority in church matters.

We will now discover that there has always been a remnant who, to a large extent, has followed the Holy Spirit led principles of the early church .

This has been a voyage of discovery for me, and I trust it will be for you too. We will then be able to proclaim the truth of our conclusion that, even during the darkest times of the church's history.

THE CHURCH 100-325AD

We will see, as we proceed from the death of John round 100AD (generally considered to be the end of the Apostolic Age), that the gifts of the Holy Spirit continued to operate amongst many believers, even as they were rejected by the formalized church that started to develop from this time.

There are a number of historical writers and records confirming the continuation of spiritual gifts. I must first acknowledge that much of the material that follows is drawn from the excellent publication by Eddie L. Hyatt, **2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity**. For specific references to the writings quoted, please refer to that publication.

Let's have a look at the experiences of these early followers of Jesus.....

Justin Martyr (AD100-165) Justin, a brilliant wandering philosopher, was converted when he met an elderly man on a beach, who pointed out 'the way' to him. He went on to open a Christian school in Rome. Generally regarded as the leading apologist of the 2nd century, he wrote in his "Dialogue With Trypho".....

"For the prophetic gifts remain with us even to the present time." and "Now it is possible to see among us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God."

In "The Second Apology of Justin", he further wrote.....

For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men.

It is clear that, in Justin's time, spiritual gifts were still active amongst the body of believers.

Irenaeus (AD 125-200), bishop of Lyons, is best known for his writings against Gnosticism and other heresies of the day. Born in Smyrna, he was a student of Polycarp, the well-known disciple of the apostle John.

Refuting Gnosticism, in *Against Heresies*, he proclaimed the works of the believers to include.....

For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have been thus cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ], and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions and utter prophetic expressions. Others still heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole.

Irenaeus speaks too, of the dead being raised.....

Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of gifts which the Church [scattered] throughout the whole world has received from God in the name of Jesus Christ.

.....and of people prophesying and speaking in tongues.....

In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God.

Therefore it can be concluded that the operation of the spiritual gifts was alive and active throughout the life if Irenaeus. Nor was there any expectation that the operation of the gifts would cease.

Tertullian (AD160-240) A noted student of law and philosophy, skilled in both Greek and Latin, he was converted in his early thirties. With this background, he soon became a presbyter of the church in Carthage, then the foremost apologist of his time in the Western church, becoming known as the 'Father of Latin Theology'.

Tertullian's writings confirmed his personal experience of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues.

In "A Treatise on the Soul", he writes.....

"For seeing that we acknowledge the spiritual charismata, or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift."

In "To Scapula" he concludes.....

"And heaven knows how many distinguished men, to say nothing of the common people, have been cured either of devils or of their sicknesses."

When writing to counter the heretic Marcion, in "Against Marcion" he talks about prophecy, tongues and interpretation when he challenges the heretic to produce spiritual gifts.....

Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have predicted things to come and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer—only let it be by the spirit, in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him. Now all these signs are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty.

In his treatise, "On Baptism", Tertullian describes the need for both water and Spirit baptism.....

Not that in the water we obtain the Spirit; but in the water we are cleansed and prepared

for the Holy Spirit. And, following water baptism, "the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction.

Tertullian's writings demonstrate that the spiritual gifts continued to be prominent in the church of the third century.

Origen (AD 185-284) From a prominent Christian family, his father was martyred in Alexandria, in Egypt, when Origen was 16. At 18, Origen was appointed leader of a prominent Christian school founded to instruct converts from paganism, and became the church's first systematic theologian.

In "Against Celsus", he testifies to having participated in miraculous activities and states.....

Some give evidence of their having received through this faith a marvelous power by the cures which they perform, invoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things, and of Jesus, along with a mention of His history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from distractions of mind, and madness, and countless other ills, which could not be cured neither by men nor devils.

Origen recognized the reality and value of praying in tongues. In his commentary on Romans 8:26 he links praying in the Spirit with praying in tongues. The commentator Cecil M. Robeck notes,

"Origen must have held that prayer in tongues existed in his day, and it was thought to be beneficial in that it was through this type of prayer that the Spirit interceded exceedingly before God."

Holy Spirit baptism is also detailed in "De Principiis". Speaking of God breathing into Adam the breath [Spirit] of life, he added that this cannot refer to all men, but only to those who have been made new in Christ. He goes on to say.....

For this reason was the grace and revelation of the Holy Spirit bestowed by the imposition of the apostles' hands after baptism. Our Savior also, after the resurrection, when old things had already passed away and all things had become new..... His apostles also being renewed by faith in His resurrection, says, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Origen is the first of the church fathers to acknowledge that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were decreasing in the church generally remarking when referring to the apostolic age.....

But since that time these signs have diminished.

The reason he gives for it however, is not the unavailability of the gifts, but the lack of holiness in the people of the day! A truly insightful insight!

CYPRIAN (AD195-258) Born in Carthage, he enjoyed a good education in rhetoric and law. Becoming a Christian in his early 50's, He quickly rose to prominence, becoming bishop of Carthage within 2 years, a position he held for 8 years, until his martyrdom.

An avid student of Tertullian he was not only aware of spiritual gifts, but his congregation practised them, even in times of severe persecution.....

it seemed best to us through many and clear visions.

Cyprian had a debate with Stephen, bishop of Rome, over the necessity for re-baptism of those first baptized by heretics. In his discussions he argued.....

One is not born by the imposition of hands when he receives the Holy Ghost, but in baptism, that so, being already born, he may receive the Holy Spirit, even as it happened to the first man Adam. For first God formed him and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

It is obvious from both this and the visions mentioned earlier, that the gifts of the

spirit operated within his congregation. He also indicated elsewhere that they were active amongst the wider body also.

NOVATIAN (AD210-280) A respected theologian, he was a presbyter in the church of Rome. He became embroiled in an argument with Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, over leniency towards those Christians who had 'lapsed' during persecution. (What would our attitude today be?!) He effectively spawned the first holiness movement, critical of the carnal and impure Christians of the establishing institutional church. The movement, called 'Cathari', meaning pure ones, spread quickly, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean and North African areas.

In Novatian's most important surviving writing, 'The Trinity', he talked about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.....

This is he [the Holy Spirit] who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, offers discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts there are of charismata; and thus making the Lord's Church everywhere, and in all, perfected and completed.

There are several other early writings confirming that the spiritual gifts remained operational amongst the dedicated followers of Jesus during this period.

THE CHURCH DIVIDES

By the 4th century the church had proceeded in two differing directions. Traditional church history (which we are not going to detail here) had become well institutionalized and formalized in theology and worship, under the control of a'pp'ointed (as opposed to a'nn'ointed) leadership of 'bishops'. Hierarchical, 'positional' leadership had replaced the 'functional', Spirit-led leadership of the early church. Much of this was a defensive response to persecution by the state, and to counter the heretical teachings of sects such as Gnosticism and Marcionism. The meaning of the word 'bishop' changed from 'group oversight' to 'personal control'.

As we will continue to see, right throughout history, when man takes over the church, the Holy Spirit is the first to be side-lined, then rejected, in all but name only.

The question that now arises is, "Did the Spirit abandon the church altogether, or did He remain active in a remnant of the church?"

THE MONTANISTS

Over the centuries, the Montanists have generally had a bad press, as history has been recorded by the institutional church with whom they came into conflict. However, reality is, this movement was likely the first 'charismatic renewal' of the church.

Montanus was born in the first half of the second century in Phrygia, and converted from paganism to Christianity. He may have been a bishop at one time. Orthodox in his faith, he worked in signs and miracles. Even his enemies conceded "both his life and doctrine were holy and blameless."

He was concerned about the growing formalism of the church and increasing moral laxity amongst its membership. So around AD172, he began to assert the importance of the supernatural ministry of the Spirit, including insisting that Christians practice a morally strict lifestyle. He believed the qualifying factor for ministry was possession of a spiritual gift, rather than appointment to an ecclesiastical office. This automatically drew him into conflict with the new church leadership who believed ecclesiastical appointment held pre-eminence over any spiritual gift.

'The New Prophecy' movement, or Montanists, as they were called, quickly gained a substantial following, spreading throughout Asia Minor, North Africa and Europe, even to Rome itself.

The church proclaimed their 'ecstatic' delivery of prophetic messages to be demonic, although generally, not disputing their content. Support for the Montanists came from Irenaeus and Tertullian.

Like virtually all spiritual movements throughout history, once the founder dies, the movement becomes formalised, by followers who try to embed the revelation received, rather than seek out the Spirit for ongoing guidance. In the 3rd century the Montanists began institutionalizing, appointing their own bishops and deacons. In 381, the Council at Constantinople declared the Montanists to be pagans. However the movement continued until the 5th century at least, when Augustine mentioned their existence.

Interestingly, in 1750, John Wesley read an early eighteenth-century work by John Lacy called "The General Delusion of Christians Touching the Ways of God Revealing Himself to and by the Prophets." It gives a positive view of Montanism, refuting many of the traditional accusations. After reading this book, Wesley wrote the following observation in his Journal, on August 15, 1750:

I was fully convinced of what I had once suspected:

- 1) *That the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real Scriptural Christians; and*
- 2) *That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.*

So here we have the understanding of one Spirit led person about others.

THE IMPACT OF EMPEROR CONSTANTINE'S CONVERSION

Much traditional church teaching would say that the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in AD312 led to the spreading of Christianity throughout the extensive Roman sphere of influence in the world. Regrettably, while this may have been true in form, the true essence of what Jesus taught - a personal relationship with Him through the Holy Spirit was lost. The church now became another organ of the state. For example, of the Council of Nicaea, the modern historian Hans Kung has recorded in 'Christianity: Essence, History, and Future'.....

Constantine used this first council not least to adapt the church organization to the state organization. The church provinces were to correspond to the imperial provinces, each with a metropolitan and a provincial synod. In other words, the empire now had its imperial church!

Initially, Constantine granted special favours to the church, and built churches modelled on the civic auditoriums of the day. Elevated throne-like seating for the state appointed bishop were provided along with rows of pew like seating for the congregation, making congregational involvement impractical. Liturgy and worship, once plain and personal, now became modelled on the pomp and ceremony of the Imperial Court.

When Constantine died in 337, his sons continued and intensified the favouring of the church. In 381, the new emperor, Theodosius I, made Christianity the exclusive religion of the state. According to human logic, this was a wonderful event for the church, but it actually resulted in hordes of unconverted pagans coming in, bringing with them their heathen ideas and immoral practices.

One who appalled by this terrible state of affairs was John Chrysostom (347-407), patriarch of Constantinople. He complained that the character of the church of his day was no different from that of the marketplace or theatre.....

If anyone is trying or intending to corrupt a woman, there is no place, I suppose, that seems to him more suitable than the Church. And if anything is to be sold or bought, the Church appears more convenient than the market. Or if any wish to say or to hear any scandal, you will find that this to be had here more than the forum without.

He stated, when mourning the loss of spiritual gifts in the formal church.....

The obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and their cessation.

The church became a political organization, modelled along the state lines, with personal worship being replaced by formalized sacraments, presided over by ecclesiastical officials.

This provided an ideal climate for doctrinal disputes (which continue to the present day) to emerge and develop, for again, form rather than substance took over. Basil of Caesarea, bishop of Cappadocia (370-379), likened it to a great naval battle being fought by men who "cherish a deadly hate against one another." He continued.....

But what storm at sea was ever so wild and fierce as this tempest of the churches. In it every landmark of the Fathers has been moved; every foundation, every bulwark of opinion has been shaken; everything buoyed up on the unsound is dashed about and shaken down. We attack one another. If our enemy is not the first to strike us, we are wounded by the comrade at our side.

The battle for Holy Spirit influence in the church was lost, but the Spirit of God cannot be denied. He now continued His influence through individuals, namely the 'monastics', who literally withdrew from the world.

325-600AD THE MONASTICS

As we have already seen, when the primary church descends into formalism and institutionalism, the Lord works through others who remain open to the Holy Spirit's leading and guidance, the essence of what 'relational' (as opposed to 'religious', 'organizational' or 'theological') Christianity is all about.

Jesus came so that we might be brought back into relationship with the Father by belief and relationship with Him through interaction with the Holy Spirit in the living of our lives. In many ways it is what we would understand as a 'grassroots' movement of individuals sold out to Jesus.

This is beautifully illustrated in the case of the monastics, a movement that grew in response to the institutionalism of the church under Emperor Constantine and his successors. Quoting directly from Eddie Hyatt in **2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity.....**

The monastics were devout believers who lived ascetic lives in an effort to experience the presence and power of God in a very personal manner. The initial stage of the movement was individualistic with these ascetics living as hermits. Around A.D. 320, they began to gather together in communities where they lived a totally self-sufficient lifestyle. During the Middle Ages (A.D. 600-1517), these communities or monasteries, as they were called, became centers of learning, and the monks served as custodians of books and manuscripts.

In complete devotion to God, they gave themselves to study, prayer and meditation. Indeed, they proved to be shining lights during the period of intense social decadence known as the Dark Ages (c.a. 500-1300).

Following Constantine's ascent to power, most supernatural phenomena are recorded either by monastics or by those who venerated the monastic lifestyle. Cardinal Leon

Joseph Suenens is correct in saying, "In its beginnings, monasticism was, in fact, a Charismatic movement."

The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, which disappeared from the institutional church, now appeared among the monastics. Many monks gained notoriety for their power in prayer and their ability to produce healing, deliverance from demonic oppression and other miraculous phenomena. Church fathers, such as Athanasius, Augustine and Jerome, who speak of miracles, either practiced the monastic lifestyle themselves or were closely associated with those who did.

Again repeating myself, my hope and prayer is that you understand how God works. God works in people. He is a people person. Belief in Jesus is an individual decision, bringing with it a commitment to live a holy and righteous life. When people move away from this foundation into a man-made, man controlled, formalized religion, God will seek out and find another group of people whose desire is simply to follow Jesus and to live as He lived.

ANTONY (AD251-356) An Egyptian, and normally regarded as the founder of monasticism, Antony's life was lived in complete contrast to the formalism, legalism, pomp and grandeur of the mainline church that was emerging in the West.

His parents died when he was 18, and the Lord directed him to sell their estate, then give up his possessions and live a life of absolute devotion to his Lord. He did this by retiring to a cave in the desert and spending his time in prayer and meditation.

Antony's holy life and powerful prayer became famous throughout the Empire and many adopted his hermit lifestyle. Others organized themselves into monastic communities.

The 'Life of Antony', written by bishop Athanasius, recorded many supernatural

events experienced by the many who visited him. He was noted for discerning of spirits, healing the sick, delivering the demonized and for speaking words of knowledge.

He lived into his 105th year and reputedly, was physically strong with bright eyes and retaining all his teeth, until the end of his life.

Nearing his death, he visited the other monks in the desert for one last time, exhorting them tearfully, to continue devoted lives. Going back to his cave he distributed his meagre possessions and pulling his feet under him (like Jacob in Genesis 49:33), where he died with a joyful expression on his face.

PACHOMIUS (AD292-346) A soldier by profession, and likely inspired by Antony, he retired to live the life of a hermit. One day, in his cell, an angel appeared to him and said, "Go and gather together unto thyself those who are wandering, and be thou dwelling with them, and lay down for them such laws as I shall tell unto thee."

Subsequently, Pachomius organized the first monastery about AD320, at Tabennisi on the east bank of the Nile. Each member dressed similarly, had a communal work assignment, along with scheduled times of both private and corporate worship.

An ancient writer described Pachomius as "a man endowed with apostolic grace both in teaching and in performing miracles." For example, he had a visitor from the West who spoke Latin, a language he did not understand. After 3 hours of concerted prayer, Pachomius was able to converse with his visitor in Latin. Several other times too, he was reported as speaking in a language he had not learned, indicating that speaking in tongues was known within the monastic communities.

ATHANASIUS (AD295-373) Athanasius was known as 'the Father of Orthodoxy', and was the bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. Best known for his writings against

'Arianism' (Christ as a created being, different from and less than the Father), he insisted Christ was coequal, cosubstantial and coeternal with the Father. Exiled 5 times, his teaching was finally accepted as official church doctrine.

Talking of the Holy Spirit, when writing of his friend Antony, he said.....

And we ought not to doubt whether such marvels were wrought by the hand of a man. For it is the promise of the Saviour, when He saith, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The office of bishop was becoming formalized, leading to a life of ease, wealth and temptation. However, he reasoned he could still live a devoted life as a bishop while some monks didn't.....

"We know bishops who work wonders [miracles] and monks who do not."

Athanasius clearly experienced spiritual gifts personally and saw them being for the body, not the limited few of an appointed clergy.

HILARION (AD305-385) Born in Gaza city in Palestine to pagan parents, he received a good education, becoming a believer at an early age and showing a tendency towards an ascetic lifestyle.

While still in his teens he visited Antony in the Egyptian desert and then devoted himself to a life of devotion in the Palestinian wilderness. Like his mentor Antony, he gained a reputation for holiness and power in prayer. Jerome, who knew Hilarion personally said of him, *"Time would fail me if I wished to relate all the miracles which were wrought by him."*

On one occasion, Hilarion found a paralyzed man lying near the entrance of his dwelling. After finding out the man's identity.....

weeping much and stretching out his hand to the prostrate man he said, "I bid you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, arise and walk." The words were still on the lips of the speaker when, with miraculous speed, the limbs were strengthened and the man arose and stood firm.

He died in Cyprus, having spent his last years there. A friend stole his body and returned it to Palestine. Jerome, writing after Hilarion's death, recorded that miracles continued to take place both at the site of his death in Cyprus and at his tomb in Palestine.

AMBROSE (AD340-397) Giving up a successful political career, Ambrose became bishop of Milan in 374. An able administrator and preacher, he brought Augustine to Jesus, baptizing him in 387.

Augustine, in turn, reported of a time in Milan when a 'vast throng' gathered at the tomb of two martyrs, the location of which had been revealed by the Holy Spirit to Ambrose. As the crowd gathered there, a blind man miraculously received his sight.

Ambrose lived in a time of general spiritual decline, which he tried to counteract in his work "Of The Holy Spirit", linking the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son through active spiritual gifts.....

You see the Father and Christ also set teachers in the churches; and as the Father gives the gift of healings, so too does the Son give; as the Father gives the gift of tongues, so too has the Son also granted it. In like manner we have heard also above concerning the Holy Spirit that He too grants the same kinds of graces. So, then, the Spirit gives the same gifts as the Father and the Son also gives them.

JEROME (AD347-420) Becoming a Christian at an early age, Jerome, an astute scholar, loved classical learning. While travelling through Antioch, he became very

sick and the Lord appeared to him, reproaching him for his devotion to classical study.

This encounter with God changed Jerome's life. Repenting of his former ways and living as a hermit near Antioch, he became an avid bible student, so much so that he was described by one writer (Sullivan) as *the ablest scholar the ancient Western Church could boast.*"

Later, having moved to Palestine to head a monastery, he produced the works for which he is noted, the greatest being "The Vulgate" (pictured), the famous and hugely influential Latin translation of the Bible. From the Council of Trent (1545-63) until recently, The Vulgate was the only official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

Jerome was a firm believer in the power of the Holy Spirit to work miracles. This was particularly noted in his work "The Life of Saint Hilarion" (see last week). Jerome tells of Hilarion stilling a raging sea brought about by a violent earthquake (perhaps a tidal wave?) that was about to engulf the village of Epidaurus, by raising his outstretched hands. Jerome then comments.....

Verily, what was said to the Apostles, "If ye have faith, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove into the sea, and it shall be done," may even be literally fulfilled if one has such faith as the Lord commanded the Apostles to have.

Living on into the 5th century, it is clear that Jerome considered that spiritual gifts were still applicable to the church of the time and were not about to cease.

AUGUSTINE (AD354-440) Converted in 387, Augustine went on to become bishop of Hippo, in North Africa. Due to his influential thinking and voluminous writing he has become widely regarded as the most influential of the church fathers. In fact much of the theology of both Catholicism and Protestantism is based on his thinking.

Interestingly, he had 2 differing positions on the miraculous ministry of the Holy Spirit during his life. Initially, in his homily 'The Epistle of Saint John', he referred to the tongues at Pentecost as a sign "*adapted to the time*" that had passed away. He goes on to say that that the witness of the Holy Spirit's ministry is no longer manifested through miracles but is reflected by the love of God in one's heart for the church.

I trust you can see the subtle change here from an emphasis on relationship directly with God to a focus on the church as being the depository of God, with the priesthood being the only ones able to communicate God's will to the masses.

However, later in life, Augustine had a change of heart and embraced the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit. In his work, 'The City of God', a chapter with the long, convoluted title, "Concerning Miracles Which Were Wrought in Order That the World Might Believe in Christ and Which Cease Not to Be Wrought Now That the World Does Believe", Augustine says, "*For even now, miracles are wrought in the name of Christ, whether by His sacraments or by prayer or the relics of His saints*".

Augustine then proceeds to describe various miracles which he knew of personally. These included healings from blindness, cancer, gout, haemorrhoids, demon possession and even the raising of the dead. Some were healed as a result of a simple prayer, and a paralytic was healed at the moment of baptism. So miracles were obviously not uncommon at this time, for he says, "*I am so pressed by the promise of finishing this work that I cannot record all the miracles I know*".

Augustine also discusses a phenomenon that he called 'jubilation', which is very similar to what modern Charismatics would call "singing in the Spirit," or, in other words, tongues. According to Augustine, a person begins to jubilate when the mouth is not able to express with words that the heart is singing. The person continues to make sounds, but the sounds are inarticulate because the heart is speaking what it cannot say in words. He then says: '*And for whom is such jubilation*

fitting if not for the ineffable God? For he is ineffable whom one cannot express in words; and if you cannot express him in words, and yet you cannot remain silent either, then what is left but to sing in jubilation, so that your heart may rejoice without words, and your unbounded joy may not be confined by the limits of syllables'.

While, in later life, Augustine came to believe in the miraculous ministry of the Holy Spirit, the damage done by his earlier writings was eagerly embraced by a church that desired spiritual power for itself. It is therefore generally regarded that Augustine is to this day, regarded as the father of the 'Cessation Theory' of the miraculous ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I am sure he would be upset to be held responsible for this in view of his spiritual experience in later years.

BENEDICT (AD480-547) Sent by his parents to Rome as a teenager for a good education, Benedict of Nursia, shocked by the vice of the city, decided to live as a hermit in a cave east of Rome. Around 529, he founded the famous monastery at Monte Casino, destroyed in World War 2.

In his writing, 'The Rule of Benedict' he set the pattern for life, worship and work under the communal monastic system. It became highly influential in determining the methodology of monastic life throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. Benedict was renowned both for his powerful prayer and for facilitating miracles. One time, a monk was raised from the dead. When building the monastery wall, it collapsed on him, killing the monk. His mangled body was brought to Benedict's room. Benedict shut the door and prayed most earnestly. Within the hour the young man revived, went out from the room back to the wall, where he continued working normally!

Benedict did not confine himself to the monastery but also ministered to the people of the area. It is quoted by Michael Walsh, in 'Butler's Lives of the Saints' (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1991), 212., "*He cured their sick, relieved the distress and is*

said to have raised the dead on more than one occasion."

In his writing "Dialogues", Gregory (see his story next) relates incidents in which Benedict cast evil spirits out of certain individuals. On one occasion, an evil spirit entered one of the monks and threw him to the ground in a violent convulsion. When Benedict saw what was happening, he struck the man on the cheek. The evil spirit immediately left and never returned.

Benedict also displayed the revelatory gifts of the Holy Spirit and was active in the gift of prophecy. He was often able to describe to his fellow monks what they had done while he had been away.

Additionally, he foretold future events, including his own death. When God forewarned him of his impending death, He told others and got his disciples to dig his grave 6 days beforehand. He died in the chapel of the monastery with his hands raised towards heaven.

GREGORY THE GREAT (AD540-604) Born of wealthy parents, Gregory received a good education. About 500, he was appointed Prefect of Rome, a position of considerable honour.

After the death of his father, Gregory gave up the fortune he had inherited and entered a Benedictine monastery where he soon became recognized as a gifted leader. So much so that when Pope Pelagius died in 590, Gregory was elected to succeed him.

In his 'Dialogues', Gregory records many miracles which he had direct personal knowledge of, even including the raising of the dead. Many of these miracles reflect Mark 11:23 where Jesus said.....

"If anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (Mark 11:23)

In one example, Gregory tells the story of Bishop Boniface whose garden suffered an invasion of caterpillars. Seeing all his vegetables going to ruin, Boniface turned to the caterpillars and said, "I adjure you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, depart from here and stop eating these vegetables." Obeying his voice all the caterpillars, right down to the very last one, disappeared from his garden! A spiritual insecticide!

Gregory also tells of a boy who, when drawing water from the river, fell in and was being swept away by the current. Benedict, the abbot (leader) of the nearby monastery, became aware of the crisis through a word of knowledge, and charged Brother Maurus to hurry to the river to rescue the boy. Running to the river's edge, Maurus spotted the frantic boy being swept downstream, and without realizing it, continued to run on the water until he reached the boy! Grabbing him by the hair, Maurus dragged him to safety on the riverbank. Benedict took no credit for the miracle but attributed it to the obedience of his disciple. Maurus, however, claimed that the rescue was "due entirely to his abbot's command."

Gregory also tells of a man named Marcellus being raised from the dead. Marcellus died on a Saturday. Because he could not be buried the same day, his sisters sought the prayers of Fortunatus, bishop of that area. Fortunatus went to the home of Marcellus early on the Sunday morning. Kneeling near the corpse, he began to pray. After praying for some time, he got up, then sat down. In a subdued voice, he called out, "*Brother Marcellus.*" Marcellus opened his eyes, and looking at Fortunatus said, "*What have you done? What have you done?*"

Fortunatus then asked, "*What have I done?*" Marcellus explained how, on the previous day, two people [angels] had come to escort him to the 'abode of the blessed'. A messenger had intervened, however, commanding, "*Take him back because Bishop Fortunatus is visiting his home.*" Marcellus revived, quickly regaining his strength, and lived for years after this miracle.

Gregory believed in miracles. As he nowhere speaks of a theory of cessation, he obviously believed that miracles were to continue throughout the history of the church.

However, he does emphasize that it was holy men of God who performed these miracles, thus exhibiting the medieval tendency to associate miracles with an ascetic and saintly lifestyle. This undue regard for the ascetic life actually divided the church during this period.

PATRICK OF IRELAND (c.AD387-461) The inclusion of 'Saint Patrick' here could be controversial, as there is as much - probably more - myth and legend about his life as there is reality! I can safely say this, for I am of mixed Irish/Scottish stock, my mother having been born in Ireland!

I quote a summary of his life story.....

Patrick was born around 385 in Scotland, probably Kilpatrick. His parents were Calpurnius and Conchessa, who were Romans living in Britian in charge of the colonies.

As a boy of fourteen or so, he was captured during a raiding party and taken to Ireland as a slave to herd and tend sheep. Ireland at this time was a land of Druids and pagans. He learned the language and practices of the people who held him.

During his captivity, he turned to God in prayer. He wrote

"The love of God and his fear grew in me more and more, as did the faith, and my soul was rosed, so that, in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers and in the night, nearly the same." "I prayed in the woods and on the mountain, even before dawn. I felt no hurt from the snow or ice or rain."

Patrick's captivity lasted until he was twenty, when he escaped after having a dream from God in which he was told to leave Ireland by going to the coast. There he found some sailors who took him back to Britain, where he reunited with his family.

He had another dream in which the people of Ireland were calling out to him "We beg you, holy youth, to come and walk among us once more."

He began his studies for the priesthood. He was ordained by St. Germanus, the Bishop of Auxerre, whom he had studied under for years.

Later, Patrick was ordained a bishop, and was sent to take the Gospel to Ireland. He arrived in Ireland March 25, 433, at Slane. One legend says that he met a chieftain of one of the tribes, who tried to kill Patrick. Patrick converted Dichu (the chieftain) after he was unable to move his arm until he became friendly to Patrick.

Patrick began preaching the Gospel throughout Ireland, converting many. He and his disciples preached and converted thousands and began building churches all over the country. Kings, their families, and entire kingdoms converted to Christianity when hearing Patrick's message.

Patrick by now had many disciples, among them Beningnus, Auxilius, Iserninus, and Fiacac, (all later canonized as well).

Patrick preached and converted all of Ireland for 40 years. He worked many miracles and wrote of his love for God in Confessions. After years of living in poverty, traveling and enduring much suffering he died March 17, 461.

He died at Saul, where he had built the first church.

(Source Catholic Online http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=89)

Patrick brought the Holy Spirit inspired monastic tradition to Ireland, from where it spread to Scotland, and even back into parts of Europe. At a time when the monastic tradition was becoming formalized in Europe, the Roman Catholic Church having rejected the gifts of the Spirit as being for then, the missionary work of Patrick and his successors, particularly in Scotland, retained Holy Spirit activity through the centuries to come.

600AD-1517

MONASTICISM BECOMES RELIGIOUS

With the rise and rise of the Roman Catholic Church to a dominant position not only in the spiritual but also in society where it raised armies and dominated political life, it was inevitable that monasticism would be drawn into this 'religious' source of influence.

The state of the church of the day was beautifully summed up when Augustine visited Rome. When being shown the church's wealth, Pope Innocent IV commented, "*You see that the Church is no longer in an age in which she can say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'*" Augustine replied, "*It is true, nor can she say to the lame man, 'Rise up and walk.'*" How true this was then - and now!

The spiritual life and vitality of early monasticism drifted into legalism and spiritual pride. As the monasteries had become wealthy through communal ownership and thrift, so they now fell into laziness, greed, and gluttony. Hence today's common caricature of a 'fat monk'.

Miracles were replaced by myths and legends, personal relationship with Jesus by mysticism and formalism.

In the book 'Mystike Theologia', written by a Syrian monk under the pen name Dionysius the Areopagite, he encouraged his readers.....

I counsel that in the earnest exercise of mystic contemplation, you leave the senses and activities of the intellect and all that the senses or intellect can perceive. Having laid your understanding to rest, strain as far as you can toward a union with Him whom neither being nor understanding can contain. So shall you be led upwards to the Ray of that divine Darkness which surpasses all existence.

The persecution suffering of the early church was replaced by self-inflicted long term fasting, sleep deprivation and exposure to the elements. Sickness became glorified and healing was only to be of the soul. Monasticism had become worldly and inward looking.

The credible miracles of the time were now found in the missionary expansion of the church. Three examples follow.

Ansgar (800-865), called "The Apostle of the North," was one of the first missionaries to Scandinavia. He is said to have experienced visions and dreams from childhood. When commended by his contemporaries, he exclaimed that the greatest miracle would be for him to become pious through them.

Miracles also accompanied the arrival of the Gospel to Britain. Augustine arrived in 597, sent by Pope Gregory. Reporting on Augustine's mission in his Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, the Venerable Bede (673-735) tells of a letter written by Gregory around 601 in which he commends Augustine because "*the English by outward miracles are drawn to inward grace.*" Gregory had also cautioned him not to be "*puffed up by the number of them.*"

The later "preaching friars", individuals such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi and Vincent of Ferrier, instead of withdrawing from the world, similarly experienced great success and saw miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit when they went out amongst the people and preached the gospel.

As mentioned earlier, there had become a separation between the priesthood and the people. This can be seen in the Roman Catholic Church's publication of its 'Roman Rituals' around 1000. Speaking in tongues was to be regarded as a sign of demon possession, while amongst monks and the church priesthood, a sign of sainthood! The people were given a corporate identity with the Church but not allowed a personal relationship with Jesus.

Medieval mysticism, while having some benefits was not spiritual in terms of personal relationship with the Saviour and the signs and wonders, miracles and healings that are to accompany it. However certain people broke the mould and went out from the monasteries to display true Christianity to the world through missions.

We will discover now that there was ongoing Holy Spirit activity in the midst of the Dark Ages, both within and outside the dominant Roman Catholic Church of the time.

A MONASTIC REVIVAL

After a period of spiritual inactivity in the Roman Catholic Church, the 11th century saw genuine spiritual renewal, particularly within the monastic movement. New orders emerged, including the Cistercians, the Franciscans and the Dominicans who, particularly the latter two, left their monasteries and went out into the world. Known as the 'preaching friars', they preached in the common languages and helped the people in many ways.

Characteristically they.....

1. Literally obeyed the commands of Jesus.
2. Took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.
3. Went on preaching missions without money or clothing, depending on God and people for their sustenance.
4. Saw miracles in their own lives and the people's lives.
5. Recovered the purity of faith of an earlier day.

(Isn't amazing what happens when we fully trust in the Lord?)

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX (1090-1153) Born of noble parentage in Fontaines, Burgundy, now east-central France, by choice he entered the monastery at Citeaux

in 1112. Making remarkable progress, he was commissioned by the abbot of Citeaux to establish a new monastery at Clairvaux in 1115.

Becoming widely influential through his travels, he was largely responsible for the Second Crusade (1147-1149), with noblemen, bishops, princes and popes seeking his counsel.

Bernard also gained recognition because of the many miracles that occurred in his ministry. It was reported, "*From all quarters sick persons were conveyed to him by the friends who sought from him a cure.*" Many miracles took place. A deaf-mute boy regained his hearing and spoke. The monk Gottfried reported of a blind boy after having his eyes opened shouting, "*I see day, I see everybody, I see people with hair.*" Clapping his hands in delight, he exclaimed, "*My God, now I will no more dash my feet against the stones.*"

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN (1098-1179) She has been recognised as "*the most prominent woman in the Church of her day.*" The leader of a Benedictine convent near Bingen on the Rhine in Germany, she was widely recognized for her power in prayer, being petitioned by many, including church officials, to intercede on their behalf. Many came to Hildegard seeking healing, even from as far away as Sweden. She applied no formula but relied upon the inner leading of the Holy Spirit for a unique solution in each case. It is reported, "*Sometimes the medium used was a prayer, sometimes a simple word of command, sometimes water which, as in one case, healed paralysis of the tongue.*" Contemporaries reported that "*scarcely a sick person came to her without being healed.*"

Hildegard had visions while wide-awake and perfectly conscious. What she saw, she saw by "using the eyes and ears of the inner person according to the will of God."

Additionally, she spoke and sang in tongues. Her colleagues referred to these spiritual songs as "concerts in the Spirit."

Misunderstood by some, her critics denounced her as being demon possessed. She was defended however, by her friend, Bernard of Clairvaux, who also commended her to Pope Eugenius III. In 1148, Eugenius personally visited her and, after investigating her revelations "*recognized the genuineness of her miracles and encouraged her to continue her course.*"

DOMINIC (1170-1221) A contemporary of Francis of Assisi, Dominic set up the preaching order known as the Dominicans, particularly known for their efforts in missionary work and education. Primarily they were seeking to win back to the Roman Catholic Church, those such as the Cathari and Waldensians, by outstripping them in piety and zeal.

Dominic was well known for visions and miracles. Napoleon, the son of Lord Cardinal Stephen, fell from his horse and instantly died. Dominic arrived on the scene, lifted his hands to the heavens and cried out, "*Young man, Napoleon, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I say to thee arise.*" Before the eyes of all those present, the young man arose and said, "*Give me something to eat.*"

Joining with a group of Germans travelling through Europe, Dominic enjoyed their hospitality but could not talk to them. Dominic told his companion to join him and "*kneel down and pray God that He teach us their language for we are not able to announce to them the Lord Jesus.*" Astonished at Dominic's sudden ability to speak their language, the Germans listened intently over a four-day period as Dominic shared the gospel.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI (1181-1226) The son of a prosperous merchant, as a young man, while praying in a church outside Assisi, he heard a voice say to him, "*Go and repair My house, which is fallen down.*" Interpreting "house" to mean the building in which he was praying, he immediately went to his father's warehouse, took a horse and a load of cloth, sold both and gave the money to the church for repairs.

Later, he realized that 'house' meant the church generally.

Quoting Hyatt again.....

"Francis established the Franciscan order, a monastic order dedicated to studying the Scriptures, preaching the gospel, praying and helping the poor. Interpreting Matthew 10:7-19 literally, they elected to renounce all earthly possessions and to live in poverty. The order was endowed with great spiritual power, and it has been called "perhaps the most thoroughly charismatic [order], in its primitive period, that the church has ever known. Indeed, Francis's preaching was accompanied by great power. Specifically, reports Butler, God gave Francis the gifts of prophecy and miracles. Also, many healings occurred as a result of Francis's prayers. On one occasion, for example, while preaching in the city of Narni, Francis was taken to a man who was completely paralyzed. The man had expressed assurance that if Francis would come to him, he would be completely healed. When Francis entered the man's room, he made the sign of the cross over the man from his head to his feet. Immediately, the man arose fully recovered."

According to Jacob de Voragine, a thirteenth-century writer, Francis had originally been named Giovanni (i.e. John), but adopted the name Francis as the result of a miracle from God that had empowered him to speak French. De Voragine says, "*Whenever he was filled with the fervour of the Holy Spirit, he burst forth ardently in the French tongue.*"

VINCENT OF FERRIER (1350-1419) At a time when he was ill, Vincent, a Dominican preacher, had a vision of Christ instructing him to *"go through the world preaching Christ."* And he was healed! Immediately, he set out preaching and teaching throughout Europe with amazing results. He was described as one whose words *"struck terror in the hearts of sinners."* Such conviction accompanied his preaching that, sometimes, he had to curtail his sermons because of overpowering sobs from the congregation. Everywhere he preached, numerous conversions and amazing miracles were reported. Some 'fainted' under the Holy Spirit's power. During ministry in the Netherlands, so many miracles happened, that an hour was

set aside daily for the healing of the sick. Vincent is also reported to have spoken in tongues.

OTHER EXAMPLES Many other examples include.....

Jean of the Cross spoke in tongues often, once convincing two Muslims to believe on Christ by speaking in their native Arabic.

St. Stephen (d. 1396) on missions to Georgia, preached to the native peoples in their own language, a tongue he had never learned.

St. Colette (1380-1447) spoke in both Latin and German neither of which she knew.

Francis Xavier (1506-1552) In his missions to the Far East, he is said to have spoken Japanese "*as if he had lived in Japan all his life.*" At his canonization by Urban VIII, it was emphasized that Xavier possessed the gift of tongues and "spoke to the various tribes with ease in their languages."

THE CATHARI (c.12th-14th centuries)

In an opposite approach to the Monastics who tried to reform the Roman Catholic Church from within, the Cathari, or 'come-outers' (meaning 'pure'), led morally strict lifestyles in contrast to the political and moral corruption of the established church.

The general understanding of the Cathari has been negative, as all earlier written records were composed by their institutional opponents. More recently however, this view has started to change, for there has developed an understanding that their 'revolt' was similar to others who opposed the excesses of the establishment through the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, Scaff in 'Ante-Nicene Christianity, vol. 5 of History of the Christian Church' says.....

The exciting cause of this religious revolt is to be looked for in the worldliness and arrogance of the clergy, the formalism of the Church's ritual and worldly ambitions of the papal policy...The people wanted to get behind the clergy and ritual of sacraments to Christ himself.

They opposed many things, including the emphasis on church buildings as being of religious value. Shaff continues his critique.....

God dwells not in houses made with hands. It is not the house of stone, but the good man and the good woman, and the community of such, that constitutes the Church. Prayer in the Church is no better than prayer in the closet.

THE CONSOLAMENTUM

In rejecting the highly developed ritualistic forms of the Church, the Cathari rejected both baptism and the Lord's Supper, replacing them with the 'Consolamentum', a baptism of the Holy Spirit received by the laying on of hands.

According to Augustus Neander, a nineteenth-century Lutheran scholar.....

By virtue of this imposition of hands, whoever submitted to it in a suitable frame of mind would be filled with gifts of the Holy Spirit and purified from all sin; he would be made capable thereby for the first time of rightly understanding the deep things of Scripture...This inward working of the divine Spirit stood to them in the place of sacraments.

The Cathari experienced the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues. One woman is recorded as speaking in Armenian, a language she did not understand. She was accused as being under a wizard's spell. The Roman Catholic Church accused the Catharis of witchcraft for exercising the gifts of the Spirit, in an attempt to destroy the movement.

HERETICS OR HEROES?

The establishment considered the Cathari as heretics and burned them at the stake or branded them on the forehead in an unsuccessful attempt to eradicate them. As we have seen earlier, this reaction is consistent of opposition to Holy Spirit movements throughout history.

While many establishment scholars have considered them to be non-Christian, or at best, sub-Christian, John Foxe, the sixteenth-century author of the famous classic, 'Foxe's Book of Martyrs', judged them to be true Christians, in fact, forerunners of the Protestant Reformation.

THE WALDENSES (c. 1176 - Today)

Beginning as a renewal movement within the Roman Catholic Church, seeking to live by New Testament patterns, they were rejected by the Church. Forming their own church, they emphasized inner spiritual life rather than the outward form and ritual of the establishment.

Their platform included 5 main points.....

1. To return to the pure teaching of Scripture.
2. Rejected the concept of purgatory.
3. Rejected the infallibility of the church.
4. Christian laypersons, male and female, were allowed to preach.
5. Selling ones goods and giving to the poor were acts of consecration.

PETER WALDO (c.1140 -1218) A wealthy merchant from Lyons in southern France, he obtained a copy of the New Testament, he was particularly moved by Matthew 10:5-13, where the disciples were told to go away and preach without concern for material comfort. Keeping just enough goods to provide for his family, he gave up the rest and became an itinerant preacher.

He life of devotion soon attracted sizeable numbers of those with like minds. They went out preaching 2 by 2, as was the example set by Scripture.

REJECTION AND PERSECUTION

Like others before, and since, he tried to minister within the Church, but was rejected when he requested his lay people be allowed to preach. In 1179, Pope Innocent III rejected the request, considering them to be but ignorant lay people. Waldo, forced to choose between obedience to God and man, he chose to continue the work already begun. As could be expected, in 1184, Pope Lucius III

excommunicated the Waldenses.

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Pursuing New Testament Christianity, they experienced the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit. Inevitably too, like the Cathari, the Waldenses were accused of witchcraft because of miraculous phenomena that took place, which also became grounds for persecution by the institutional church.

DIVINE HEALING

Divine healing was a vital aspect of their belief system. The Waldensian confession of 1431 states:

Therefore concerning the anointing of the sick, we hold it as an article of faith, and profess sincerely from the heart that sick persons, when they ask it, may lawfully be anointed with anointing oil by one who joins them in praying that it may be efficacious to the healing of the body according to the design and end and effect mentioned by the apostles; and we profess that such an anointing performed according to the apostolic design and practice will be healing and profitable.

EQUALITY IN MINISTRY

The Waldenses recognized the responsibility of both men and women to preach, to baptize and to administer the Lord's Supper. The basis for ministry was the anointing or gifting of the Spirit rather than institutional appointment or ordination. Ministry was open to all since it was the direct, free activity of the Holy Spirit that gave the right to bind and loose, to consecrate and bless.

CONCLUSION

Severely persecuted by the institutional church, the Waldenses endured, and in the 16th century aligned themselves with the Protestant Reformation, while retaining their own identity, still being found in many parts of Italy. While their position on

charismatic gifts today, is not so clear, they certainly were a Holy Spirit based movement in origin.

1517-1700

MARTIN LUTHER (1483 -1546)

Luther's "95 Theses", nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Church on 31 October 1517, were credited with starting the Protestant Reformation. However, the foundation of the Reformation arose from the new found ability of people to read modern, printed, European translations such as the English Wycliffe, the French Paris, and German Mentel Bibles, of the primarily hand written, Latin Vulgate Bible that was the previously the preserve of the clergy.

Luther protested the selling of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) without requiring repentance. These financed the extravagances of the Church. As well, he long struggled with the issue of authority, before concluding that salvation was by faith alone, not church-designated works and sacraments. This led to the excommunication of Luther from the RCC in 1521.

LUTHER AND MIRACLES

It is often thought that Luther rejected the miraculous as he objected to the superstition and greed associated with medieval miracles of the RCC, along with some extreme teachings and actions of certain Anabaptists, claimed to be at the leading of the Holy Spirit.

However, in his personal life, Luther clearly believed in the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit. Evidence is presented by Professor Bengt Hoffman of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in his book 'Luther and the Mystics'. He reports a conversation in which Cochelus asks Luther if he had received special revelations. Luther was silent for a moment, and then replied, "*'Est mihi revelatum,' yes, he had had revelations.*" It seems that one of these was similar to Paul's experience of being caught up to the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2.

OF AUTHORITY

Luther claimed the direct activity of the Holy Spirit as a source for his own authority and teaching. In one of his early writings titled 'The Babylon Captivity of the Church', he said.....

"I have learned under the Spirit's guidance."

When challenged by the RCC and civil authorities at Worms, Luther replied he.....

"relied on the revelation of God to him—through the Word, but via the Spirit in a personal manner."

OF THE PROPHETIC GIFT

Many of Luther's early followers believed him to be a prophet. One of his contemporaries and first biographers, Johann Mathesius, mentions numerous prophecies spoken by Luther that were fulfilled. Mathesius continues.....

"With many sure prophecies he confirmed his doctrine."

OF HEALING

Luther prayed for the sick. He is quoted as saying.....

"Often has it happened, and still does, that devils have been driven out in the name of Christ; also by calling on His name and prayer, the sick have been healed."

I now quote directly from Eddie L. Hyatt, whose material provides the basis for much of this history.....

On one occasion, Luther's close friend and colleague, Philip Melancthon, became extremely ill and was at death's door. It is said that Luther prayed fervently using all the relevant promises he could repeat from Scripture. Then, taking Melancthon by the hand, he said, "Be of good courage, Philip, you shall not die." Melancthon immediately revived and soon regained his health.

He later said, "I should have been a dead man had I not been recalled from death itself by the coming of Luther."

On another occasion, Luther's colleague, Frederick Myconius, lay dying in the last stages of tuberculosis. When Luther heard about his friend's condition, he wrote him a letter that exudes faith for the miraculous.

He said: I command thee in the Name of God to live because I still have need of thee in the work of reforming the Church. The Lord will never let me hear that thou art dead but permit thee to survive me. For this I am praying, this is my will, and may my will be done because I seek only to glorify the Name of God.

Myconius said that when he read the letter it seemed as though he heard Christ say, "Lazarus, come forth!" Luther's prayer was answered. Myconius was healed and outlived Luther by two months.

LUTHER AND CESSATIONISM

Luther and his fellow reformers must take some responsibility for the theory of the cessation of miracles.

When challenged by the RCC to prove his own authority through personal miracles, Luther argued that miracles were no longer necessary in the post-Apostolic age to prove the authority of those who stood on Scripture.

He used a similar argument when challenged over the excesses of some Anabaptists.

However, his comments have been taken out of context and converted into a 'convenient' doctrine, still followed by the Lutherans and many other denominations.

CONCLUSION

It has been wrongly held by many that Luther was against the personal work of the

Holy Spirit today. It is apparent that Martin Luther did experience both the leading and spiritual gifts. The historian Souer's German work, "A History of the Christian Church", on page 406 of volume 3, describes Luther as.....

"a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues and interpreter, in one person, endowed with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

THE ANABAPTISTS

While Luther was open to the supernatural in his own life, he largely rejected it in church life, retaining much of the liturgy and organisational principles of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) e.g. infant baptism and a state supported, territorial church.

THE SO-CALLED RADICAL REFORMERS

The Anabaptist movement began in Zurich, Switzerland, as part of the Reform Movement led by Ulrich Zingli, a contemporary of Luther. A split developed between Zingli and two of his colleagues, Felix Manz and Conrad Grebel, when Zingli decided to co-operate with the Zurich City Council's decree that mass continue to be celebrated and the destruction of images in the churches be stopped. Those who disagreed with this and also refused infant baptism were banished from the region.

In Switzerland, and throughout Europe, groups of reformers dissatisfied with the 'half way house' reforms of Luther and Zwingli, whom they accused of tearing down the old systems without building new ones, desired to re-establish the pure apostolic order of the New Testament church.

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

At the heart of Anabaptist beliefs was the need for believers (as opposed to infant) baptism. For this they were heavily persecuted by both the RCC and other Protestant groups, with adult baptism being made an offence punishable by death.

Additionally, they believed in the illumination of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit - the ability, as we would say, to 'read between the lines'. The persecution led them to meet in homes, forests and fields, where they regularly danced in the Spirit, spoke in tongues and fell under the Spirit's power.

THE 'PROPHETHOOD' OF ALL BELIEVERS

The Anabaptists, in response to the ecclesiastical system of the RCC, extended Luther's 'priesthood of believers' revelation to a 1 Corinthians 14 system, being the exercise of spiritual gifts by all believers during church meetings.

In a Swiss Anabaptist document dated c.1532-1534 entitled 'Answer of Some Who Are Called (Ana)Baptists Why They Do Not Attend the Churches', the author says.....

When someone comes to church and constantly hears only one person speaking, and all the listeners are silent, neither speaking nor prophesying, who can or will regard or confess the same to be a spiritual congregation, or confess according to 1 Corinthians 14 that God is dwelling and operating in them through His Holy Spirit with His gifts, impelling them one after another in the above mentioned order of speaking and prophesying.

CHARISMATIC-PROPHETIC EXTREMES

It is a characteristic truism that charismatic Christians of every age believe the return of Jesus to be imminent. This apocalyptic expectation was taken to extremes by a few early Anabaptists, and led to the whole movement being discredited amongst many, both then and now.

A writer of the time, Obe Philips, in "A Confession," wrote.....

Now when these teachings and consolation with all the fantasies, dreams, revelations and visions daily occurred among the brethren, there was no little joy and expectation among us, hoping all would be true and fulfilled, for we were all unsuspecting, innocent, simple, without guile or cunning, and were not aware of any false visions, prophets and revelations. We supposed in our simplicity that if we guarded ourselves against the papists, Lutherans and Zwinglians, then all was well and we need have no cares. Thereby a man's experience brings him great wisdom.

False prophets who move outside of Scripture to manipulate people for their own ends are a problem in every generation.

Many Anabaptists were martyred in the most horrible ways, both by those inside and outside the church. It is written by Marpeck, an Anabaptist leader in central Germany that.....

tortures inflicted by sword, rope, fire and water and suffering terrible, tyrannical, unheard-of deaths and martyrdoms, all of which they could easily have avoided by recantation.

.....was the fate of many devout, Spirit filled believers.

THE ANABAPTIST LEGACY

Eddie L. Hyatt, succinctly sums up the Anabaptists legacy.....

The Anabaptist vision of the separation of the powers of the church and state became a foundational principle of modern Western society. Their rejection of force and coercion in matters of faith and their insistence on freedom of conscience have become hallmarks of freedom-loving people and nations throughout the world. George Williams, former professor of ecclesiastical history at Yale University, has said:

The whole Western world, not only the direct descendants of the Continental Anabaptists, not alone even the larger Protestant community, but all who cherish Western institutions and freedoms, must acknowledge their indebtedness to the valor and the vision of the Anabaptists who glimpsed afresh the disparities between the church and the world, even when the latter construed itself as Christian.

Direct descendants of the Anabaptists include the Amish, Hutterite and Mennonite churches. In addition, their free-church concept influenced Puritan Separatists, Baptists and Quakers. Even more important is their charismatic influence on succeeding generations.

Mennonite scholar John H. Yoder has said that Pentecostalism "is in our century the closest parallel to what Anabaptism was in the sixteenth." Anabaptism was certainly a Charismatic movement.

THE FRENCH PROPHETS

THE HUGENOTS

After 1520, Reformation ideas began to infiltrate Catholic France, finding fertile soil there, in spite of intense persecution. Protestantism then became a force to be reckoned with. After 1560, French protestants became known as the Huguenots. In 1598 they were granted religious freedom by the Edict of Nantes.

However, when Louis XIV revoked the charter in 1685, severe persecution resumed.

Up to 400,000 Huguenots fled to England, Prussia, Holland, South Africa and the Carolinas in North America. Many though, chose to remain, primarily being concentrated in the Cevennes Mountains of southern France. Because of the dynamic power of the Spirit operating in their midst, they became known as the French Prophets.

Their firm belief in the supernatural power of God arose from their prayer and diligent searching of the New Testament. They insisted.....

"God has no where in the Scriptures concluded Himself from dispensing again the extraordinary gifts of His Spirit unto men."

Tongues, visions, prophetic utterances and other supernatural phenomena were common amongst them.

A PROPHETIC ANOINTING

Both children and adults received this anointing. Children as young as 3 prophesied in perfect French that was not their native language. Adults too, experienced the same spiritual phenomena.

It is reported that one simple minded woman, under the power of the Holy Spirit gave discourses of such elevated character in such good French that her hearers exclaimed.....

"This ass of Balaam has a mouth of gold."

A writer of the day wrote of many whom.....

"fell on their backs, they shut their eyes, they heaved with the breast, they remained a while in trances, and coming out of them with twitching, they uttered all that came into their mouths."

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Tongues speaking was apparently common amongst the French Prophets. John Venett, who escaped to England, recalled hearing his mother speak French under the power of the Holy Spirit. He was amazed.....

"because she never before attempted to speak a word in that language, nor has since to my knowledge, and I am certain she could not do it."

Sir Richard Bulkey, a wealthy English nobleman, was converted through contact with French Prophets who were refugees in England. He tells of hearing one of their leaders, John Lacy.....

"repeat long sentences in Latin, and another refugee speak in Hebrew, neither one of whom could speak a single word in these languages when not in spiritual ecstasy."

CAMISARDS

Hunted down by the dragoons of the French Government, the believers mounted an armed resistance becoming known as Camisards, that is, 'night stalkers.' By 1711 their resistance was crushed, and the movement dispersed. Their memory

could not be extinguished with their spiritual experiences and faith exploits became legendary throughout Europe.

John Wesley cautiously welcomed those who fled to England, declaring when a Dr Middleton denied the post apostolic gift of tongues.....

"Sir, your memory fails you again...It has been heard of more than once, no further off than the days of Dauphin,".....

in a reference to the French prophets.

THE QUAKERS

The 'Religious Society of Friends', or 'Quakers' as they were derogatively known for shaking under the power of the Holy Spirit, was an obvious charismatic movement, in huge contrast to the established church of the time. King Henry VIII had split from Rome, but other than appointing himself head of the Church, had continued with most Roman Catholic practices.

GEORGE FOX (1624-91) In total despair, unable to find help from the state Church and clergy, he heard a voice say.....

"There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition."

The Lord then proceeded to teach him personally and dynamically, and he became particularly convinced of the priority of Christ within (Colossians 1:27) and the Inner Light (John 1:1-14).

This brought Fox into conflict with the authoritarian State Church, which relied on ritual and ceremony to rule the people. He emphasized personal responsibility to seek and respond to Christ, through Scripture. He preached against church buildings, salaried clergy, and titles. The authority to minister remained with Christ, expressing itself through true and equal believers.

PERSECUTION

This led to both civil and church persecution. At one time 15,000 Quakers were held in British prisons and 100's died in there. But the movement continued to grow!

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Charismatic gifts were common among the early Quakers. Fox's 'Journal and Book of Miracles' is filled with accounts of miraculous healings and other charismatic

gifts. It reports that on one occasion as Fox prayed.....

The Lord's power was so great that the house seemed to be shaken. When I had done some of the professors said it was now as in the days of the apostles, when the house was shaken where they were.

In his Journal, Fox talks of the healing of John Banks, a fellow Quaker who had lost the use of his right arm and hand. Banks had a powerful dream where he was to ask Fox to pray for him. Fox prayed.....

"The Lord strengthen thee within and without."

When eating a meal elsewhere that night, Banks realized he had regained full use of his arm and hand. Later, in gratitude he said.....

My heart was broke into true tenderness before the Lord, and the next day I went home, with my hand and arm restored to its former use and strength, without any pain. And the next time that George Fox and I met he readily said, "John, thou mended, thou mended;" I answered, "Yes, very well, in a little time." "Well," said he, "give God the glory."

Spiritual gifts such as discerning of spirits and gifts of wisdom and discernment were exercised by Fox and others.

Speaking in tongues was normal. Edward Burrough, a friend and colleague of Fox recalled Quaker meetings where they sat and waited in silence upon God for hours at a time, experiencing God's dynamic and apostolic presence, saying.....

We received often the pouring down of the Spirit upon us, and the gift of God's Holy eternal Spirit as in the days of old, and our hearts were made glad, and our tongues loosed, and our mouths opened, and we spoke with new tongues, as the Lord gave us utterance, and as His Spirit led us, which was poured down upon us, on sons and daughters.

CONCLUSION

In spite of savage persecution, stoning's, whippings, beatings, public hangings and lengthy imprisonments, Quaker missionaries went round the known world, becoming the fastest growing Christian movement in the world within a single generation, having by 1660, forty to sixty thousand adherents. This truly was a Spirit-led movement.

THE MONROVIAN REVIVAL

JOHN HUS (1373-1415) A pre-Lutheran reformer, Hus was a professor at the University of Prague, (now the capital of the Czech Republic) and pastor of Bethlehem Chapel, the most influential church there. One hundred years before Luther, he preached justification by faith and the supreme authority of Scripture!

As could be expected, his preaching infuriated the church hierarchy, and he was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1415.

THE MONROVIANS (United Brethren)

The followers of Hus, persecuted by the institutional church, spread the word through Bohemia and into the neighbouring province of Monrovia. The Counter Reformation in the Roman Catholic Church saw many forced from their homes, between 1722 and 1727.

Many of these refugees found sanctuary at Berthelsdorf, Saxony, on the estate of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760). There they established the community of Herrnhut, meaning "under the Lord's watch" or "on watch for the Lord."

COUNT ZINZENDORF (1700-1760) The Count was a committed Christian whom a contemporary described as "*one of the most extraordinary personages that have appeared in the Church of Christ since the period of the Reformation.*" Zinzendorf was reared by Pietist parents and was influenced by the leaders of the Pietist movement. Pietism was a spiritual renewal that arose within German Lutheranism in the late 1600's, in a reaction to the intellectual staleness that had arisen within Lutheranism one hundred years after Luther.

FERVENT PRAYER

Zinzendorf organized the Moravians into a church body with elders and pastors,

and he encouraged them to seek God for a gracious outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Zinzendorf himself led the way with fervent supplications that sometimes lasted through the night. Others soon began to gather of their own accord for prayer continuing at times for the entire night. A spirit of prayer prevailed, touching the children as well as the adults.

AN OUTPOURING

During the summer of 1727, their prayers began to be answered in a remarkable fashion. On Sunday, August 10, about noon, while Pastor Rothe was leading the meeting at Herrnhut, he was overwhelmed by the presence of the Lord and fell to the floor. The entire congregation, overwhelmed by the Spirit and presence of the Lord, sank to the floor with him. The service continued until midnight with prayer and singing, weeping and supplication.

During a communion service three days later, God's presence was manifest in such a way that none of the participants could fully describe it. John Greenfield, Moravian historian and evangelist, says that they "hardly knew whether they belonged to heaven or earth." Zinzendorf said.....

A sense of the nearness of Christ [was] bestowed in a single moment upon all the members that were present; and it was so unanimous that two members, at work twenty miles away, unaware that the meeting was being held, became at the same time deeply conscious of the same blessing.

Miraculous healings and other spiritual gifts appeared, including prophesying and supernatural healings. Again Zinzendorf said.....

To believe against hope is the root of the gift of miracles; and I owe this testimony to our beloved Church, that Apostolic powers are there manifested. We have had undeniable proofs thereof in the unequivocal discovery of things, persons and circumstances which could not humanly have been discovered, in the healing of maladies in themselves incurable, such as cancers, consumptions, when the patient was in the agonies of death, all by means of prayer, or of a single word.

Critics inevitably criticized them for speaking in tongues also.

This initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit lasted for 4 months.

'100 YEAR' PRAYER MEETING

On August 26, 1727, 48 Moravian men and women met and covenanted together to continue from one midnight to the next in continuous prayer. The twenty-four hours of the night and day were divided among themselves by lot as each took their turn in keeping a continual fire burning on the altar (Leviticus 6:13-14). Others soon joined this group of intercessors, and the group grew to seventy-seven. The children also organized a similar plan. The fervent intercessory prayers kindled a burning desire to make Christ's salvation known to the heathen. These meetings continued, non-stop, for 100 years!

MISSIONARIES

Missionaries spread throughout Europe, North and South America, Asia and Africa. Moravian missionaries sailed to Georgia on the same boat as John Wesley, profoundly influencing his life. The German historian of Protestant missions, Dr. Warneck, declared.....

"This small Church in twenty years called into being more Missions than the whole evangelical Church has done in two centuries."

1700-1900

METHODISM

JOHN WESLEY (1703-1791) The son of an Anglican vicar and brilliant mother, John graduated from Oxford with the highest honours available and was ordained into the Anglican priesthood in 1728, aged 25.

While at Oxford he and his brother Charles founded a group which became known as Methodists, due to their disciplined, methodical approach to seeking God. It did not bring John peace to his soul.

After a failed missionary venture to Georgia, USA, he returned to Britain and continued his search. On 14 May, 1738, he found the inner assurance he had long sought at a reading of Luther's 'Preface to Romans', at a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, declaring.....

I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

This radically changed both his personal life and his ministry. Preaching justification by Christ alone, he was accepted by the masses but rejected by the church hierarchy, a rejection that continually stung him.

Supernatural phenomena followed. Concerning an all-night prayer meeting Wesley wrote in his 'Journal'.....

At about three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground...We broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

As the churches continued to reject him, he found new avenues to minister, traveling on horseback throughout England, preaching in the open air. Multitudes were converted. The Holy Spirit confirmed the Word with healings, with deliverances and with unusual manifestations such as falling, trembling, roaring, crying and laughing. Healings took place too.

Interestingly, he was 'charged with enthusiasm' by an appropriately named 'Mr Church', particularly over the supernatural phenomena being experienced! Wesley responded.....

I do not recollect any Scripture wherein we are taught that miracles were to be confined within the limits either of the apostolic age or the Cyprian age, or of any period of time, longer or shorter, even till the restitution of all things.

A SECOND WORK OF GRACE

Wesley's primary revelation was his emphasis on an experience that Christians should seek subsequent to the new birth experience. He referred to this second experience as Christian perfection or entire sanctification. This was not sinless perfection. For Wesley, this experience consisted of God's love so filling the heart that the power of sin would be broken and holiness of life would result. While a sanctified person could still make mistakes, and even sin, the mistakes would be related to the mind and making poor judgments rather than wilful sins of the heart, being based on Hebrews 12:14

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness [sanctification] without which no man shall see the Lord" (KJV)

JOHN FLETCHER (1729-1785) Fletcher, an ordained Anglican priest, became the systematic theologian of early Methodism. His most important work was 'Checks to Antinomianism,' a defence of the Arminian theology of Wesley and a rebuttal of the Calvinistic branch of Methodism led by George Whitfield.

Quoting Eddie Hyatt.....

Fletcher was widely read by nineteenth-century holiness advocates who also incorporated his Pentecostal language into their teaching and writing. Wesleyan terminology was thus replaced by his Pentecostal terminology. This helped set the stage for the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement that emerged out of the nineteenth-century Holiness movement. Early Methodism, a Charismatic movement in its own right, thus became the womb that gave birth to the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement of the twentieth century.

THE AMERICAN GREAT AWAKENING (1726-1750)

By 1726, through the demoralizing effect of frontier challenges and several brutal wars, there was a continuing moral and spiritual decline which the formalized religious churches were unable to influence.

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758) Pastor of the Congregational Church in Northampton, Massachusetts, Edwards expressed his concern for the "general deadness throughout the land", setting himself to seek God for a "revival of religion." Others also began to seek God diligently. In 1726 a spiritual awakening broke out in various regions along the eastern seaboard of the US.

Edward's home town of Northampton, Massachusetts was one such place. An awesome sense of the Holy Spirit's divine presence permeated the entire community. Edwards reports that during the spring and summer of 1735, "*the town seemed to be full of the presence of God.*" In every part of town, the Spirit of God was powerfully at work until.....

"there was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world."

Without formal evangelical outreach, Edward's church filled to overflowing. Edwards commented.....

Our public assemblies were then beautiful: the congregation was alive in God's service, everyone intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth; the assembly were in general from time to time in tears while the word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours.

Outsiders often scoffed at the events in Northampton. Yet when they entered the

town, their scepticism dissipated in the overwhelming presence of God. Returning home, carrying the revival spirit with them, the awakening spread.

Edwards was particularly known for his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God", when the congregation grasped the backs of the pews and pillars to avoid, as it were, being consumed by eternal flames. On the other hand, Edwards was very sensitive and could be moved to tears contemplating the love and mercy of God. He commonly spent 18 hours in prayer before preaching a sermon. The resulting revival transformed both the local community and the nation.

GEORGE WHITFIELD (1714-1770) An English, Anglican associate of the Wesleys, but not denominationally prejudiced, he came to America in 1739 and preached up and down the Eastern Seaboard.

Everywhere he went, shops shut and workers laid down their tools to come to his meetings. At a time when Boston's population was round 25,000, he preached to a crowd of 30,000 on Boston Common!

Signs and wonders accompanied his preaching. Whitfield once commented.....

Look where I would, most were drowned in tears. Some were struck pale as death, others wringing their hands, others lying on the ground, others sinking into the arms of their friends and most lifting up their eyes to heaven and crying out to God.

Benjamin Franklin, a close non-Christian friend of Whitfield's reported.....

In 1739 there arrived among us from Ireland the Reverend Mr Whitfield who made himself remarkable there as an itinerant preacher. He was at first permitted to preach in some of our churches, but the clergy, taking a dislike to him, soon refused him their pulpits, and he was obliged to preach in the fields. The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was a matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were

growing religious so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.

Both Edwards and Whitfield were rooted in Calvinism, and while accepting spiritual manifestations such as falling under the power of the Holy Spirit, for they accompanied their preaching, they rejected spiritual gifts such as prophecy, tongues and miracles, saying they ended with the Apostles.

However it is obvious that the power of the Holy Spirit rested with them and had huge political influence. Harvard professor William Perry states,

"The Declaration of Independence of 1776 was a result of the evangelical preaching of the evangelists of the Great Awakening."

THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING (1800-1840)

Quoting directly from Hyatt.....

As the nineteenth century dawned, America was again morally bankrupt. A generation had come of age that knew little of the revival that had swept the nation sixty years earlier. Eight years of war had drained the nation's vitality, leaving a dark cloud of spiritual indifference and moral degradation. Negative influences from the French Revolution were penetrating American society, and deism was at its peak of popularity. All of this resulted in a rise in profanity, drunkenness, gambling and lewdness.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church circulated a pastoral letter declaring they were "filled with concern and awful dread" at conditions they beheld on every hand. They expressed the solemn conviction "that the eternal God has a controversy with this nation." This concern prompted fervent prayer that precipitated a national spiritual awakening beginning on the East Coast around 1800 and spreading to the western frontier.

REVIVAL ON THE EAST COAST

East Coast Colleges were hotbeds of rebellion, of 'infidels' as they were then known, yet became centres of revival.

At Yale, President Timothy Dwight, son-in-law of Jonathan Edwards, preached a series of messages on infidelity resulting in 1/3 of the student body declaring faith in Christ. Revival fires engulfed Dartmouth, Williams and other colleges. From there, it swept into the towns and cities.

REVIVAL IN KENTUCKY

Far more influential was the events in Kentucky, over the Allegheny Mountains.

James McGready, a Presbyterian pastor of three small congregations on the Gasper, Red and Muddy Rivers in Logan County, Kentucky, experienced revival. In 1796, he led his congregation in signing a covenant to pray every Saturday and Sunday morning, devoting the third Saturday of each month to prayer and fasting. Their focus was revival.

Four years passed with no obvious change, when suddenly a revival broke out that would eventually change the course of the American nation.

It started in a weekend meeting at McGready's Red River Church. The presence of the Spirit was so intense during the first two days of the meeting that the congregation was reduced to tears, several times. On the final day, after the formal service had ended and other ministers had left, two Methodist ministers, John and William McGhee, lingered behind with the congregation. The Holy Spirit seemed to permeate the very atmosphere, and weeping could be heard throughout the house. Finally, John McGhee rose to his feet to give one final exhortation.....

I exhorted them to let the Lord Omnipotent reign in their hearts and submit to Him and their souls should live. Many broke silence. The woman in the east end of the house shouted tremendously. I left the pulpit to go to her. Several spoke to me, "You know these people Presbyterian are much for order, they will not bear the confusion, go back and be quiet." I turned to go back and was near falling, the power of God was strong upon me. I turned again, and losing sight of fear of man, I went through the house shouting and exhorting with all possible ecstasy and energy and the floor was soon covered by the slain.

With news spreading quickly, McGready announced another meeting for the end of July at the Gasper River church. Response was phenomenal, some travelling 100 miles to be there! Many came with tents, prepared to remain for the 4 days. The first camp meeting!

The first service continued throughout the night. Sleep and physical comforts

seemed to be forgotten as things eternal gripped the hearts and minds of the people. On the Sunday evening, as John McGhee preached, the cries of the penitent almost drowned his voice. People fell prostrate on the ground, where cries of distress over sin soon gave way to shouts of joy arising out of assurance of salvation.

BARTON STONE AND THE CANE RIDGE REVIVAL

Barton W. Stone, pastor of Presbyterian churches at Concord and Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, Kentucky, attended the Red River meeting. Convinced it was a genuine work of God, he applied McGready's principles, and revival fires began to burn in his two congregations.

A Camp Meeting at Cane ridge, beginning on August 6, 1801, and attended by between 10 and 25,000 people, saw many manifestations of the Holy Spirit. James Findlay, not a professing Christian, attended and reported.....

The noise was like the roar of Niagara. The vast sea of human beings seemed to be agitated as if by a storm. Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy in the most piteous accents, while others shouted vociferously. A strange supernatural power seemed to pervade the entire mass of mind there collected... At one time I saw at least 500, swept down in a moment as if a battery of a 1000 guns had been opened upon them, and then immediately followed shrieks and shouts that rent the very heavens. I fled for the woods...and wished I had stayed at home.

Because of the number and nature of manifestations, critics abounded, with Barton Stone commenting.....

"So low had religion sunk, and such carelessness had universally prevailed that I have thought that nothing common could have arrested and held the attention of the people."

CONCLUSION

Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists now often joined together in great general camp meetings with thousands attending. The revival grew, gaining momentum like a great tidal wave. Peter Cartwright, a Methodist preacher, stated.....

"The work went on and spread almost in every direction gathering additional force till our country seemed all coming to God."

From 1800-1803, in Kentucky alone, Baptist churches added 10,000 new members, and the Methodists, 40,000. Every denomination experienced the fruit of the revival, assuring the religious character of the United States for generations to come.

EDWARD IRVING AND THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH

EDWARD IRVING (1792-1834) A Scottish native, he received an MA, aged 16, and was ordained in the Church of Scotland in 1822. A powerful preacher, moving to London, he took the pastorate of the Caledonian Chapel where he attracted large and influential crowds.

GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In 1827, Irving preached a sermon series on baptism, referring to Acts 2:38 - repent and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was to be for today too! He developed this alongside the doctrine of Incarnation (Christ had taken on human sinfulness but triumphed over it through Holy Spirit power), a doctrine at odds with the church teaching of the time. Commenting on ongoing spiritual gifts he said.....

If they ask for an explanation of the fact that these powers have ceased in the Church, I answer, that they have decayed just as faith and holiness have decayed; but that they have ceased is not a matter so clear. Till the time of the Reformation, this opinion was never mooted in the Church; and to this day the Roman Catholics, and every other portion of the Church but ourselves, maintain the very contrary.

A CHARISMATIC OUTBREAK IN SCOTLAND

At the same time, a charismatic outbreak was occurring in the Gareloch and Port Glasgow regions of western Scotland. In the town of Farnicarry, a young lady, Mary Campbell, lay dying of TB. On March 28, 1830, while praying with her sister and a friend, the Holy Spirit came on her with power, as later quoted by Edward Irving

... and constrained her to speak at great length, and with superhuman strength, in an unknown tongue, to the great astonishment of all who heard, and to her own great edification and enjoyment in God.

Concurrently, in the Port Glasgow area, prayer meetings were being held, praying for a restoration of spiritual gifts. In April 1830, James McDonald had a spiritual experience he identified as Holy Spirit baptism. A few moments later, he went to his sister Margaret's room, who was near death, and commanded her to rise from her bed. She did so, miraculously healed!

James then felt led to write a letter to Mary Campbell, with whom he and his family were acquainted. Telling her of Margaret's healing he commanded her to arise as well. Mary did so and later wrote...

...a power which no words can describe; it was felt to be indeed the voice of Christ... I was verily made in a moment to stand upon my feet, leap and walk, sing and rejoice.

A few evenings later, on 18 April, 1830, both James and his brother spoke in tongues for the first time. The next night they again spoke, and interpreted also. The first (and very appropriate) interpretation was.....

"Behold! He cometh—Jesus cometh!"

Stirring the whole area, these events became known far and wide, and people came to visit the McDonald house from England and Ireland, as well as Scotland.

Quoting directly from Hyatt.....

Irving received the reports of these events with a mix of excitement and caution. "I felt it to be a matter of too great concern to yield up my faith to anything but the clearest evidence." He realized that if true, "it would revolutionize the Church and make such an upturning as the world had not seen." After discussing the events with eyewitnesses, including members of his own church, and interviewing the Spirit-baptized ones themselves, Irving concluded that this, indeed, was a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

EVENTS IN LONDON

Quoting from Strachan, 'The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving'.....

Irving began to testify publicly of the events to his congregation, and he encouraged prayer meetings for the purpose of seeking spiritual gifts. As a result, almost a year later on April 31, 1831, Mrs. Cardale, the wife of a prominent London lawyer and a member of Irving's church, spoke in tongues at a home prayer meeting. Six months later, on October 30, Miss Hall spoke in tongues in the vestry of Regent Square Church. The following Sunday, several believers brought forth utterances in tongues and prophecy during the morning worship service. Needless to say, this caused no small stir.

While the majority of the congregation support Irving in his quest for spiritual gifts, inevitably several key leaders opposed him. After 3 months of spiritual manifestations, the trustees of the Regent Square Church appealed to the presbytery of the Church of Scotland to intervene. Following a trial in which he was found guilty of allowing individuals without official appointment or ordination to lead public worship, Irving was locked out of his church on May 4 1832. On March 13, 1833, he was also convicted of holding heretical views of concerning the person and humanity of Christ, and excommunicated from the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

A majority of the Regent Square members joined him in forming a new congregation on Newman Street, called the Catholic Apostolic Church. In seeking to restore the gifts, ministries and power of the early church, 12'apostles' were appointed, along with Irving as 'angel' or 'pastor'. Other likeminded churches linked themselves with the movement.

THE STANDING SIGN

Irving then formulated ideas on Spirit baptism as being an endowment of power subsequent to regeneration. Speaking of Spirit baptism, quoting David Dorries, "Edward Irving and the Standing Sign,"

He also speaks of Spirit baptism "whose standing sign, if we err not, is the speaking with tongues."

Irving himself said.....

Therefore it is nothing to be doubted that tongues are a great instrument for personal edification, however mysterious it may seem to us; and they are on that account greatly to be desired. and "that they may prophesy and edify the Church when they themselves have been edified."

Classic Pentecostal doctrine 70 years before the Pentecostal movement began!

Irving's involvement with the CAC was short lived as, failing in health, he travelled on a horse, back to Glasgow in September 1834. Forming a new congregation, his health rapidly deteriorated and he died of consumption (TB) on December 7 1834, aged 42.

Larry Christenson, a Lutheran charismatic, writes.....

He was a man ahead of his time, pointing to things yet future for the great body of the Church. He was a forerunner not only of the Catholic Apostolic Church in a direct sense, but of the entire pentecostal phenomenon of the twentieth century. The things he said and did, his emphases and concerns, largely rejected in his own day, have become common place in the Pentecostal movement of our time.

CONCLUSION

Much like the first church, the Catholic Apostolic Church appointed no successors and after the last apostle died in 1901, the church, in a practical sense, ended. Interestingly, in the very same year that a group of Bible school students in Topeka, Kansas, experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. The modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement began. But, in reality, it had already been experienced by Edward Irving, 70 years earlier!

OTHER PROMINENT LEADERS

PHOEBE PALMER (1807-1874) The 19th century Holiness movement began in the Methodist Church, as they sought to revive the religious fervour of the 1700's and John Wesley's teaching of a 'second work of grace' in the believer. While other words were used to describe this teaching in the various denominations to which the movement spread, it was what we now know as the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Phoebe Palmer was the most prominent and influential leader of this movement. The wife of a prominent New York physician, Dr Walter Palmer, she was a Methodist lay person. While never ordained, she has been widely regarded as the most influential female theologian ever.

In 1840, she became the leader of the 'Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness'. Meetings were held in the Palmer's spacious parlour, and attended by 4 Methodist bishops and other leaders from the Methodists and other denominations. Phoebe wrote 3 books and edited and published the most influential Holiness periodical of the era, "The Guide to Holiness".

She travelled widely throughout the US, Canada and Britain, in later times accompanied by her husband.

From England, Phoebe reported, "*the Lord was saving the people by scores daily.*" and that "*now the entire (Newcastle) community seems ready to acknowledge its [the revival's] power.*" There was such a presence of God that "*people are weeping all over the house*" and "*the power of God is sensibly felt to be present to heal.*" She also spoke of people who "*felt the girdings of almighty power in an unusual manner*" and of "*tokens of divine presence*" among them.

Phoebe understood this as "*a resuscitation of primitive Christianity and primitive Methodism.*"

Speaking in tongues occurred also. In a series of afternoon meetings in England, the emphasis was to be on "*the full baptism of the Holy Spirit as received by the one hundred and twenty disciples on the day of Pentecost.*" At another time, "*the baptism of fire descended; and, as in the early days of Christianity, utterance as a restraining gift was also given.*" And again, a local preacher came forward and received "*the tongue of fire.*" then "*spoke as the Spirit gave utterance.*"

Through Phoebe Palmer's influence, Pentecostal language came to replace Wesleyan terminology in describing the second blessing. *Sanctification* became *the baptism of the Holy Ghost* and instead of *cleansing from sin*, the blessing now became *endowment of power*. Critically, these modern Pentecostal/Charismatic terms have lost much of the spiritual depth of meaning of the original ones, and the godly requirement to live a holy life has been lost to an undue emphasis on speaking in tongues and power, without evidence of a changed life, as Phoebe Palmer pronounced.

CHARLES FINNEY (1792-1873) A lawyer, Finney was converted at age 29, firstly aligning himself with the Presbyterian, then later, the Congregational Church.

A powerful, logical preacher, his innovations included the Altar Call and the Anxious Seat.

At the time of his conversion, Finney had an experience that he later identified as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, recalling that he "*wept aloud with joy and love*" and "*literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my soul,*" a likely reference to speaking in tongues.

While Finney didn't pray for the sick, healings occurred. For example an unconverted lady who was not expected to live the night was prayed for intensely, and Finney experienced a settled peace in his mind. The next day Finney told her husband....

"Brother W_____, she will not die with this sickness; you may rely upon it. And she will never die in her sins."

The woman recovered and accepted the Lord as her Saviour.

Spiritual manifestations were common at his meetings. At a meeting in Rome, New York, he heard the *sobs and sighs* of the people as he closed in prayer.

At this very moment a young man by the name of W_____, a clerk in Mr. H_____'s store, being one of the first young men in the place, so nearly fainted, that he fell upon some young men who stood near him; and they all of them partially swooned away, and fell together.

Finney's preaching affected entire cities. Charles P. Bush, a leading New York pastor reported.....

The whole community was stirred. Religion was the topic of conversation in the house, in the shop, in the office and on the street. The only theater in the city was converted into a livery stable; the only circus into a soap and candle factory. Grog shops were closed; the Sabbath was honored; the sanctuaries were thronged with happy worshippers; a new impulse was given to every philanthropic enterprise; the fountains of benevolence were opened, and men lived to good.

In 1835 Finney became the professor of systematic theology at the new Oberlin College in Ohio. Here, he and Asa Mahan, the first president, developed the 'Oberlin Theology', referring to the second blessing as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was identified as an empowerment for service, rather than a cleansing from original sin. Finney commented about the lack of this in a certain pastor's life and ministry.....

He had fallen short of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost which is indispensable to ministerial success. When Christ commissioned his apostles to go and preach, he told

them to abide at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. This power, as everyone knows, was the baptism of the Holy Ghost poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. This was an indispensable qualification for success in ministry.

Finney's methods and teachings played a major role in the preparation for what was to come in the 20th century.

Many of the influential people we have looked at over this period are not known for their openness to spiritual gifts, but as we have seen, and will continue to see today, they did experience the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives, so preparing the way for the Holy Spirit outpouring of the early 20th century.

A J GORDON (1836-1895) A Baptist pastor in Boston, USA, and founder of Gordon College, his voluminous writings were widely read in the latter 19th century. Gordon authored such works as *The Ministry of Healing*, *The Two-Fold Life* and *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. The book titles indicate the leading of the Holy Spirit in his life. One writer described him as "a major figure on the way to Pentecostalism."

Quoting from Hyatt.....

*In his work *The Two-Fold Life*, Gordon declares, "It is still our privilege to pray for the baptism of the Spirit and to tarry in supplication until we be endued with power from on high." In *The Ministry of Healing* he not only defends divine healing as a ministry of the church, but he also says that even the gifts of tongues and prophecy "do not seem to be confined within the first age of the Church."*

DWIGHT L. MOODY (1837-1899) The most prominent evangelist of the second half of the 19th century, he experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1871, through the fervent prayers of two women in his church. He describes the experience.....

I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York—oh, what a day!—I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not be placed back where I was before that blessed experience for all the world—it would be as the small dust of the balance.

While Moody's ministry was not characterized by Holy Spirit manifestations, healing, prophecy and tongues did occur. For example, an astounded Baptist minister testified.....

When I got to the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association, Victoria Hall, London, I found the meeting on fire. The young men were speaking with tongues, prophesying. What on earth did it mean? Only that Moody had addressed them that afternoon.

REUBEN A. TORREY (1856-1928) As Moody's associate and heir apparent, he popularized Moody's doctrine of a subsequent Holy Spirit baptism experience through the Moody Bible Institute and speaking engagements. He disagreed with the Pentecostals of the early 20th century that speaking in tongues was the necessary, initial evidence of Spirit baptism, although agreed it could occur. He wrote.....

It [Spirit baptism] is the impartation of supernatural power or gifts in service, and sometimes one may have rare gifts by the Spirit's power and few graces...The power may be of one kind in one person and of another kind in another person, but there will always be power.

CONCLUSION

As we can see in our journey through the ages, in the same way that the Reformation did not just suddenly happen, but was prepared for by spiritual people

of the centuries beforehand, so the Pentecostal Revival of the 20th century had its foundations laid by the Lord in the 18th and 19th centuries, through men and women filled with, and guided by, the Holy Spirit.

THE EARLY 1900'S

At the beginning of the 20th century there was an expectation that a huge outpouring of the Holy Spirit was imminent. None more so than in.....

CHARLES FOX PARNHAM (1873-1929) AND THE BETHEL BIBLE COLLEGE

In 1900, the young evangelist Parnham, took a study tour around leading ministries concluding.....

I returned home fully convinced that while many had obtained real experience in sanctification and the anointing that abideth, there still remained a great outpouring of power for the Christians who were to close this age.

In October 1900, together with his Quaker wife, Sarah, and sister-in-law, Lilian Thistlethwaite, Parham opened Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, with 40 students (including dependents) who were prepared to sell what they had, give it away, and enter the school for study and prayer, there to obey and live the commandments of Jesus. The only text book was the Bible and the teacher, the Holy Spirit.

By late December, the students had completed their scheduled courses. Three days prior to the end of the year, Parnham left to preach in Kansas City after exhorting his students to study the Bible for evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in an individual. Upon his return on New Year's Eve he found....

To my astonishment they all had the same story, that while there were different things occurred when the Pentecostal blessing fell, that the indisputable proof on each occasion was that they spoke with other tongues.

About 11pm, in the Watchnight Service at the dawn of the 20th century, Agnes Ozman (1870-1937), a Holiness preacher who was a student at the school, asked Parnham to pray for her to receive Holy Spirit baptism in the manner they

had studied. Parnham, hesitant at first, finally prayed, recalling.....

Humbly in the name of Jesus, I laid my hand upon her head and prayed. I had scarcely repeated three dozen sentences when a glory fell upon her, a halo seemed to surround her head and face, and she began speaking in the Chinese language and was unable to speak in English for three days.

This fanned spiritual desire in Parnham and the others there so, setting aside normal activities, they set up an upper room where they would pray for their own personal Pentecost. On January 3rd, Parnham went to preach at the Free Methodist Church in Topeka, where he predicted that the entire school would have received the Pentecostal experience while he was away.

Returning at 10pm, he climbed the stairs to see sheens of bright light coming from under the door. Going in, he was overwhelmed, for some were standing, others kneeling but all were singing "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" in perfect harmony, in tongues.

Parnham knelt and asked God for his personal Pentecost. God answered him saying that if he were willing to withstand the persecutions, hardships, trials, slander and scandal it would entail, the full blessing would be his. Replying yes.....

Right then there came a slight twist in my throat, a glory fell over me, and I began to worship God in the Swedish tongue, which later changed to other languages and continued so until the morning.

Meetings continued throughout the spring in nearby communities, but the results were marginal. However, groundwork was laid for Parnham's significant Pentecostal Revival in Zion City in 1906. By summer, the mansion they were renting was sold and the students dispersed. Sarah Parnham noted.....

Bethel Bible College was not intended to be a permanent school. The whole idea was a

period of intensive training in the Word, prayer and evangelism.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BETHEL

Unlike many earlier leaders who had concluded that speaking in tongues was 1st century only, Parnham and the students at Bethel agreed with the conclusion of Edward Irving, 70 years earlier, that tongues was an objective criteria that the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been received. This understanding was foundational to the Pentecostal movement of the 20th century.

PARNHAM'S PERSECUTION

Parnham, as the Lord had promised him, suffered considerable persecution for his views. He was criticized as a racist, but in the context of his times, he was liberated, ministering to black, brown, white and red alike. Robert Mapes Anderson says.....

Even before the Los Angeles revival, Parham had tapped this new ethnically heterogeneous constituency in Houston, where he garnered black converts like Seymour, Miss Farrow and "Brother" Johnson, and some Mexican Americans. At the 1913 summer encampment of Parham's group in Baxter Springs, Kansas, "White people, colored people and Indians all took part in the meeting" and as Brother Parham remarked, "We had the Gospel in black and white and red all over." For years, Parham held integrated meetings throughout the lower Midwest.

William Seymour, the black leader of the Azusa Street Revival, was one of his students and ministered under his leadership. Parnham was also accused of homosexuality, which was never proven and his support of the British Israelites (believing Anglo Saxons to be the 10 lost tribes of Israel) was ridiculed.

However, as we will see, his influence in the foundation of the Pentecostal movement was huge.

WELSH REVIVAL 1904-6

Like the Holy Spirit outpourings then being experienced in the USA, the Welsh Revival too was grounded in the Holiness Movement that developed out of the ministry of John Wesley and the Methodists of the 18th century. This had led to a number of spiritual renewals in Britain throughout the 1800's, before the major 'awakening' in Wales of 1904.

In contrast to the American outpourings which affected segments of the population, the Welsh Revival, for a time, transformed a whole, albeit small, country.

EVAN ROBERTS (1878-1951) Born in Loughor, Wales, Evan Roberts was the younger of two sons of Henry and Hannah Roberts. Raised in a Calvinistic Methodist home, he was a serious child who attended church regularly and memorized scripture at night. From the age of 11 to 23, he worked in the coal mines alongside his father, before commencing training for the ministry. He longed for revival and had spent 13 years praying for God to control him. This culminated in 1904, when he felt the need to spend 7 hours daily in Bible study and prayer. In the spring, he was repeatedly awakened at 1am and met with God until 5am. By October 1904, the Lord had told him he was the leader of revival.

An unassuming man, with few human leadership traits, he had a passion to see souls saved and lives changed. He was not interested in mere intellectual acceptance.

Roberts went to his hometown of Loughor in order to share his burden with his young friends. A meeting was set up and the Holy Spirit fell and convicted the attendees of their sin and their need for cleansing through Jesus. The meeting continued until midnight. The people were amazed, and decided to keep the chapel open day and night for worshippers to go to pray and praise God. The revival

spread like wildfire, reporting 80,000 conversions in 6 months, and dramatically changing the country.

From politicians.....

On January 11th The Times noted that David Lloyd-George, who later became the British Prime Minister, said the Welsh revival gave hope "that at the next election Wales would declare with no uncertain sound against the corruption in high places which handed over the destiny of the people to the horrible brewing interest..." Lloyd-George even saw one of his political rallies taken over by the Welsh revival. He was impressed as a young girl prayed in the presence of 2,000 people. He said in one town the tavern sold only 9 cents worth of liquor drinks on Saturday night!

.....to the miners.....

Coal miners crowded into prayer meetings that lasted till 3:00 a.m. and then washed, ate breakfast and returned to work. Many drunkards confessed their sins and received Christ. According to the London Times of February 2nd, 1905 due to the Welsh revival many men abandoned dens of iniquity. Employers noticed a great improvement in the work produced by their employees. A judge named Sir Marchant Williams said that his work was much lighter especially regarding drunkenness and related offenses.

The Times of London further commented.....

The Times observed that "The whole population had been suddenly stirred by a common impulse. Religion had become the absorbing interest of their lives. They had gathered at crowded services for six and eight hours at a time. Political meetings and even football matches were postponed...quarrels between trade-union workmen and non-unionists had been made up... At Glyn-Neath a feud had existed for the past 10 or 12 years between the two Independent chapels, but during the past week united services have been held in both chapels, and the ministers have shaken hands before the congregations."

It is estimated that half the population were touched by the Holy Spirit over the

next 2 years.

Sadly, in 1906, while ministering in North Wales, due to the strain of his strenuous schedule, Roberts suffered serious physical and mental collapse. In spite of the enormous challenges he faced, he never lost his faith. He was looked after, in seclusion, by his friends the Penn-Lewises, until his death in 1951.

The Welsh Revival is the classic example, even today, of God changing a nation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Roberts himself said.....

God used young Evan Roberts to spark the new fires of revival. He was not the human leader of the revival, however. In fact, no one human leader directed it. Evan was extremely conscious of divine leadership during the momentous events of the Welsh revival. He said, "This movement is not of me, it is of God. I would not dare direct it...It is the Spirit alone which is leading us" (Ellis, Living Echoes, Delyn Press).

As we look forward to the establishment of God's kingdom here upon the earth, the example of the Welsh Revival remains the closest large scale illustration of what it may be like.

AZUSA STREET REVIVAL 1906-9

THE PREPARATION

In 1905, Parnham conducted a successful revival campaign in Bryan Hall, in Houston, Texas. In order to spread the Word, Parnham opened a short-term Bible school there on 1 January 1906.

WILLIAM SEYMOUR (1870 – 1922) William Seymour, a black Holiness church pastor, desired to attend. Southern racial segregation policies posed a problem which Parnham overcame by placing Seymour in an adjoining room where he was able to listen to the lectures. Although Seymour did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit there, he accepted it as being biblically correct.

Seymour was passionate for God.....

Before I met Parham, such a hunger to have more of God was in my heart that I prayed for five hours a day for two and a half years. I got to Los Angeles, and there the hunger was not less but more. I prayed, "God, what can I do?" The Spirit said, "Pray more." "But Lord, I am praying five hours a day now." I increased my hours of prayer to seven, and prayed on for a year and a half more. I prayed to God to give what Parham preached, the real Holy Ghost and fire with tongues with love and power of God like the apostles had.

Before the course was complete Seymour received a letter from a Los Angeles Holiness congregation to pastor them. He accepted and Parnham provided his fare.

He preached his first sermon form Acts 2:4, broaching the subject of tongues being the evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. Returning for the evening service he found the door padlock, his teaching being unacceptable to the elders.

The Asberry's took him into their home on Bonnie Brae Street where Seymour prayed constantly. One evening, while eating supper, Richard Asberry suddenly fell from his chair and began speaking in tongues. Soon others, including Seymour,

followed.

As the word spread, crowds turned up and they were forced to find larger premises. An empty building was found at 312 Azusa Street, in downtown Los Angeles. Originally a Methodist Episcopal Church, it had more recently been used as a stable and warehouse. They removed the rubbish and built rough plank benches and a makeshift pulpit made from wooden shoe boxes. The first service held there was on 14 April 1906. Revival fires blazed even brighter.

PRAYER

Prayer was the foremost activity there. Seymour spent much time with his head inside the pulpit's top shoebox praying for the continual guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit.

A contemporary, John G Lake, commented.....

God had put such a hunger into that man's heart that when the fire of God came it glorified him. I do not believe any other man in modern times had a more wonderful deluge of God in his life than God gave to that dear fellow, and the glory and power of a real Pentecost swept the world. That black man preached to my congregation of ten thousand people when the glory and power of God was upon his spirit, and men shook and trembled and cried to God. God was in him.

HOLY SPIRIT LEADERSHIP

Azusa Street services were spontaneous, not pre-programmed, with no organised choirs, singers or speakers. The services started mid-morning and continued until 3 or 4 the next morning! An attendee wrote.....

Someone might be speaking. Suddenly the Spirit would fall upon the congregation. God Himself would give the altar call. Men would fall all over the house, like the slain in battle, or rush for the altar en masse to seek God. Presumptuous men would sometimes come among us. Especially preachers who would try to spread themselves in self-opinionation. But their effort was short-lived. Their minds would wander, their brains reel. Things would

turn black before their eyes. They could not go on. We simply prayed. The Holy Ghost did the rest.

Word soon spread that God was doing something new there. The 'Los Angeles Times' covered the 'local happenings', although not always positively! Frank Bartleman, a participant and Holiness journalist, wrote many articles which he distributed widely to Holiness publications. William Seymour himself started a paper called 'The Apostolic Faith' which rapidly reached a 50,000 circulation.

As the word spread, people came from far and wide. Many claimed they could feel the spiritual atmosphere several blocks away. Thousands were baptized in the Holy Spirit and went away re-energized in their faith and with a heart to share with others.

Ernest S. Williams, later the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God from 1929 to 1949, first visited the revival in 1907 and was astounded by what he encountered.

I wish I could describe what I saw. Prayer and worship were everywhere. The altar area was filled with seekers; some were kneeling; others were prone on the floor; some were speaking in tongues. Everyone was doing something; all were seemingly lost in God. I simply stood and looked, for I had never seen anything like it.

A short time later, Williams experienced his personal Pentecost and spoke in tongues. Nearly sixty years later, he revealed that his initial encounter with the Holy Spirit was not a one-time experience.....

Soon it will be 59 years since I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I still have my seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, speaking in other tongues and at times shaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

AN INTERRACIAL CHARACTER

Far removed from southern states, Los Angeles was, even then, a melting pot of races. This was reflected in the mission, where differing ethnicities met as one under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The original Azusa Board of Directors reflected both racial and gender diversity, consisting of 7 women and 5 men, of which 3 were black and 9 white.

MINISTRY DECLINE BUT ONGOING WORLDWIDE INFLUENCE

The revival continued at its peak for round 3 years from 1906 to 1909, before internal strife dampened the flames. As the revival smouldered, many whites left to begin their own churches and missions. By 1914 the Azusa Street Mission had become a small, local, black congregation.

William Seymour continued as the senior pastor until his death in 1922. His wife continued the Mission until she died in 1936. Finally, the building was sold, and then used as a parking lot.

However, God used William Seymour and Azusa Street as catalyst to spread the Pentecostal message worldwide. The extent of its influence can be seen in the proliferation of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches found today.

PARNHAM AND THE ZION CITY REVIVAL

In May 1906 Charles Parnham moved back from Texas to Baxter Springs, Kansas. He received a request to go to Zion City, and went with several co-workers in mid-September.

TROUBLE IN ZION CITY

Zion City, was established by John Alexander Dowie (pictured) in 1901 on the shores of Lake Michigan, round 40 miles north of Chicago. Dowie, known for a dramatic healing ministry, envisaged Zion as a Christian city from which missionaries would go out round the earth. Many dedicated believers from throughout the USA relocated there, dreaming of living in a Christian Utopia.

The dream was crushed when, in 1906, political strife and financial mismanagement plunged the city into corporate bankruptcy. Dowie and one of his lieutenants struggled for political control. The people utterly despaired. In the Federal Court a judge gave control of all Zion's industries to a receiver, who ordered an election for an Overseer. Dowie encouraged his followers not to vote, so Voliva won the election. The election did little to calm the citizens, many of whom had lost their life's savings. Bitterness, confusion, anger and strife, reigned.

Parnham arrived with his team arrived, having a meeting at Zion's impressive Elijah Hospice hotel on that same night. By the end of the week they were conducting 3 services daily with hundreds attending.

"TIL KINGDOM COME"

Voliva was not happy with Parnham's success. Reportedly, he phoned Parnham to ask how long he was staying. "Til kingdom come" was the reply. As the Elijah Hospice was under city control he was able to oust Parnham from there. Voliva then rented every auditorium in the city so Parnham would have nowhere to go.

Parnham responded by organizing meetings in 5 homes concurrently, from 7pm until midnight. He would travel from one meeting to the next to preach, each night, in a horse drawn buggy.

A comment by a participant.....

Glenda, oh, you have to be careful nowadays, I said to Glenda, "Is that a good thing?" And she said, "Yes, it's a very good thing, indeed." So I said, "Well what are you doing on the telephone then?" So she said "Well, I'll tell you," she said.... She said, "I have crawled to the telephone on my hands and knees." So I managed to look solemn for another minute and I said "thank you very much. I will get back as soon as I can."

The crowds increased flooding from the houses onto porches and lawns. *The Daily Sun* of Illinois reported that thousands were attending. Many experienced release from bitterness, despair and anger upon being baptized in the Holy Spirit. They saw visions and hundreds responded to the call of full time ministry.

DIVINE HEALING AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

An important feature of the revival was the permanent merger between the divine healing teachings of Dowie and the Spirit baptism experience of Parnham. Through this powerful combination, several independent healing evangelists emerged from the Zion City Revival.

SPIRITUAL OUTBREAKS SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD

We have already looked at the 'Welsh Revival' that preceded the 'pentecostal revivals' in North America.

Following these, spiritual outbreaks took place, all round the globe. We will now look at some of these. Throughout the world, believers considered they were seeing the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit promised before the return of Christ.

The Day of the Lord

28 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-9)

INDIA

PANDITA RAMABAI: (1858-1920) Pandita was an upper caste woman of amazing intellect, organizational skills and spiritual understanding. Sanskrit scholars at Calcutta University conferred on her titles of 'Sarawati' and 'Pandita'. A master of seven languages, she translated the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into Marathi, her mother tongue. She wrote 'The High-Caste Hindu Woman' and 'A life of Christ', plus numerous tracts that were widely distributed throughout India. In honour of her social impact on the nation the Indian Government issued a stamp in her honour in 1989.

During a famine in her area, Ramabai opened a home for girls, being totally dependent upon the Lord for provision, with prayer her lifeline. In January 1905 she began to speak about the need to seek God for revival. Soon, 550 people,

mainly women and girls, met twice daily, praying for revival presence and power.

On 30 June, as Ramabai was teaching the girls from John 8, the Holy Spirit fell, as in the Book of Acts. Everybody in the room began to weep and pray out loud. Ramabai suspended school, so giving the Holy Spirit free reign in their midst. Early on confession of sin and repentance predominated, but this then turned into joyful singing, wonderful praise and spontaneous dancing. Many experienced Holy Spirit baptism, experiencing visions and supernatural dreams and speaking in tongues.

A visitor at the time, a missionary by the name of Albert Norton, wrote.....

One week ago I visited the Mukti Mission. Miss Abrams asked me if I should like to go into a room where about twenty girls were praying. After entering, I knelt with closed eyes by a table on one side. Presently I heard someone praying near me very distinctly in English. Among the petitions were "O Lord, open the mouth; O Lord, open the mouth; O Lord, open the heart; O Lord, open the heart; O Lord, open the eyes! O Lord, open the eyes! Oh, the blood of Jesus, the blood of Jesus! Oh, give complete victory! Oh, such a blessing! Oh, such glory!"

I was struck with astonishment, as I knew that there was no one in the room who could speak English, besides Miss Abrams. I opened my eyes and within three feet of me, on her knees, with closed eyes and raised hands was a woman whom I had baptized at Kedgaon in 1899, and whom my wife and I had known intimately since as a devoted Christian worker. Her mother tongue was Marathi, and she could speak a little Hindustani. But she was unable to speak or understand English such as she was using. But when I heard her speak English idiomatically, distinctly and fluently, I was impressed as I should have been had I seen one, whom I knew to be dead, raised to life. A few other illiterate Marathi women and girls were speaking in English and some were speaking in other languages which none at Kedgaon understood. This was not gibberish, but it closely resembled the speaking of foreign languages to which I had listened but did not understand.

As Norton saw others being receiving Holy Spirit baptism, he was amazed to hear so many speaking in English rather than one of the many Indian languages. He

didn't know why, but offered a possible explanation.....

I have an idea that it is in mercy to us poor missionaries from Europe and America who, as a class, seem to be Doubting Thomases, in regard to gifts and workings of the Spirit, and not receiving the power of the Holy Spirit as we ought.

An ironic comment, as 'Doubting Thomas' himself overcame his doubts and travelled as far as India, arriving in Kerala (I have been to the place where he first ministered. There is a beautiful presence of the Holy Spirit there) on the West Coast, finally being martyred for his beliefs, outside Chennai, on the eastern seaboard of South India.

SOUTH AMERICA

CHILE

In 1907, **MINNIE ABRAMS (1859-1912)**, who worked for a time with Pandita Ramabai in Mukti, India, sent an account of the revival to her friends, **WILLIS C. (1856-1936)** and **MARY ANNE HOOVER**, Methodist missionaries to Valparaiso, Chile. Reading their friend's eyewitness account of the remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit in India, they earnestly sought God for a similar revival in Chile.

Prayer times, often encompassing whole nights, were instituted. People were convicted of, and confessed their sins, many making restitution to those they had sinned against.

But more was to come. On July 4 1909, heaven's floodgates opened. Willis Hoover wrote.....

Saturday night was an all night of prayer, during which four vain young ladies (three of them were in the choir) fell to the floor under the power of the Spirit. One of them, after lying a long time, began to exhort saying, "The Lord is coming soon and commands us to get ready." The effect produced was indescribable. The following morning in Sunday

School, at ten o'clock, a daze seemed to rest upon the people. Some were unable to rise after the opening prayer which had been like "the sound of many waters," and all were filled with wonder. From that time on the atmosphere seemed charged by the Holy Spirit, and people fell on the floor, or broke out in other tongues, or singing in the Spirit, in a way impossible in their natural condition. On one occasion a woman, a young lady and a girl of twelve were lying on the floor in different parts of the prayer room, with eyes closed and silent. Suddenly, as with one voice, they burst forth into a song in a familiar tune but in unknown tongues, all speaking the same words. After a verse or two they became silent; then again suddenly, another tune, a verse or two, and silence. This was repeated until they had sung ten tunes, always using the same words and keeping in perfect time together as if led by some invisible chorister.

Naturally this attracted attention, and the congregation exploded as both the convicted and the curious joined in. The congregation expanded from 300 to nearly 1000. Naturally, as occurred in other revivals we have looked at, the local press levelled blatantly false charges against them. This aroused further curiosity and many more came, were convinced, and took the revival Spirit back with them from Valparaiso to other cities.

As we have sadly seen previously, and still see today, opposition came from the traditional churches too. In February 1910, The Hoovers were forced by their superiors in the Methodist Church to choose between returning to America and leaving the Methodist Church. They choose to stay in Valparaiso. With 440 followers they found new premises.

The revival mushroomed, until today there are over 1,000,000 Spirit filled believers in Chile, including over 600,000 in the Pentecostal Methodist Church founded by the Hoovers. The Chilean Methodist Church, which rejected the revival, has shrunk to just 4,000 members.

C. Peter Wagner has commented.....

"Many Methodists who blamed the devil for what happened in 1909 have since wondered

out loud on whose side the devil might really have been."

The pattern of the rejection of the Holy Spirit by the establishment, in the past, present, and future, is again confirmed.

EUROPE

A huge area so just a couple of examples.

NORWAY

T B Barratt (1862-1940), an Englishman, was a minister with the Methodist Episcopal Church in Norway. In 1905 he travelled to America to raise mission funds. Hearing about Azusa Street while in New York, he began to pray for Holy Spirit baptism. On 7 October 1906 he received it.

Returning to Norway, without funds, he began to preach the message of a 'new Pentecost'. The results were amazing.....

Folk from all denominations are rushing to the meetings. A number have received their Pentecost and are speaking in tongues. Some have seen Jesus in our meetings, and tongues of fire have been seen over my head by an infidel, convincing him of the power of God. People who have attended the meetings are taking the fire with them to the towns round about.

The news spread rapidly and many from other nations came including....

GREAT BRITAIN

A A Boddy (1854-1930) The Anglican rector in Sutherland, England, Boddy came seeking a greater dimension to his spiritual experience, and was convinced what he saw in Norway was genuine. Returning to England, revival broke out in his church first, then throughout the land. Thousands came to Sutherland, including SMITH WIGGLESWORTH who received his Holy Spirit baptism when Mrs Boddy laid

hands upon him. He then ministered on and in faith, healing and the gifts of the Holy Spirit around the world.

SWEDEN AND GERMANY

LEWI PETRUS and **JONATHON PAUL** from Sweden and Germany respectively, came to Oslo also and returned home to become leaders of the Pentecostal movements in their own countries.

CHINA

WILLIAM SIMPSON (1869-1961) a Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary in China, learned of the Holy Spirit revival in 1908. The first person he heard speak in tongues was his illiterate Chinese cook, while attending a convention on the Tibetan border. The man went on to interpret the message in both Mandarin and local dialects. Intrigued, Simpson decided to devote 4 years of intense study and prayer about it all. On May 5, 1912, he was baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues.

This acceptance necessitated his resignation from the CMA, who stopped his support. In spite of financial hardship, his ministry continued and enlarged, accompanied by charismatic phenomena such as falling, visions and healings.

Returning to the US in 1915, he joined the new Assemblies of God (AOG) movement and became principal of the Bethel Bible Institute in Newark, New Jersey.

But the love of China, where he had spent 20 years of his life, reclaimed him in 1918.....

In a camp meeting the Spirit spoke just as directly to me as He had spoken long ago to Paul: It was in Chinese through a sister who knew not one word of Chinese, and told me to go back to Taochow on the Tibetan border. So I was sent forth by the Holy Spirit, sailing

again on February 4, 1918. The Lord opened the way until we reached the border, and as soon as we arrived on that mission field the Spirit of God was poured out...We received letters inviting us here and there, and wherever we went the Spirit was poured out in Pentecostal power.

PENTECOSTAL PROLIFERATION

Spontaneous outpourings were taking place around the world. By 1908 it was present in 50 nations, while by 1914 the movement was truly worldwide.

20th CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS THE HEALING REVIVAL

The Day of the Lord

28 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-9)

SMITH WIGGLESORTH (1859-1947) Todays writing has special significance to me. For my Great Aunty Ina, in whom I could see something 'different' than in others in my traditional Baptist Church background, received her Holy Spirit baptism at the Smith Wigglesworth meetings in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1922. It took me another 20-30 years after she died to seek it for myself though!

Smith Wigglesworth was brought up in a poor, traditional church family and became a plumber. He learned to read after his marriage to Polly, a fiery preacher in the Salvation Army. For 20 years he sat beside her on the platform, without saying a word. Upon receiving the Holy Spirit, Polly got him to speak at her next meeting. The Holy Spirit's presence came powerfully and his world-wide faith healing ministry was launched. Polly died in 1913.

A report of his New Zealand meetings follows.....

NEW ZEALAND May-June 1922

Published in A History of the Charismatic Movements in New Zealand, by James E. Worsfold p112-114

EVANGELIST WIGGLESWORTH MINISTERS IN WELLINGTON

The opening services for the Evangelist's mission were conducted in the Vivian Street Baptist Sunday School Hall through the courtesy of its minister who previously had been an eyewitness at the Welsh revival. In these morning services the Evangelist delivered a series of addresses on "The Endowment of Power" and "The Gifts of the Spirit." The numbers so increased that the services had to be transferred to the main church, but even

this building became too small for the crowds that came. During these services the Evangelist was led to manifest the gifts of tongues and interpretation, creating faith in the congregation to believe God for an outpouring of His Spirit and that signs would follow the preaching of the Word. Miraculous touches of healing were definitely experienced in these meetings. One case was of a hopeless consumptive who was carried in a coma into the church but after prayer arose, full of vigour, and walked with head up around the church, healed.

On the Sunday morning the Evangelist ministered in the Berhampore Baptist Church and at the 11 a.m. service preached on the subject of "Faith." In this meeting, to the consternation of some of the congregation, the gifts of tongues and interpretation were manifested. This was the only church service that the Evangelist ministered in outside the Mission.

For the evening services during the crusade the Town Hall (pictured) had been engaged.

The charismatic services in the Capital produced various reactions in some of the pulpits in the city. The Revd. F. de Lisle of the Constable Street Congregational Church preached on the subject "Is the day of Miracles Past?" The Revd. G. Glasson at the Terrace Congregational on "The Gifts of Healing;" the Revd. W. Day at the Kelburn Presbyterian on "Faith Healing :" the Revd. E. Drake of Trinity Methodist on "Healing in the Mission Field;" Mr. J. Moore, missioner at the Sailors' Friendly Society on "The Cures at the Town Hall;" the Revd. H. E. Edridge at the Island Bay Baptist on "Healing by Faith;" and the Revd. W. Rowlings of the Brooklyn Baptist on "Divine Healing." All other ministers preaching in their pulpits during the mission decided to ignore the subject as far as their religious advertisements were concerned, and the situation became a little strained later at ministerial level when the Evangelist addressed the Wellington Council of Churches, in a meeting which was arranged to bring about a better understanding of Pentecostal theology and phenomenon. Regrettably, this meeting widened the gulf between the older churches and the new charismatic Christians, a situation which was to continue until the 1960's.

The first Sunday evening saw 800 present and the third evening saw 3000 present. From then on crowds were unable to gain admission each night. It was said that the singing was electrifying and was thought to surpass even the Torrey-Alexander and the Chapman-Alexander Revival services. In his preaching the Evangelist emphasised the key words,

"Only believe," and his ministry covered such subjects as "The Baptism of the Holy Ghost," "The Sanctification of the Believer," the "Second Coming of Christ," "Divine Healing for the sick," and "Exorcism from evil spirits." The whole Gospel for the whole man was preached fully in the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit, with very many conversions to Christ taking place and backsliders being restored. The services received, on the whole, fair treatment from the Press, and Wellingtonians were no doubt startled when reading their morning paper to see the bold caption, "FAITH HEALING, EXTRAORDINARY SCENES AT TOWN HALL; THE DEAF MADE TO HEAR." A vivid description of the services then followed.

One evening, almost a thousand could not gain admission and a Salvation Army officer who had come from Brisbane to be present at the services, stood on the Town Hall steps and preached the gospel to those outside. This preaching yielded at least 20 decisions for Christ with some remarkable healings taking place as well. Inside the Town Hall there were scenes taking place that many Christians had prayed for and waited patiently to see. Not only hundreds of sinners accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord, but the sick were being healed in mind and body and Christians were being baptised in the Holy Spirit. For them, Bible days were here again and the influence of the revival was making its presence felt in many quarters of the city.

Seeking to carefully and objectively assess the first series of the Wigglesworth services in Wellington, Mr. E. E. Pennington, later to become chairman of the New Zealand Evangelical Mission said, "Evangelist Wigglesworth came to Wellington, little known to any of us. There was no flourishing of trumpets to herald this event. A few small advertisements in the local Press announced his meetings. . . His message was truly wonderful. If ever it could be said of a preacher of righteousness since the days of Philip that he preached Christ unto them, it surely would apply to Brother Wigglesworth. Never has the writer witnessed such scenes that followed the presentation of the Word of God by this Spirit-filled man, although being associated with such mighty evangelical services with Drs. Torrey, Henry Chapman and others in their New Zealand campaign. In the Wigglesworth services sometimes 400-500 responded in a meeting with whole families entering the Kingdom of God."

WILLIAM BRANHAM (1909-1965) Branham is the widely recognised person God used to initiate the post-World War 2 Healing Revival.

A controversial figure, particularly in his later life, Branham was brought up in difficult circumstances in a nominal Roman Catholic family. His father was both a logger and an alcoholic.

The call of God was on him from an early age. He said that in his early childhood, while walking home from getting water from the creek, he heard the voice of the Angel of the Lord who told him.....

'never to drink, smoke or defile his body, for there would be a work for him when he got older'.

Leaving home at 19, he worked on a ranch in Arizona and had a short career as a boxer. After his conversion he became a Baptist pastor. He was a humble man with a simple faith in the God of the Bible. On May 7 1946, after a time of prayer, he recorded an angel appearing and saying to him.....

Fear not. I am sent from the presence of Almighty God to tell you that your peculiar life and your misunderstood ways have been to indicate that God has sent you to take a gift of divine healing to the people of the world. If you will be sincere, and can get the people to believe you, nothing shall stand before your prayer, not even cancer.

Branham immediately launched into successful evangelistic and healing ministry, but with limited exposure. This changed when he was introduced to Gordon Lindsay, who was well known in Pentecostal circles. He agreed to become his campaign manager, soon thrusting Branham into international prominence.

Branham worked powerfully in the word of knowledge, being able to reveal minute details of the person's life to whom he was ministering. Through the gift of healing, he was able to detect and diagnose diseases through pulsations in his left hand

occurring when he held the sick persons left hand.

Walter Hollenweger, is a Swiss theologian and author, and recognized as an expert on worldwide Pentecostalism, interpreted for Branham on several occasions, saying in his famous book, 'The Pentecostals'

The author, who knew Branham personally and interpreted for him in Zurich, is not aware of any case in which he was mistaken in the often detailed statements he made. It was characteristic of Branham's kind-heartedness that he gave certain personal revelations to those who were seeking healing in a whisper, so that they could not be picked up by the microphone and revealed to the spectators.

Sadly, as time went by Branham got more involved in theology, where his radical views embroiled him in controversy, and his popularity waned. (This serves as a warning to us all!) A number of his views are now becoming more commonly accepted. e.g. immersion baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the abolition of organized religion.

He retained a large number of followers who regarded him as the prophet of the 'Bride of Christ'. They bestowed on him godlike attributes, and I suspect, misinterpreted his words in ways they were not intended. However Branham did little to correct them and this led to him and his followers being rejected by the general Christian community.

He died in a car accident on 24 December 1965, at the age of 56.

His legacy though, survives to this day.

ORAL ROBERTS (1918-2005) While William Branham is generally acknowledged as the founder of the Healing Revival, at a similar time God was dealing with Oral Roberts, the young pastor of a small Pentecostal Holiness Church, and divinity student at Phillips University, in Enid, Oklahoma, USA.

Aged 17, being miraculously cured of advanced tuberculosis, the Lord said to him.....

"I have called you to take My healing power to your generation."

From then on, he diligently sought God for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his life and ministry, and for the fulfilment of the word he had received.

Twelve years later, on May 14, 1947, following a sustained 7 month period of praying and fasting, Roberts received the inner assurance that it was time for God's call to begin to be fulfilled. At the same time, God showed him how he would feel the Lord's power in his right hand, so that when he laid his hand on the sick he would be able to detect the name and number of demons that might be present in that person.

Roberts immediately launched into an instantly successful ministry emphasizing healing for the body and salvation for the soul.

In 1948 he bought a tent that would seat 2,000 people. By 1953 he was operating in one that seated 12,500. It was the world's largest fireproof canvas tent of the time. Many miracles occurred and Oral Roberts became the most prominent healing evangelist of the era.

Unfortunately though, he later became enamoured with the Prosperity Doctrine, and his spiritual influence began to wane. The ministry continued to grow into a financial empire with a university, hospital, TV shows and more. Although morally scrupulous, the organisation finally ran into financial problems and declined.

It is true to say though, that in his early days particularly, Oral Roberts was used by the Lord to expand His spiritual kingdom on the earth.

T L and DAISY OSBORN (1923-2013 & 1924-2005) While Branham and Roberts were forerunners of the healing evangelism era, almost immediately after they were followed by a host of others including, to name a few, **A. A. Allen, Jack Coe, T. L. Osborn, William Freeman, W. V. Grant and Kenneth Hagin.**

In 1945, T L and Daisy Osborn went to India as Pentecostal missionaries, in a failed attempt to convert the masses. Disappointed by their lack of success, the still young Osborns returned to America, but would not rest until they had found a way to reach the masses with the Gospel.

While pastoring in the Northwest, they diligently sought the Lord for answers and began to hold evangelistic and healing crusades. Hyatt continues.....

God confirmed the gospel with signs and wonders, and they knew they had found the answer for the masses such as they had seen in India. Following a period of cooperative ministry with the Voice of Healing in America, the Osborns returned to the mission fields of the world. Traveling to seventy-six nations, they pioneered mass healing crusades with phenomenal results. They found that demonstrations of God's compassion and healing power would result in thousands accepting Christ in a single service. Their huge outdoor crusades became the pattern for mass evangelism in developing nations. As they approached their seventies, it was said of this husband/wife team that they had preached the gospel to more people, face to face, than anyone to that point in history.

CONCLUSION

By the end of 1956, the Healing Revival was on the wane, being rent by strife between the Healing Evangelists and the Pentecostal denominations to which they belonged. There were faults on both sides. The denominations were jealous of their success, while there were many questionable practices, moral and financial, amongst the evangelists.

It still provides a stark example of what happens when spiritually gifted people lose

their focus on the God and Lord who gave them the gift, becoming misguidedly focused instead on money, power, and the other distractions of the world.

However, the Healing Revival provided a most important link between the Pentecostals and the Charismatic Renewal, beginning round 1960.

THE LATTER RAIN REVIVAL

PERSONAL NOTE: It is always more difficult to talk about 'history' when the events concerned take place in one's own lifetime. Being part of history makes one think you are getting old! LOL! I was born in 1947, but didn't become a true Christian until 40 or so years later. (I was brought up in church, became a 'churchian', then then went into the world for 15 years, before truly finding Jesus through a bankruptcy) However the events of my lifetime have affected me, and I have met others who were involved more intimately with them. The revelations of the Latter Rain Revival have had the greatest effect on my life, and the teachings the Lord has given me have been based on the foundation of the revelation and teachings of that revival. Naturally, the Lord has revealed more since that time, but the principles revealed then eg. The Covenants, The Feasts of the Lord etc., as well as the various spiritual anointing's mentioned below, remain foundational today.

THE OUTPOURING AT SHARON BIBLE COLLEGE

The Latter Rain Revival began amongst the students and staff of Sharon Bible College in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada, in February 1948, rapidly spreading from there, through North America, and around the world.

In the Fall (Northern Hemisphere Autumn) of 1947, teachers from Sharon attended services by William Branham in Vancouver, Canada. Deeply impressed by Branham's demonstration of the word of knowledge and the miraculous healings they observed, they returned home, and together with the students, began fasting, praying and studying the Scripture with heightened expectation. On 12 February 1948 (my wife Kathy's birthdate), they experienced an unusual demonstration of God's presence and power. Ern Hawtin, a faculty member records.....

Some students were under the power of God on the floor, others were kneeling in adoration and worship before the Lord. The anointing deepened until the awe of God was upon everyone. The Lord spoke to one of the brethren. "Go and lay hands upon a certain

student and pray for him." While he was in doubt and contemplation one of the sisters who had been under the power of God went to the brother saying the same words, and naming the identical student he was to pray for. He went in obedience and a revelation was given concerning the student's life and future ministry. After this a long prophecy was given with minute details concerning the great thing God was about to do. The pattern for the revival and many details concerning it were given.

The students spent the next day searching the Scriptures for insight and confirmation of what had happened. Hawtin continued about the events of February 14.....

It seemed that all heaven broke loose upon our souls, and heaven came down to greet us. Soon a visible manifestation of gifts was received when candidates were prayed over, and many as a result were healed, as gifts of healing were received.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHARON

The historian, Richard Riss, who studied the Latter Rain Movement extensively, maintains the events at Sharon raised both hope and interest, as there had been a dearth of manifestations in Pentecostalism, having now become formalised and traditionalized, as is the historical denominational pattern over the ages. The curious as well as the spiritually hungry flocked to North Battleford from across particularly Western Canada, the USA and around the world. The Sharon Star carried reports and advertised camp meetings and conventions. Soon, Sharon faculty members were responding to invitations to minister throughout North America.

Quoting John Kilpatrick (from Pensacola) Hyatt continues.....

With emphasis on the laying on of hands for the impartation of spiritual gifts, the recognition of apostles and prophets in the present-day church and the gift of prophecy for directing and commissioning ministerial candidates and proper church government, the revival drew opposition. Although many of these practices had been common among early Pentecostals, they were rejected by most of the Pentecostal denominations.⁷ As a result of

the opposition, a number of ministers left their denominations, including Frodsham. Most of these worked as independent ministers or joined loosely formed fellowships. Although rejected by Pentecostal denominations, these Latter Rain believers continued and, to a degree, influenced and were absorbed into the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s and 1970s.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY: I have been blessed to meet several of those who were involved in the early Latter Rain Movement when it spread to New Zealand. The feedback I got from them all was of the wonderful home meetings they had where the power of the Holy Spirit changed people's lives dramatically. Naturally, they were rejected by the mainline Christian groupings, including the Pentecostals. However, over the years these groups too became formalized, churches and bibles colleges were set up, splits occurred, formal ministry qualifications sought for the now paid leadership. The stream, while now more generally accepted, is lacking in power, spiritual life and revelation. Without exception, the pioneers I met were hugely saddened by the way things had developed, even though they had continued to participate in the church, and reap the financial stability and rewards that denominationalism brings to leadership. These sentiments were not necessarily shared by their wives, for whom the initial financial and family sacrifices had been hard on them and their families!

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

The April 1960 edition of 'Time' magazine in the USA, carried the story of Dennis Bennett, rector of St Mark's Episcopal (Anglican) Church, having been baptised by the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues when praying at home in November 1959. Other news agencies picked up the story, and it was widely distributed. While others in traditional churches had experienced speaking in tongues earlier, this event generally marks the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal.

DENNIS BENNETT(1917-1992) AND THE PROTESTANT RENEWAL Although Bennett had considerable support in his parish, a small number vehemently opposed his 'Pentecostal activity'. He resigned under pressure and was reassigned St Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, Washington. It was on the brink of extinction, having been shut down twice already. But to the amazement of many, the church arose from the dead and flourished, becoming one of the strongest churches in the entire Northwest USA. It became a centre of Charismatic Renewal for many denominations, as the church hosted and helped visiting clergy and lay people of all hues.

The new Pentecost spread like wildfire, throughout most Protestant denominations in the US and around the world. Informal prayer groups sprung up where the participants sang praise songs, prayed spontaneously, spoke in tongues and sang in the Spirit.

Unlike the early Pentecostals, many found acceptance within their churches, where they were encouraged to remain, for the movement leaders saw it as a way renewing existing denominations spiritually. Hence the use of the less threatening word 'renewal', rather than 'revival', is being used to describe the experience.

THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

The foundation of the Roman Catholic Church's charismatic movement, was laid in the Vatican II Council(1962-5) Pope John XIII, in calling the Council, desired a new Pentecost as *the hope of our yearning*. He directed the churches for the Holy Spirit renew His wonders *in this our day as by a new Pentecost*.

Vatican II's careful acceptance of outsiders provided new opportunities for interaction with other Christians. Non Catholics, instead of being regarded as *heretics* were now described as *separated brethren*. It also declared Christians of other denominations *are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces*. Many Roman Catholics were now able to be brought into Holy Spirit baptism by those outside their faith.

Of equal importance was the Council's final acceptance of spiritual gifts. Cardinal Ruffini expressed the traditional view that spiritual gifts today *are extremely rare and altogether exceptional*, while Cardinal Suemens argued that these gifts are *no peripheral or accidental phenomenon in the life of the Church*. Cardinal Suemens argument prevailed and declared the spiritual gifts "*should be recognized and esteemed in the Church of today*."

With this foundation now in place, Vincent Synan writes, *It was almost inevitable that Pentecostalism would break out in the Roman Catholic Church.*

Hyatt writes.....

It began with a retreat attended by about twenty professors and graduate students from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on the weekend of February 17-19, 1967. In preparation for the retreat, the participants were asked to read the Book of Acts and David Wilkerson's The Cross and the Switchblade. When the group gathered in the chapel on Saturday evening, they experienced a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and some began speaking in tongues. Synan says:

"As these Catholic seekers prayed through to Pentecost, many things familiar to classical

Pentecostals began to take place. Some laughed uncontrollably "in the Spirit," while one young man rolled across the floor in ecstasy. Shouting praises to the Lord, weeping and speaking in tongues characterized this beginning of the movement in the Catholic Church."

This fire soon spread to the nearby Notre Dame University, the theological centre of Catholicism in the US. Many professors and students received Holy Spirit baptism and spoke in tongues. Catholic Charismatic prayer groups spread rapidly throughout the world. My mother, a Baptist, was prayed for by a group in our city here, far away in New Zealand, and she was cured of Multiple Sclerosis in her late 40's and lived until she was 90! PTL!

In 1970 a Catholic Charismatic Conference at Notre Dame attracted 30,000 priests, nuns and lay people who sang, prayed in tongues, prophesied and rejoiced in what God was doing.

ECUMENISM AND SCHISMS

When this movement became widespread, there was much cross pollination between denominations. Conferences multiplied and their participants encompassed a broad spectrum of Christianity. I belong to the Full Gospel Businessman's Association whose purpose was to provide fellowship to Spirit filled businessmen at a time when they were not able to find spiritual fellowship within their churches. We have members from a wide variety of churches, Roman Catholic, Traditional, Evangelical and Pentecostal.

Catholic priest and scholar Peter Hocken referred to the Charismatic movement as "an ecumenical gift of grace poured out on all the churches."

In the United States, at the peak of the renewal in 1977, 52,000 Pentecostals/Charismatics met in the Arrowhead Stadium, in Kansas City. Quoting Hyatt.....

Truly ecumenical, it was indeed a work of the Holy Spirit. Half of the registrants were

Roman Catholic, while the other half consisted mostly of Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, denominational Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists and Messianic Jews. Great rejoicing filled the stands as the multitude sang in tongues and danced before the Lord.

While Charismatics were encouraged to remain in their churches in order to spread the renewal, many found this too hard, either because they felt they were withering spiritually, or they encountered varying degrees of opposition within their denominations.

Some joined traditional Pentecostal denominations while many more formed new, independent Charismatic churches and fellowships. There are now many thousands of these throughout the world. Having ministered in many of these, particularly in Africa, it is again noticeable that Holy Spirit anointing is fast becoming in short supply here also.

THE ISSUE OF AUTHORITY IN CHARISMATA

Throughout history, as we have seen, there is inevitably it seems, a tension that occurs between the Christian establishment, the institutional church and charismatic ministry. The challenge always is whether people should submit to denominational authority, or the 'charismata'.

For example, the Protestant Reformation, under Luther, was largely a result of the intransigence of the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church over the previous century, the previous 10 years in particular. Similarly, while John Wesley remained attached to the Anglican Church throughout his life, the church did not want him. Reluctantly, he appointed and ordained his own ministers based on their obvious charismatic gifts and callings. Naturally, against what would have been his personal desires, the Methodist Church was inevitably formed shortly after his death, from the seed he had sown.

Again, the Pentecostal movement of the early 20th Century was rejected by the

traditional church who would not accept legitimacy of spiritual gifts. So believers formed new relationships amongst themselves and Pentecostal denominations were spawned.

This principle, which is true from the time of the Montanists of the 2nd century, still applies today. Now the Pentecostal denominations have become institutionalized, replacing spiritual gifting and anointing with formal structure, appointment by theological qualification, church buildings and

The cycle continues. We will discuss this further as we proceed towards the present day.

SOME LATER 20TH CENTURY SPIRITUAL MOVES

Since the Charismatic Renewal there have been other spiritual revivals which, while not as universal in their influence, have impacted on the church in some way, be it territorially, denominationally, or through influencing the wider body. Some, particularly Peter Wagner, have described these as the 'Third Wave' of spiritual revival, after the after the Pentecostal Revival of the early 20th Century and then the more recent Charismatic Renewal. Some have arisen and waned, while others have been become formalized within new denominations. It would be fair to say that none individually, have had the widespread impact of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, but collectively, they have had a considerable influence in the later 20th century. Only a sample can be considered here.....

JOHN WIMBER (1934-97) AND THE VINEYARD CHURCH

A successful secular musician from a non-religious family, Wimber found Jesus in 1963. He joined the Quakers and was responsible for converting many hundreds of people. This led to his appointment as Founding Director of the Department of Church Growth at a offshoot of the Fuller Theological seminary. Forming a house group that began adopting Charismatic values brought about a split with the Quakers. This led to the formation of a new church associated with Vineyard Christian Fellowships, started by Kenn Gulliksen, which later became the Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

John Wimber travelled widely and his meetings were characterized by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, similar to those of the early Pentecostals. Hyatt writes.....

Prophecy and speaking in tongues commonly occurred in these meetings, and various other manifestations, such as being slain in the Spirit, shaking and swooning in a state similar to drunkenness also occurred.

David White, a psychiatrist and proponent of the Third Wave, describes the phenomenon similar to drunkenness. In meetings where the Holy Spirit's power is strongly manifest, some people may seem a little drunk...

They may describe a heaviness that is on them. Their speech may be slightly slurred, their movements uncoordinated. They may need support to walk. They show little concern about what anyone will think of their condition and are usually a little dazed. The condition may endure several hours.

Theologically, Wimber and Vineyard had 2 differences to early Pentecostals. Firstly, they believed that all spiritual gifts were received at conversion, although they may not be manifested until later. This included speaking in tongues, which Pentecostals taught and teach is the true sign of conversion. They also placed greater emphasis on the importance of all the spiritual gifts.

TESTIMONY: This has been the experience of my own life, where I was able to prophesy some time before speaking in tongues.

Their second point of difference was in the development of 'Kingdom Theology' which promotes the building of God's kingdom upon the earth, rejecting the escapist, rapture theology of traditional Pentecostals of believers avoiding the tribulation, or part thereof, by being whisked off to heaven. Hence there is a greater emphasis on holiness and righteousness and the release of all spiritual gifts, in order to build God's kingdom now. As the Lord's Prayer says.....

Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

John Wimber died of a brain haemorrhage on November 17, 1997, aged 63, following a fall and after recent coronary bypass surgery.

Today the Vineyard Movement - an association of likeminded independent churches - comprises about 1600 churches worldwide.

THE INFLUENCE OF RODNEY HOWARD-BROWNE

A successful South African evangelist, Howard-Browne received God's call to go to America, He arrived at the Lakeland Carpenter's Church (named after the "Carpenters and Joiners Home," a retirement home for members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the previous owners of the building) in March 1993 for a scheduled 1 week meeting. Hyatt reports.....

The one-week meeting, however, became a fourteen-week revival. Pastor Karl Strader declared it to be the greatest move of God he had ever seen: "It was like something from the history books." Spiritual phenomena common in past revivals such as falling, weeping and joyous laughter occurred nightly, attracting large crowds. By the fourth week of the revival, so many conversions had occurred that a baptismal service was held with fifteen hundred being baptized. By the end of the sixth week, cumulative attendance had exceeded one hundred thousand, with many pastors and church leaders attending and being profoundly affected.

God had shown him that the revival in Lakeland was not to become a mecca, but that he was to carry the revival throughout America. After holding similar meetings at Calvary Cathedral International in Fort Worth, Texas, Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Rhema Bible Institute in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

His heart remains as a travelling evangelist, even though today he also pastors a church in Tampa Florida.

TESTIMONY: I attended a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, where I observed the manifestations of the Holy Spirit that occurred. I felt disconnected. However, a few weeks later, I conducted the first evangelism meetings of my own, and similar manifestations, on a much smaller scale amongst the few who attended, occurred there, at the final meeting, much to my surprise. While in later times, these particular manifestations have not happened again, the Holy Spirit, in His grace, generally has a powerful presence when I minister.

RANDY CLARK

Rodney Howard-Browne returned to Lakeland in January 1994, where a Vineyard Church pastor from St Louis, Missouri attended, seeking a new level of spiritual power in his life. Clark was profoundly impacted and experienced a burning sensation in his hands.

THE TORRONTO BLESSING

Very shortly afterwards, Randy Clark went to minister at the Airport Vineyard Christian Fellowship, pastored by John and Carol Arnott. On Thursday evening, 20 January 1994, the 'Toronto Blessing' erupted. Hyatt again records.....

Characterized by holy laughter, falling, shaking, divine healings and other unusual spiritual phenomena, this revival soon captured the attention of both the Christian and secular media. During the first year of the revival, cumulative attendance exceeded two hundred thousand, with people attending from almost every nation. A secular magazine, 'Toronto Life', billed the revival as Toronto's top tourist attraction of 1994.

TESTIMONY: My pastor at the time, a man well versed in the Charismatic, attended and was impacted. Another pastor/teacher in the church, who also attended, came back and reported to the church that God dealt with him in terms of his attitude to his wife, which was not good. Nothing changed and after that his ministry quickly diminished.

By the fall of 1997 attendance had reached the two million mark, with pastors comprising forty-five thousand of this number. The Toronto Revival has had a global impact. It was especially well received in Great Britain where it is estimated that over seven thousand churches have been impacted, not only independent, charismatic churches, but also many Anglican churches, including London's Holy Trinity Church Brompton.

By the turn of the century, the revival faded.

CRITICISM OF THE REVIVAL

On December 5 1995, John Wimber disassociated the Vineyard Movement from the Airport Church, because of what he considered 'exotic practices' of the revival services, in particular the animal noises that occurred occasionally. John Arnott insisted that these occurred only rarely, perhaps 1 in 10,000 cases, and insisted neither he nor his staff encouraged such manifestations.

Undoubtedly, among many, there was a concentration upon the manifestations rather than upon God Himself. This, together with man taking over from God, has been the ultimate scourge of all revivals. However, as already mentioned, the Toronto Blessing had a big impact on many believers and churches worldwide.

HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON, LONDON (Sandy Millar - Vicar, Nicky Gumbel - Curate) Now for a British experience through the eyes of historian Richard M. Riss.....

One of the first and most highly publicized "hotspots" for the awakening in England was an Anglican Church, Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), in London.

At about 11:30 a.m. on May 24, 1994, Eleanor Mumford, assistant pastor of the South-West London Vineyard and wife of John Mumford (pastor of South-West London Vineyard and overseer of the Vineyard Churches in Britain) met with a group of friends, many of whom were leaders of other churches, to describe her recent visit to the Toronto Airport Vineyard. As she explained her remarkable experiences of the power of God and prayed for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, everyone was profoundly affected. Nicky Gumbel, Curate of Holy Trinity Brompton, suddenly realized that he was very late for a staff meeting at his own church, and rushed back from this meeting with his wife, Pippa, to HTB church office in South Kensington. The meeting was getting ready to adjourn, so he apologized and spoke briefly about what had happened. He was then asked to pray the concluding prayer. He asked the Holy Spirit to fill everyone in the room. According to the church newspaper, "HTB in Focus," 12 June 1994:

The effect was instantaneous. People fell to the ground again and again. There were

remarkable scenes as the Holy Spirit touched all those present in ways few had ever experienced or seen. Staff members walking past the room were also affected. Two hours later some of those present went to tell others in different offices and prayed with them where they found them. They too were powerfully affected by the Holy Spirit -- many falling to the ground. Prayer was still continuing after 5 pm.

At 4:00 that day, HTB's Vicar, Sandy Millar, received an urgent phone call while attending a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, chaired by General Secretary Clive Galver. Glenda, a member of the HTB church staff was calling to report that all of the members of the church team were on the floor of the office, unable to get up, after having received prayer. When Sandy asked how she had managed to get to the phone, she said that she had crawled. At

*I've never had such a message in my life. I was at a very serious meeting in the Evangelical Alliance, and we were talking about very serious things. And the telephone went, and Clive Calver, who's the chairman of the Evangelical Alliance, went and answered it and then he looked over at me, and he said "It's for you," he said, "and it's urgent." So I said, "Oh, thank you very much." And I went over and I took the call, and this was Glenda. Now Glenda works here most of the time -- by which I mean she wasn't working that afternoon, and she said, "Oh hello," she said, "I'm sorry to interrupt the meeting," she said, "but I thought you ought to know that the entire staff is slain in the Spirit and lying on the floor." And these other seven solemn men and women were watching me because they wanted to know what this urgent news was, and they hoped it wasn't too serious. I wasn't quite ready to tell them, because I wasn't quite sure what it meant. So I just rushed back to find people rather startled at what had happened. The church leaders invited Eleanor Mumford to preach at Holy Trinity Brompton that Sunday, May 29, at both the morning and evening services. After both talks, she asked the Holy Spirit to come. Wallace Boulton in *The Impact Of Toronto* (Crowborough: Monarch, 1994), p. 21, wrote of the morning service: "There was a time of silence. Then slowly, members of the congregation began to cry quietly, and some to laugh. As the Holy Spirit came, Eleanor asked people to come forward if they wanted prayer. Many did so. As Eleanor's team and members of the church ministry team started to pray, people began to fall in the power of the Spirit. Soon the whole church was affected. There were scenes that few had ever seen before. The children arrived from their own groups and many of them were deeply touched and began praying for each other." People lingered for a long time after each service. Audiotapes of Eleanor Mumford's evening talk soon gained wide circulation in over one*

thousand churches of all kinds throughout England and served to pave the way for a massive reawakening among Anglicans and others.....

And in the time that I was there, I have to tell you, I heard not one mention of the devil. I heard not one word about spiritual warfare. Nobody mentioned a principality or a power, and I cannot tell you how refreshing that was. And the truth is that the people there, and I ever since, have been so consumed with the person of Jesus and with the work of the kingdom that quite honestly there is no time to give any attention to the enemy or to all his works. Because the power of Jesus is so great, and the person of Jesus is so preoccupying, and our passion for Jesus is on the increase to such a degree that it is a wonderful thing.....

At the end of September, 1994, Mike Fearon wrote of Holy Trinity Brompton in his book, A Breath Of Fresh Air (Guildford, Surrey: Eagle, 1994), p. 4, "At the time of writing, four months after the 'Toronto Blessing' made its unexpected but very welcome appearance, services there are so full that the choir stalls and chancel area behind the speaker have to be used as overflow areas, with scores of people standing in the gallery and around every doorway. Nearly 2,000 people pack into the building every Sunday."....

TESTIMONY: In 1998, Kathy and myself and 2 of our kids, flew to our eldest son's wedding, in Aberdeen, Scotland. On the way, having landed in London from New Zealand, we decided to go to Holy Trinity, Brompton for a Sunday service. It was a big disappointment to me, the service being like a normal Anglican service anywhere. I asked the Lord, "Where is the Holy Spirit?" He told me that he had been there but had now departed. The whole emphasis of the church was centred round the wonderful 'Alpha Course', developed over a period of 20 years by today's Vicar, Nicky Gumbel. It has been responsible for presenting the Gospel to huge numbers of people worldwide. The revival had ended.

However many thousands of churches throughout Britain had been revitalized by the Holy Spirit through this revival.

THE PENSECOLA REVIVAL (John Kilpatrick, pastor, Steve Hill, evangelist, Michael Brown, teacher)

The last major 'megachurch' American revival came after 2 years of revival prayers at the Brownsville Assembly of God, instigated and led by their pastor, John Kilpatrick. On Father's Day, June 18, 1995, the invited speaker, Steve Hill, a revivalist evangelist, preached and gave an invitation for prayer. Approximately 1000 responded and "an unusual measure of the Lord's presence and power came into their midst."

A more traditional revival than that in Toronto, it is recorded.....

Stephen's insatiable burden for lost souls, which often drove him to tears while preaching a message of repentance and forgiveness, spread like an uncontrollable flame through the hearts of men in the revival meetings.

Professor Vinson Synan, a leading Pentecostal historian and the Dean of the Regent University School of Divinity, called it.....

the largest local church revival in the history of America,.... Brownsville, with its emphasis on conversion and people weeping over conviction of sin, seems to be a revival in the long tradition of American native revivals dating back to the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. There's heavy preaching on sin, repentance, conversion, and holiness. And there's a lot more weeping and wailing over sin than there are the so-called exotic manifestations.

Here is an (abbreviated) account of one man's experience.....

In July of 1996, over a year into the revival, I was a 17 year-old atheist, regularly doing drugs, toting guns, given to drunkenness, filled with rage and bitterness, and battling suicidal thoughts.....

We arrived in Pensacola on July 20th, 1996, and showed up at Brownsville AG at about 1 p.m. Already, nearly a thousand people were gathered in a large bunch near the door,

waiting for the meeting which began at 7 p.m.! As an unbeliever, I thought, "What is wrong with these people? They're nuts! Why are they so excited to get into an AG Church?" I remember spontaneous hymns of praise rising from the throng while we waited outside in the hot Florida sun. "How Great Thou Art," "Amazing Grace," and several others. Passers-by on the street (the Church met in the poorer area of the city) were hearing songs of praise to the Lamb of God, and this has been common in times of revival over the course of history. O, that every city would hear again of the glory of Christ, through the revived hearts of His people! But here I was, in the midst of the crowd, totally detached from their joy.

My hardened heart grew curious when the doors opened, as I saw men, women and children moving quickly and earnestly for a seat in the building. As I walked into the building, even as a hardened sinner, I began to sense a difference in the atmosphere. A strange pull began to affect me. I felt increasingly uncomfortable about my sin, but there was an unspoken yearning for truth, reality, and salvation rising in my soul. I watched the people engaging in fervent and sincere worship and praise which lasted well over an hour, and a conviction of my sinfulness was intensifying. I attempted to put a wet blanket over it, even turning to the young man next to me and speaking in jest about the people worshipping around me. But I could not evade or circumvent the fact that something, or Someone, as real as He was invisible, was moving in the midst of this people.....

.....the evangelist began to preach. It was a passionate call to repentance, a cry to humble ourselves, turn from sin, have faith in the work of the cross, and receive the free mercy of Jesus Christ. I later discovered that this was his message every night at the Brownsville Revival, but on that night, I felt I was alone in a room with the preacher and the Holy Spirit.

The word was like a hammer that shatters the rock, and I could not resist the Spirit any longer. I understood clearly that I had to "flee from the wrath to come" and receive a new heart from the God of mercy. I was undone in my sin, and overcome with the revelation of the cross of Christ. I was gloriously born from above that night, and nothing has been the same since. Glory to the Lamb that was slain!

DIVISION AT PENSECOLA

In 2000, as we have seen many times previously, division and strife basically brought an end to the revival. The dispute here involved money, authority and accountability, involving John Kilpatrick, the AOG denomination and Michael Brown, the president of the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry.

However, over 5 years over 4 million attended and 200,000 were saved. Many more sought forgiveness and committed to living more holy lives.

THE APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT

This century is seeing the restoration of the gift of the apostle to the church. Ignore the many who call themselves 'Apostle' for status! A true apostle walks in humility, not looking for personal recognition, but to walk, talk and act through the salvation of Jesus, in the will of the Father, as revealed through the Holy Spirit. They are not 'superstars' in the way of leading pastors, teachers, evangelists and prophets, leading big successful churches or ministries. Rather, they incorporate all these giftings, plus the ability, through God's direction, as his servants, to point people towards the furtherance and extension of God's kingdom on the earth, in preparation for the return of Jesus for his pure white, holy and righteous bride, the 'church'.

The revelation of the kingdom is growing, but obviously, is yet to be seen to its fulfilment.

TESTIMONY: The Lord got me to set up WWJ Ministries' in the early 1990's. The first 'fruit' was the Walking With Jesus Course. The (His) ministry is based on Revelation 12:11., with a concentration on the 3rd part of the verse, the part most either don't know, or choose to ignore.

*They overcame him (satan that is) by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus) and the word of their testimony (as given through the Holy Spirit): **they loved not their lives so much as to shrink from death. (doing the will of the Father, irrespective of the cost)** Revelation 12:11 (words of explanation in brackets are mine).*

The Lord gave me teachings which I shared both here in New Zealand and overseas. It felt like knocking my (thick!) head against a brick wall! People would say "that's nice" but not understand what the Lord was saying through me.

In 2006 I went to a ministry conference in Capetown, South Africa, before heading north. I had flown 20 odd hours from NZ and didn't feel like going, but my friend

Israel Onoroibe insisted. That afternoon changed my life. For the first time I heard someone (a man from Singapore) say the same things the Lord had given me. Over the next couple of days I met others who also had similar revelations. The one common factor between them was that all had been through hard times in their lives. The revelation had come at a cost.

No easy opt out in the (false) rapture here! For we are commanded to become 'spiritual', and perhaps 'physical' martyrs, to love *not their (our) lives so much as to shrink from death*, in order to truly enter into the kingdom of God. The cost is great, but the rewards eternal.

What a release and wonderful confirmation that was to me! For I now knew that others were receiving similar revelation and going through similar, difficult experiences, to what I had been.

For this is a new working of the Holy Spirit. Not directed through a 'superstar' but through a worldwide move of individuals not looking for fame and fortune, but who are prepared to share the word of the Lord for these times, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, to those individuals who are also truly sold out '100 fold' for Jesus.

8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." (Luke 8:8)

You cannot 'belong' to a 100 fold church, for it is an individual, personal commitment to the Lord, to do His will no matter the cost.

How about unity in the church? Building of the bride? Impossible in the natural (though some are and will try), but rather a unity of Spirit amongst those prepared to give up their lives, whether spiritually or physically for their Lord. (Dictionary: 'a ruler by hereditary right or pre-eminence to whom service and obedience are due.' Hebrew: (Adonai) 'Lord, Lord, LORD, master, or owner. (Adon) 'lord' or 'father')

It is these ones who make up the bride, walking in spiritual unity of holiness and righteousness.....

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” (Revelation 19:7-9 ESV)

Amen.

PRINCIPLES OF THE APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT

Peter Wagner has listed the differences between the New Apostolic Reformation and traditional Protestantism (including Pentecostalism) as.....

- 1. Apostolic governance** – *The Apostle Paul's assertion that Jesus appoints apostles within his church continues to this day.*
- 2. The office of the prophet** – *There is within the church a role and function for present-day prophets.*
- 3. Dominionism** – *"When Jesus came, He brought the kingdom of God and He expects His kingdom-minded people to take whatever action is needed to push back the long-standing kingdom of Satan and bring the peace and prosperity of His kingdom here on earth."*
- 4. Theocracy** – *Not to be confused with theocratic government but rather the goal to have "kingdom-minded people" in all areas of society. There are seven areas identified specifically: religion, family, education, government, media, arts & entertainment, and business.*
- 5. Extra-biblical revelation** – *There is available to all believers the ability to hear from God. "The one major rule governing any new revelation from God is that it cannot contradict what has already been written in the Bible. It may supplement it, however.*
- 6. Supernatural signs and wonders** – *Signs and wonders such as healing, demonic deliverance and confirmed prophecies accompany the move of God.*
- 7. Relational structures** – *church governance has no formal structure but rather relational and voluntary alignment to apostles.*

This is an excellent summary of how things should be. As the church has prayed in the 'Lord's Prayer' billions of times over 2 millennia without understanding what they were praying..... *Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Again, its purpose is to prepare a holy and righteous bride for the return of Jesus.

THE PRIMARY PROBLEMS OF THE APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT

It saddens me to say this, but the primary problem of the Apostolic Reformation or whatever you want to call it, is CAPITALS! "What a stupid statement David! Or so obscure that I cannot understand it", I hear you saying. Please let me explain.

The movement has been hijacked by man and religion. What are the first things you see when man and religion get involved? The use of capitals!

Firstly, capitals of a new denomination, a new formal church movement, which then becomes movements (plural) as the movement inevitably splits through differing doctrines. Jesus not only wept (John 11:35), He weeps! So the apostolic intention of unity in the Spirit has become like any other movement, split by differences in theology, accountability to man etc.

Secondly, man has taken over with pride of position, seeking influence and control, through the assignment of the ministry functions of apostle and prophet being, you've guessed it, capitalized!

What is an apostle? Strong's Concordance define apostle as.....

a messenger, envoy, delegate, one commissioned by another to represent him in some

Arguably, the most influential New Testament apostle was Paul. I would ask you as 'homework' to confirm what I am saying, by going through all Paul's epistles and see if the word 'apostle' is ever given a capital when used to describe Paul. Titles lead to separation within the body, and the exercise of power and control, so beloved by man and religion. Paul walked in humility,

as a tentmaker, taking the message of the salvation of Jesus to the people of southern Europe. It must be remembered that he came from a rabbinical background, a Pharisee of Pharisees, a man of status and influence in society with authority to search out, imprison and kill Christians! From this, to become a suffering servant of Jesus, reviled as much as loved, persecuted and imprisoned for his faith, finally martyred in Rome. A far cry from flowing robes and religious title!

If every person with the title Apostle or Prophet understood the reality of what the position truly involves, much renouncing would be done!

Thirdly, parts of the apostolic movement have started to build Churches, sometimes even called Temples, for the people to meet (God) in. More capitals. Yet the primary revelation of the movement is that the kingdom lives within the personal temple of the individual. How contradictory can you get? Once you have church buildings people, being human will, subconsciously or consciously, transfer all or part of their spiritual foundation in Jesus to that building.

True apostles and prophets will walk in humility, as messengers of God, not seeking money or support, delivering both the popular and unpopular revelation and instruction given them by the Lord, irrespective of the consequences. By their actions, not their words, they will be known.....

True and False Prophets

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. (Matthew 7:15-20)

GOD'S CALL TO TODAY'S CHURCH A SUMMARY

These principles are taken from the publication **A REVELATION OF..... GOD'S CALL TO HIS CHURCH - A call for change.** The full teaching is available on the website www.wwj.org.nz

A summary of the changes required for the church to become the united bride of Christ follows.....

1: FROM MARTHA TO MARY

God is calling out to Himself today a 'Mary church'. A generation of people fully sold out to Jesus. A generation prepared to lay down everything for their Saviour and Lord. It is this Mary generation that will arise from the depths of criticism and ridicule within the church to usher in the return of the Lord.

DAVID'S DOUBTS "Maybe God, we can organise a seminar then, on how to become a Mary?" "No David, for I am roaming the earth searching out those whose hearts are truly towards me. Seek me with all your hearts, my sons and my daughters, as did Mary. Then I can, and will, use you to change the world."

2: FROM A GREEK TO A HEBREW ORIENTATION

God is calling out to Himself today a 'church of 'Christ-like disciples', imitating Jesus. A church based not on intellectualism and men's wisdom, but God's power! This is the church God is calling us to today. A church operating in the image and ways of Jesus!

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "You mean God, I am to be like you 24/7, not just 1/168!" "Yes David" "Okay Lord, I hear you, believe you, and will do my best to be as Jesus was - but without the beard, please, for mine is so wispy!"

3: FROM REVIVAL TO HABITATION

God is calling out to Himself today a people prepared to allow the Holy Spirit to inhabit and change their lives on an ongoing basis, establishing His spiritual kingdom within, preparing for the glorious day when He returns to establish His physical kingdom in which to rule and reign with His overcoming disciples for 1000 years.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "But Lord, it is so much easier to stay as I am! I am comfortable with me!" "But David, are you like me then?" "Ah, well Lord..... no! Okay Lord, I take the hint!"

4: FROM KINGSHIP TO SERVANTHOOD

God is calling out to Himself a servant church, one prepared to sacrifice everything for Him, as did His Son, Jesus, continuing to serve, no matter what the cost to pride, ego, comfort, to our very life.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "But God, it would be nice to be appreciated - sometimes!" "You are by me all the time, my son." "Thank you Lord!"

5: FROM RECEIVING TO GIVING

God is calling out to Himself today a people who are prepared to give our whole life to Jesus, as Jesus did for us.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "But God, I need an aeroplane to be efficient for you!" "If it is that critical David, I will get you there - my way!" "Okay God..."

6: FROM SONG TO HEART WORSHIP

God is calling out to Himself today a people who will worship Him with their whole life and being. Others should be able to see that we are sold out to Jesus in both word and action. Challenging? Yes! But the people God is seeking today.

"But God, surely Sunday is enough?" "But you want Me to be with you 24/7, don't

you?" "Okay God, I get it!"

7: TO CHANGE FOCUS FROM US TO HIM

God is calling out to Himself today a church fully focused upon Him, prepared to be changed into His image, no matter what sacrifice this requires.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "But God, if we don't be user friendly, people will get upset and not come." "Why not try being friendly to Me, and see what I will do." "Okay, God - it is Your church, after all."

8: FROM NUMBERS TO DISCIPLESHIP

God is calling all believers to grow into disciples. Pastors, leaders, your shepherding role is to encourage your people to open their door fully to Jesus.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "But God, if I have a big church it will glorify you - and pay my salary!" "Who will it glorify David?" "OK God. Me really! I understand now. Forgive me Lord."

9: FROM BUILDINGS TO COMMUNITY

God is calling His people out of buildings and back into the community. May we not be beguiled into believing that God lives in buildings of brick, stone or wood, irrespective of how beautiful, serene or peaceful they may be to our eyes. Instead, let us seek to instil the truths of Jesus into the hearts of men and women, where the real church, God's kingdom, is found.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "But God, if I have a big building, many will be attracted to You." "To me - or to you?" "OK God, I understand."

10: FROM SERVING PROGRAMMES TO MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

God is calling His people to become personally involved in meeting individual needs within the community. Of course we need to co-operate, helping and encouraging one another, but the extension of God's kingdom depends upon you, and upon me,

doing the work. This will not happen through reliance upon man generated programmes that have worked somewhere else. Yes, God is calling on you and on me individually, to be the light of Jesus to a lost world.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: "But God, this latest programme is sure to work! It increased XYZ Church 100 fold! And they have told me how to do it!" "David, why not try following my instructions, and be as Jesus to your neighbours." "Okay God, but it's hard!" "But not when I am with you, my son."

11: FROM PRIESTLY FOCUS TO PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

God is calling all His people to become personally involved in the ministry of the kingdom, a people willing to work for Jesus in the way the Lord has shown them to do. It is a more difficult road for the leadership, but the truth is, we are to be like Jesus and act as He acted.

DAVID'S DOUBTS: But God, how can I fulfil MY vision if I have no flock to help me, for surely my vision is their vision!" "David, my son, serve your people and give your life up for them, as Jesus did." "But God... OK God!"

12: FROM MATERIALISM TO SPIRITUALITY

God is calling His people to change focus from the material to the spiritual. There will come a time when the physical and the spiritual will be reunited as it was in the Garden before Adam and Eve sinned. But that is another story, one dependent upon the spiritual development of our character to become like Jesus.

DAVID'S DECLARATION: "This time, God, I understand. For I have been a millionaire twice and bankrupt twice and know in which state I come closer to you. And recently, you called on us to give away our protective 'nest-egg', Lord. I am learning not to worry about tomorrow - well, most of the time!"

ARE WE UP TO THE CHALLENGE?

KINGDOM LIVING THE TESTIMONY OF ROLAND & HEIDI BAKER

Originally from southern California, the Bakers spent 12 years ministering in Asia before studying for PhD's at Kings College, Cambridge, UK. In 1995 they set up a ministry to the poor and homeless in Mozambique, in southern Africa. I can attest to the reality of their testimony through the witness of my friends and theirs, Peter & Melodie Wheeler, who represent their ministry in South Africa. This is some of the Baker's story. Roland writes.....

Our years in Pemba have been tumultuous, intense, filled with demonic attacks, violence, threats, opposition from the government, discouragement, theft, loss, disappointments, failures, staff turnover, and the constant, unrelenting demands of extreme poverty and disease all around us.

It almost always seemed that our capabilities and resources were no match for the challenges we faced every day, resulting in a level of chaos and stress that literally threatened our health and lives. Intense witchcraft and a lack of exposure to familiar standards of right and wrong made our work in this very remote part of the world seem all the more impossible. Heidi and I remember many times when we did not know how we could continue, often wondering if we really had good, lasting fruit that was worth the sacrifice.

Relationship in the Kingdom of God

We are often asked what the overcoming key to our ministry and growth is. We don't think in terms of keys or secrets, but of the simplest truths of the gospel. We have learned by experience that there is no way forward when pressed to our extremities but to sacrifice ourselves at every turn for His sake, knowing nothing but Jesus and Him crucified. We must die to live. It is better to give than to receive, and better to love than to be loved. We cannot lose, because we have a perfect Saviour who is able to finish what He began in us, if we do not give up and throw away our faith.

In years past we did not think we could identify with Paul like this, but now we understand more of what he meant:

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8–9).

Heidi and I get overwhelmed by our awareness that we are only jars of clay, very fragile and finite, capable of only giving out so much, and with very limited understanding and strength. But we have come to be encouraged by this very state of affairs, because God's power and glory will become obvious in our weakness:

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:7–10).

In Pemba we just started another three-month Bible school session with new student pastors from the bush, many of whom are barely aware of any Christian doctrine and still confused about so much. But three of them have already raised the dead and given their testimonies in class! The Holy Spirit is opening hearts and bringing in the harvest more than ever, in spite of our weaknesses. Our churches are monuments to the grace of God. We are asked how we keep them all together, organized and feeling like a unified family, but we can offer no adequate human explanation, in spite of all our efforts. We have learned that He is able to melt hearts and keep people connected in spirit by His own power, and build a hunger for the Saviour that conquers every obstacle. This is His revival, His church, His display of glory, and He qualifies us to do His work.

What motivates us to keep going? What puts energy into our spirits when we run out of answers and resources? How do we stay patient and upbeat when the outlook seems bleak, yet again? Where does our power to live, serve and give come from? The question is important, because missionaries do get tired, discouraged and down. Christians of all kinds run out of motivation, no matter how much they have. Leaders with huge

responsibilities lose their peace and joy. Ministries become more like businesses, and preachers more like sales managers. But what makes the Kingdom run? What is the fuel that fires us effortlessly? What is the real thing?

Every day we find out more of the answers to these most fundamental questions, and every day we learn that what used to motivate us is no longer enough. We are going higher, pressing on to what lies ahead. We keep learning what Jesus is interested in, and lose interest in what we used to pursue. And we learn that unless Jesus is interested in what we are pursuing, the going gets tougher than we can bear.

But there is a secret place, a hiding place, a lower place, a holy place that exceeds our dreams. It is not found in anything external and impersonal. It is not found simply in activity, sacrifice and dedication. It is not found in goals, projects, productions and progress. It is not found in finances and growth. It may be missed entirely even when preaching, teaching, training and discipling. It may be forgotten completely when evangelizing and praying for the sick. The greatest and most powerful gifts don't necessarily contain it. Even ministry to the poor may become an impersonal effort that misses that greatest and most intensely motivating creation of God, that supreme display of His glory: relationship!

Love is a gift of relationship, not just self-sacrifice.

The secret place is not necessarily found in a prayer closet or a posture of soaking, or in battling for a just cause, or in a massive prayer and fasting effort. Even the most amazing miracles can leave us lonely and without relationship. We can run out of motivation advancing the noblest ideals and working at all levels to transform society. We can minister until we have no more strength, and still go home and lie in bed without the relationship for which our hearts are made.

Everything is okay with relationship. It is all that Jesus cares about, all that motivates Him. He could do many more amazing miracles and dazzle the world with His powers, but He is interested only in relationship. The entire creation, all the grandeur of the physical world, and all His works are designed to serve one thing: relationship. Revival has no content without it. Renewal and manifestations are pointless apart from it. Miracles only find their meaning in it. Joy is shallow and groundless unless rooted in it. Without relationship we are the living dead.

There is no pressure in genuine relationship. When it turns into work, it is gone and finished. It is effortless to maintain. It is not the goal of struggle, but the fire of life. It brings the utmost peace, and washes away all tension. It is the point of living, the substance of existence, the atmosphere of heaven. It motivates to heroic heights, bringing out our best. In relationship we know we are alive, we have arrived, we are satisfied. When we turn away from relationship to pursue anything else, we lose. We have no strength to give and love without it. It is a haven, a rock, a river of living water, the perfect source of motivation to keep going.

As our Perfect Savior, Jesus provides us with relationship. For this He died and rose again on our behalf. He provides not only His Word, His promises and His gifts, but also freely fills our lives with relationship in response to the desire He has put in our hearts. No guilt and condemnation can keep us from drinking in all the relationship with Him that we desire. Nothing in our past can block us. No attitudes in others can prevent us from tasting and seeing that He is good. And from this tree of life that is our Savior, we can branch out into more and more relationship with those all around us. He takes away our loneliness. In Him we end our search and find our destination.

So in this experience of revival in Africa, our values have been refined in the fires of pressure, opposition and disappointment. Thousands of churches and testimonies of supernatural power do not keep us motivated. Huge feeding projects are not enough for us. We need more of a goal than to target people groups and disciple followers. Education and development don't keep our hearts alive. Mobilizing world-wide support still falls short. Academic missiology lacks the energy that Africa needs.

No, our hearts must have perfect relationship, a perfect union between us and our Savior, in the Holy Spirit. We were never meant to be alone for a moment. Our whole motive is to live life and do everything together with our God, to take pleasure in His company always. Our power to live comes entirely from our satisfying relationship with Him, and to stay there is to stay in our own private revival that cannot be disturbed by anything else. Only when that relationship is golden, incandescent and pure enough do we have the power to delight in all that God has richly provided for us to enjoy.

Therefore in Him we do not pursue revival, but rather revival pursues us! Church growth

and miracles pursue us. His presence pursues us. He Himself follows us, responds to us, and takes pleasure in making us happy, for we make Him happy. We care how He feels. We satisfy His longing. To stay close to Him is no effort, but a relief, a release, a door to freedom. To get a miracle is never the point, but in our relationship with Him miracles are a delight for Him to perform on our behalf. In fact, we cannot live without miracles, and in the normal Christian life we recognize that everything is a miracle, "for in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Love in Jesus,

Rolland and Heidi Baker

<https://www.irisglobal.org/>

THELASTREFORMATION.COM

Here is an example of a kingdom ministry from Denmark, a most unlikely place you would expect a kingdom ministry to come from, being a highly secular country.

Under the leadership of Torben Sondergaard, this ministry teaches kingdom principles and their practical application, spreading them through the 'hard' mission field of Europe and now, round the world.

As kingdom focus is not upon any one man, I am not going to mention anything about Torben personally, but rather show some of the amazing testimonies of people he has influenced, spreading the kingdom to people in a host of different situations, anywhere and everywhere, drawn from Torben's newsletters.

From the latest newsletter.....

Hallelujah. The Reformation is started. This is amazing.

I would like to share something with you that's amazing.

I've just been in the United States and Canada and it was really good. But the amazing thing is what happens after we have come home. Will this continue? The answer is YES.

This is from my friend in the United States. Posted 2 days ago:

"We kick-started three people, saw 8-10 healings, I led four people to Christ who were powerfully touched by the Holy Spirit (one received tongues) and I prayed for three others Christians who got baptised in the Holy Spirit on the streets. Hoping to follow up with some. I saw more fruit in one day than in my past 22 years as a follower - everyone is amazed and excited!

Getting set free more each day reading a couple chapters a day of "the last reformation book". It's really helping me see what I could not see before, things are more clear every

day without glasses. The book is 10 times better than I imagined!! Can I buy 10 or 20 more books from your publisher?"

This is from Canada. This is from someone who was NOT at the meeting, but has been kick-started through someone who was at the meeting;) Yes, it spreads like fire.

"A Big Thank You To All The Ones Who Organized Torben Søndergaard To Come To Guelph Where I Have Meet Brother Wayne Morgan

A Big Thank You Goes Out To Wayne Who Came Out To London Today In Which The Lord Was Leading Him To Come Here.

WOW!! Thank You To Everyone Who Prayed For Me!

I had no idea! I am speechless! Thank You Jesus!

What an Awesome Day Today Was!

Thank you Wayne for taking the time to come down to London to equip the body of Christ with myself and sister Joan to heal the sick and share the love of Christ to the broken harden. I cannot describe in words how it meant to me.

In Summary we prayed: 1- healing to an older lady in her 80's who had a younger lady take care of her, in which she had the peace of Christ.

2- prayed for man and shared Christ, he wanted to know where he can go to church, exchanged phone numbers.

3-A gentleman in a wheel chair who knew Christ who had demonic spirits.

4-A gentleman who had sever back pain from a pain level of 9 down to a level of 4

5- We talked to a young lady and warned her in a loving way of the dangers of Yoga

***We talked a lot, on a lot. Equip me on what to expect when praying for people.*

WOW OH WOW! GOD IS AWSOME!! PRAISE THE LORD.

Thank You Lord for Equipping Wayne to Equip Me.

Now This Is True Discipleship!"

Also, I can say that in Denmark we have seen two blind healed, two with crutches, two baptized in water and 2 with the Holy Spirit in the last week;) Love it;)

On Sunday we go to Thailand and then Singapore.

The Reformation has begun;)

And from the one before.....

Testimony from long Island

In the morning session I spoke about the importance of water baptism and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of the meeting one woman asked to receive the Baptism of Holy spirit but nothing happened. She felt as if something was blocking her and there was no evidence of being filled. She was very disappointed and began to cry. Then she explained to me that she was only "baptized" by a sprinkling of water as a Catholic, which is not a full baptism, since baptism is full immersion under water on your own faith and not only a sprinkling of a little water on the head.

Shortly afterwards we went down with her to the beach where she was baptized with 6 other believers. She was the first person baptized and as soon as she came out of the water (was still in the water), she was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. It was so powerful to witness how full water baptism opened the door for a full baptism of the Holy Ghost for this woman, just as we discussed in the training. So then she baptized the next person and then the next person baptised then next and so on. Each person was set free and were baptized with the Holy Spirit in the water. It was so strong.

Suddenly a young man came over from the parking lot. He felt led to come down and see what happened. When he saw what was happening, immediately he felt that he should be baptized. He was raised in a Catholic church, but had left the church. I asked if he knew about the baptism of Holy Spirit and speaking tongues, which he said no. But we baptized him on his own faith right thee and wow... The Holy Spirit also come over him and as soon as he came out of the water he began speaking in tongues without really knowing anything about it. It was amazing and powerful to see just how the Holy Spirit was present in this way.

Then suddenly a boy of 9 years who was watching on the side with his grandmother, said that he also wanted to be baptized. But she thought he was too young, but he kept on saying that he wanted to be baptized. (The two were also raised in a Catholic church)

He came down to the water to me and we baptized him. The then same thing happened to him. As soon as he came out of water (was still in the water) he began to speak in tongues and he did also not know about it .. wow, that was an incredible day. People were crying and they saw what true Christianity is. It was so big and beautiful.

We got it all on video for our new movie The Last Reformation which will be published early next year. This movie will be something the church has never seen before. We have witnessed and filmed things on this trip that is so incredible.

We are so grateful and we can say. THANK GOD. THANK YOU JESUS and THANK YOU HOLY SPIRIT for some incredible days here in the United States. Tonight we fly back to Denmark.

AMAZING TESTIMONY I have just received from someone who was part of the weekend in the United States last week:

"Torben, thanks again for everything. I hope your travel went well.

Amazing testimonies! At the airport I prayed for a guy's knee. Totally healed with the first quick prayer. He had a deep experience with the HS but did not speak in tongues. He is here in Colorado Springs and we hope to connect while he is here. I gave him one of your books and also prayed for his friend.

Today, Monday, at lunch I met with a man. As we were leaving the restaurant he started crying. He sat on the sidewalk and wept and repented of sin in his life. He was not ready to receive the Spirit but we will talk again soon. I told him about The Pioneer School and he and I will discuss it further.

Both of these men grew up as preacher's kids and had walked away from the church at some point in their lives.

Just before I walked in the restaurant I received a phone call from a man. He is from Bosnia. He sets tile for me so I see him periodically. I had prayed with him about his wife's cancer in the kidney and elsewhere. He does not walk with God but he let me pray with him on a construction site a few weeks ago. She had a biopsy last week and there is no cancer! He reminded me of the prayer and he understands that God healed her. He and I will meet soon.

*It is so good to be loved and used by God.
He is good."*

The major question now is, "where is the church of the 21st Century heading".

Fourteen years into the new century, it is becoming more apparent that God is 'doing a new thing'. But as we have seen over the past 2000 years, through the Dark Ages, the Reformation and the Holy Spirit revivals of the 20th century, the Holy Spirit will always be to the fore of what transpires.

Regrettably, from a human perspective, all past movements of the Holy Spirit have come to an end, primarily because man has codified them and taken over. Like Moses, the world's humblest man and the closest to God before Jesus, when he hit the rock, (which he had done successfully before to bring water), rather than talk to it as God had instructed him to do,(Numbers 20:13) man has always seemingly known better than God. This cost Moses the opportunity to take the Israelites into the Promised Land.

So where do we go from here? What is God doing here and now, and into the future?

PRACTICAL KINGDOM LIVING

We will now have a look at some of the practical aspects, and differences, of kingdom living, as opposed to a church focus.

As I went through my email inbox this morning, I came across this article and was prompted to include it today.

In the church we are encouraged to rely upon leadership for spiritual guidance and impartation. In the kingdom, our reliance and attention is to become God focused.

IDENTIFYING BLOCKAGES TO MOVING WITH GOD

By Bill Click

This week, rather than a lengthy message on the depths of intercession, I want to offer you a litmus for determining how current you are with the Spirit of God. Basically, evaluating to what degree you can and do initiate the Covenant Jesus came to establish. While I realize that revelatory descriptions of the encounters we can experience with God can have great value, without embracing our status for taking part in them, they can become of no worth whatsoever.

It is clear to me there are 3 easily identifiable blockages to moving with God that everyone can either say: "that applies to me," or "I really don't have that problem." In fact, I really believe this will let you see your life in a new way as you continue to read.

They are:

I must be in a public gathering of anointed leaders to be able to sense and feel the Spirit of God.

If our lives so grieve the Spirit by the daily choices we make based on the life-priorities we set, then what is above may very well be our present status. God designed for each one to know Him in the Spirit, and to be able to sense His presence by their personal spirit.

"An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"
(John.4:23-24).

We must be honest with God about what we are really seeking. Am I truly seeking the Kingdom of God, or is it God's endorsement for a life on my own terms in which I occasionally turn to God for assistance? (Mt.6:33)

I must receive prayer from others before I am freed from dilemmas that rise up and remain unresolved in my mind, will and emotions.

The Lord gave us His Spirit so that we could fight the good fight of faith by donning His armor and thinking with His mind (Eph.6:10-18; 1Cor.2:9-16). Lies from Hell, soulish raging against the Spirit by our own (or others) unrenewed minds, emotional ties with the fears of loved ones or the railings of societal ills....they will continue (John.16:33). The key to being able to discern what God is saying and doing can be summarized by what Jesus said:

"If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself" (John.7:17).

When we really want what God wants for us, we know what to receive, reject, stand on, or rebuke and kick away from us.

I must be ministered to by others (activated or imparted to publicly) before I feel able, worthy or confident to pray for others effectively.

For us to be "living up to what we have already attained," we must develop and discipline ourselves to "maintain and sustain" our reservoir of functionality as members of the Body of Christ (Php.3:16). If the previous sentence only applies to ministers (in your thinking), then you either need to realign yourself with those who will equip and release you to flow in the Spirit, or you need to shake off the old religious wineskin that is preventing your mind from being renewed. The Lord has made it clear:

"to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good....one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1Corinthians 12:7, 11). Jesus said: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth"

(Acts 1:8).

Use the tools God has given you. Don't mourn what doesn't yet seem to be, or let the soul realm take you to places in your mind, will and emotions that will prevent you from entering and walking in the Spirit.

Rise up in what He has given you which is yours forever, and move about in it as land that belongs to you and only you. Take ownership of the deposit He has placed in you and only you. And as you do, you won't need to go to church to get refreshed, renewed, freed or activated, you'll go with a testimony of how you have been in the presence all week.

Then, you won't need to be prayed over, you'll either be promoted in the house or booted out of the house by God or those who don't want life, and you'll take it with you wherever you go. Then, you'll be living the life of witness you've been called to and completely empowered for.

Selah.

Another article has come in this week! I am really pleased to be able to print other's understanding, so you can see it is more than just 'David's thinking'!

OPENING UP THE GATES TO THE KING OF GLORY

Psalms 24:7 "Lift up your heads, O you gates And be lifted up, you everlasting doors And the King of glory shall come in."

God has made us to be gates and doors of His glory. Jesus comes to us as the King to rule our hearts in His glory. It can be all too easy to get caught up doing lots of stuff and not

experience the intimacy of Kingdom glory in our lives. When Jesus walked the earth He carried the weight of heaven, the glory of God. People constantly were encountering heaven's glory when they got around Jesus. What does it take for us to walk in this kind of glory ourselves? For certain, we must have intimacy with God, a living communion in His Presence. Here are a few things that help create a "good foundation" for His glory in our lives:

1. Make Jesus the Center

Some time ago, My wife Brandi had a dream where Jesus was at center stage. His Presence was in the place and because of this, people were drawn to Him. When we allow Him to be at the center, everything works. When He is not at the center there is only chaos and anarchy.

2. Invite & Interact with the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit needs to be invited and stirred within us. He is the "treasure within us." We are not trying to get Him to come out of heaven. He is already within us if we are God's. Each of us are temples of the Holy Spirit. We need to take time to welcome Him to fill us, refresh us and saturate us. The Holy Spirit is the "living waters" that Jesus promised us that would spring up into everlasting life! Don't neglect the blessing that God has already deposited within you. Through a life of worship and prayer He fills us with His joy.

3. Major on the Majors

Major on foundational truths like grace, love, joy, peace, righteousness, the blood of Christ and other things that are central to the gospel that we need to focus on. Avoid controversies that have no profit, (ex. when Jesus is going to return). Just occupy until He comes. Don't wrangle about the carpet in the church and ridiculous things. Avoid heretical extreme teachings.

One of these teachings would be "sloppy grace" teaching. This is the type of thinking where people don't believe they can't sin and continue living ignorantly in rebellion. The grace of God helps us to overcome sin, not live in denial of sin. If someone does not think they can sin this is a "major" foundational truth that has been compromised, the result

being a cracked foundation. All sin simply put is "wrong doing." Done anything "wrong" lately?

I John 1:8-10 "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 Cor. 15:34, Hebrews 12:1, 12:4)

It is true that in Christ we no longer live a "lifestyle" of sin, but to say that we no longer have the ability to blow it (or "miss the mark") is error. Although, a righteously lived life is the rule, not the exception for the believer. That is why Paul says, "Don't use the grace of God as an occasion to sin..." (Romans 6:1-2)

There is also teaching that says you can just continue to sin, knowing your sinning and God's grace covers you. This is heretical as well. The truth is we don't live in sin. Jesus has set us free. If we do somehow happen to sin then we can come to him in repentance and His blood will cleanse us. We are not His if we live in a lifestyle of sin ignorantly or knowingly foreign to relationship with Him.

(1 John 3:9)

4. Treasure His Presence

Moses would not go without God's Presence. (Exodus 33:15) Prioritize God's Presence as number one in your life. Christ in us is the hope of Glory. This is referring to the Presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Treasure Him more than anything. Nothing can replace our intimate relationship with God.

5. Engage in Presence-Valuing Community

Find pure-hearted people who love to spend time in God's Presence, those who are devoted to God with accountability to others in the truth.

There isn't anything more satisfying than having the Presence of God in our lives with a pure devotion to Him. Worship God without compromise devoting yourself to His everlasting purposes.

Let the Depths of Your Heart Call Out To God,

John Belt

www.overflowglobal.com

THE CHALLENGE OF..... LIVING THE KINGDOM LIFESTYLE

To conclude this presentation on the history of the church, past, present and likely future from a Holy Spirit anointing perspective, we will finish by looking at the 'Parables of Jesus' which set out the principles of living a kingdom lifestyle.

AN INTRODUCTION

Why are the parables so important to our understanding of how to live in the kingdom today? The disciples wondered this and Jesus gave them the answer. Kingdom living is not understood, indeed ridiculed by, non-believers and sadly, many Christians too. So Jesus took the step of explaining the Christian lifestyle in a way that could only be truly understood through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. In this way, no-one is offended! But all believers with a longing to discover the heart of God, are truly challenged!

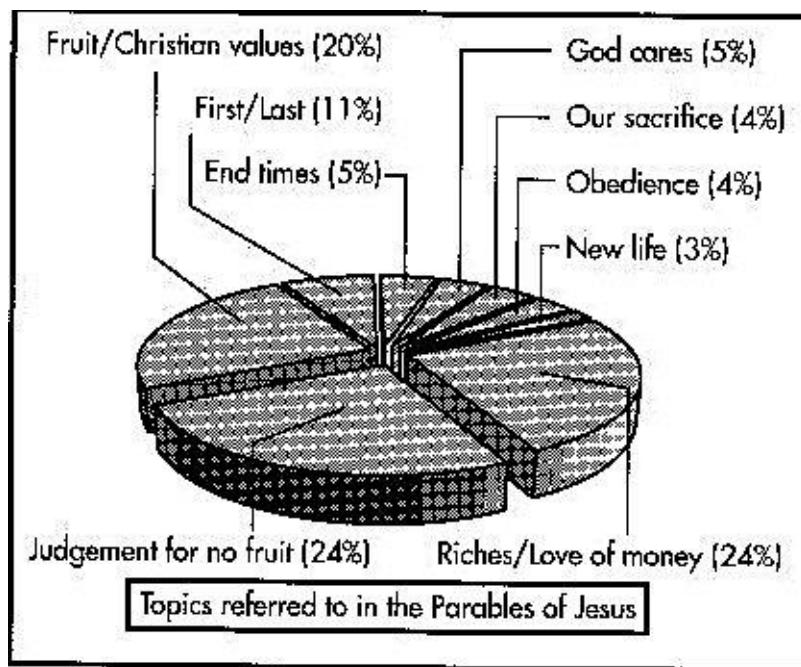
*10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"
11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. (Matthew 13:10-13)*

The parables, then, contain His secret messages to us, His followers.

Several years ago I went through these, and made a summary list of the topics referred to in them. This summary shows the emphasis that Jesus placed on the positive attributes we are to develop, but at the same time deals in detail with the areas in which we are most likely to be tempted to go astray. For He knows us better than we know ourselves! I am glad about that, for often it seems, I don't

know much about myself! God is so practical!

The summary is contained in the pie chart.



What then, is the most important attribute required to live the kingdom lifestyle?

Reading the Word? Experiencing Holy Spirit anointing? Deep theology? No, no and no!

The single most important factor in kingdom living is in the production of fruit in our lives. No, it is not apples, which is a pity really, for we live in Hawkes Bay, one of the foremost apple growing areas of the world! But rather, spiritual fruit, which Paul summarised as being;

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-5)

Developing spiritual fruit in our lives is the key to kingdom living.

Jesus was a very practical person, understanding us better than we understand ourselves. So He also took the opportunity, through the parables, to warn us of the key areas in which we can, more likely will, go astray.

First of all, there is the logical area of living a life no, or little difference, to that which we lived before we knew Jesus - commonly called, 'one foot in the kingdom, one in the world.' Seeking the benefits without being prepared to pay the price!

Jesus was tough on this! We will see this as we go through the parables individually. A quarter of them deal with the judgment that will come upon us if we don't bear fruit in our lives! Don't know about you, but it certainly gives me food for thought. And motivation for action too!

We live in a time when the love of Jesus is promoted, almost to the exclusion of the other side of His, and the Father's, balanced character, which is ultimately, His judgment, should we choose to continually ignore His will for us.

We need to understand that, just because we have accepted Jesus as Saviour, we are not excused from judgment. Don't believe me, believe the Word! In fact, it is repeated twice in this passage, in both verses 12 and 13.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. (Revelation 20:12-13)

The book of life refers to Christians. How do I know that? From verse 15.

15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

So Jesus warned us both in the parables, written specifically for believers, and here in the description of Judgment Day, what would happen if we ignored His instructions to produce spiritual fruit in our lives. This warning is again confirmed in Hebrews...

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

Is all hopeless then? No, it is not. If we do the will of God...

36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. (Hebrews 10:36)

And again in Romans...

7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. (Romans 2:7)

The choice is ours.

The second practical warning of Jesus, once again contained in round a quarter of the parables, is a warning against the love of money and accumulating riches. I

can see the hairs rising on the back of your head!

Alternatively, you may be thinking 'I don't love money', as you sit back relaxing in your armchair watching the news about the Haiti earthquake on your 100 inch screen, surround sound, Blu-ray, home theatre system thinking, I am so blessed that I don't live there!

The reality is, in the natural, we all like money, whether we admit it or not! If we don't have it, we want it, if we do have it, we want more. That simply is human nature.

Of course, Jesus understood this reality and spent a great deal of time talking about money and warning us of the dangers involved. But even before Jesus came, the Old Testament books of wisdom contained similar warnings.

10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. 11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? 12 The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep. 13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, 14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him. 15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. (Ecclesiastes 5:11-15)

Jesus was straight up about it.

24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Matthew 6:24)

The Pharisees were quoted as a worldly example.

14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. 15 He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. (Luke 16:14-15)

How about going on a ministry trip this way?

8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. (Mark 6:8)

Leave your VISA card at home, would seem to be the advice here! Some inspired wisdom from Timothy.....

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Interestingly, I did a trip to Africa in (nearly) that way. Although my airfares had been paid! I had 50c a day to live on for 2 months. After 10 days my \$30 was down to \$2 with 50 days to go! Then the Lord started bringing the money in. I left Africa with no money but having been provided for throughout my trip also. Everyone was surprised - the Africans and me!

In whom, or what, do we put our trust?

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Hope you are not going to get too mixed up with my logic here! For we will look at the parables in alphabetical order, except for this one, which we will look at twice, at the beginning and the end! Plus, we will first look at the middle, before considering the beginning and the end! Please bear with me, for all will be revealed! (No, that is not a parable!)

The Parable of the Sower is a key parable, not only for its contents, but because Jesus took the opportunity here to explain what a parable is. Hence why we are starting in the middle!

*10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"
11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. (Matthew 13:10-17)*

Jesus made several points here that will help us understand the parables better.

1. Nearly all the parables are about the kingdom of heaven and the parables are all about the kingdom of heaven!
2. Knowledge about the kingdom is restricted in its distribution.
3. This knowledge is given on an 'all or nothing' basis.

4. Unbelievers will neither understand the parables, nor the kingdom lifestyle.
5. Those who do understand, and live the lifestyle, will receive a special blessing that would be the envy of many prophets and righteous people from Old Testament times.

We are so privileged to live in a time in history when the secrets of the kingdom have been revealed to those who wish to respond. This has been the case for the past 2000 years.

Today however, we are doubly blessed. For in the ongoing pattern of God since the Reformation, which has seen the gradual restoration of truths (e.g. personal faith, believer baptism, Holy Spirit anointing, healing, spiritual gifts, etc.) lost from the end of the first apostolic age (from the time of the death of the apostle John), we are now experiencing the revelation that the kingdom is not only future, but also to be a present reality today.

When I was a boy, before I even believed, I could not understand the Lord's (Disciples) Prayer when it said;

10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

I was taught that it was future, but even then, had my doubts about that. It seemed, even then in my innocence, to be worded as much in the present as in the future, along with the other petitions of the prayer. Today, I am grateful (and relieved!) to see that there is a new and growing revelation amongst many, many, dedicated believers that 'the kingdom is for now' too.

This is both a privilege and a responsibility! Yes, there is a great blessing but along with the blessing comes a responsibility to live out the revelation of the kingdom lifestyle. But if your heart desire is to experience more of your Saviour and Lord;

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be

opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)

Amen.

Farming was the main occupation of the Jews of the time. Therefore they would have understood, in the natural, what Jesus was saying, more easily than many of us today do. Even so, Jesus explained in detail what this parable meant.

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. 22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. 23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. "
(Matthew 13:18-23)

Can we lose our salvation? Apparently so! As confirmed here.

13 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.
(Mark 13:13)

We need to nurture our faith carefully, to ensure that our seed is sown in the good soil. We choose our own soil in which to be planted! To produce a good crop we need to persevere in our faith.

36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. (Hebrews 10:36)

We also need an understanding of what we believe in order to remain firm in our faith. 'There is nothing as blind as blind faith!

Love of Money

3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:3-10)

What soil are you planted in? Fortunately, in the spiritual, it is never too late to ask for a transplant!

As we saw earlier, Jesus explained what this particular parable meant. However, this does not mean that there is no more meaning to be found in it. The understanding that Jesus revealed was for the people at the time. This does not mean that his revelation was complete for all time. The Holy Spirit can still bring additional revelation and understanding from age to age.

I would like to suggest to you 2 understandings of the final part of the parable, the crops from the good soil. That is us - believers. On an individual level it shows that there are of crop production, of fruit, in believers. Not all believers are the same. Some produce more than others. Some display the fruit of the Spirit more than others.

There has been a 'democratic' teaching over the years that all we need to do is to

pray the 'sinner's prayer' (not found in the Bible!) and all will be well. We can live how we like and we will get to heaven to live there in the same way as the martyr or greatest saint who has ever lived. Easy Christianity - but false. The whole emphasis of the Bible and understanding of the Jewish culture is that we must live what we believe. Judgment will come, for believer and unbeliever alike.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

(Revelation 20:12)

The works we do are recorded in the book of life and we are rewarded accordingly. Some produce 30, some 60 and some 100 fold crops. Are you a 30 fold, 60 fold or 100 fold follower of Jesus?

In regard to the church, there can be seen a progressive pattern of development. This development is in terms of revelation and understanding of the church at a particular time. God's pattern is always to work in threes - from Father, Son and Holy Spirit through to faith, hope and love and many, many more.

So it is with the church. There is a 3 fold revelation which relates to the 3 crop yields Jesus talks about in this parable.

1. 30 FOLD CHURCH: A church, or group of people with the revelation of Jesus, but who choose to stop there. Baptism is fine, but we will not get involved with any more. These are known as traditional or evangelical churches.

2. 60 FOLD CHURCH: A church, or group of people with the revelation of Jesus but who also accept the moving of the Holy Spirit as being of importance to them. These are known as pentecostal or charismatic churches.

3. 100 FOLD CHURCH: A church, or rather, a group of individuals with the

revelation of Jesus, but who also accept the moving of the Holy Spirit and the lordship of Jesus in their lives. Whose purpose for being is to be obedient to the will of the Father in their own lives. This church, which is being revealed today, has tentatively many names such as third day, apostolic, tabernacle, the bride, overcomers, and more. It is generally informal, as it consists of people of like mind, with a spiritual unity not found in formal organisations.

Does this excite you? It does me!

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." 16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' 18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' 19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' 20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' 21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 22 "Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' 23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" (Luke 14:15-24)

This illustration of the guest list at a feast is both an encouragement, and a warning, for those who desire to be a part of the kingdom of God. On the encouraging side, we don't have to be spiritual superstars in order to enter the kingdom. God looks not at our position, our clothing or our spiritual gifts, but at our heart attitude towards Him.

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions. (Mark 12:32-4)

The kingdom is accessed through the application in our lives of the 'golden rule', agape loving (a love involving action, not just mental assent) of both God and others. As we saw from the Parable of the Sower, perseverance is required.

15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (Luke 8:15)

Our heart attitude, as demonstrated through our actions, is the invitation that enables us to attend the feast, to enter the kingdom of God. The warning, on the other hand, was directed, at the time, to the religious people of the day.

20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

While we all see the problems of the Pharisees, we are often blinded to the reality that these characteristics are the potential downfall in leadership of any generation. Let's look briefly at the 'woes', a list of warnings from Jesus that we need to guard against today.

13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. (Matthew 23:13)

We must be so careful to only teach Biblical truth, not denominational theology. Verse 14 is excluded from the NIV, but it talks about taking advantage of 'widows' i.e. the easily beguiled - and the saying of long prayers! We can travel away, looking better than we are in reality, for at home people know us better.

15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. (Matthew 23:15)

Do we make additional rules in an attempt to earn holiness by human means?

16 "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' 17 You blind

fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? 18 You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' 19 You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. 22 And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it. (Matthew 16:22-3)

Do we major on the minor?

25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. (Matthew 23:23-4)

Are we really what we portray ourselves to be? We need to be honest with others.

27 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (Matthew 23:27-8)

Of course we are not like the Pharisees! But are we?

29 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. 30 And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' 31 So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! (Matthew 23:29-32)

Two additional warnings precede these 'woes'. Do not dress to distinguish yourself from those you lead.

5 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' (Matthew 23:5-7)

Do not use a title. Walk in humility.

8 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. 9 And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12)

Please do not take offence with me. This is Scripture speaking. I take offence with myself when I see areas here where I am failing my God, through my thoughts and actions!

"Forgive us lord. Help us Lord become more like You."

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' 36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:25-37)

This is one of the best known of the parables of Jesus. We get the general message very easily. We are to 'agape love', that is to care for as would of yourself, 'our neighbour', which is everyone, particularly the poor, the unlovely, even those we don't like. This is a recurring theme of Jesus.....

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-8)

.....being confirmed by Paul.

14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
(Galatians 5:14)

While this is well understood, although maybe not always as well lived by us, it is interesting to consider, as an aside, the 3 potential helpers here.

The first two, the priest and the Levite, were members of the God appointed priestly class. It was an indication of how far the religious hierarchy had moved away from God's Law over the 1500 years from Moses to Jesus. In these, the days of the Law, the religious people had become extra legalistic! It is a classic example of why the Law could not work, for man was never able to keep the letter, let alone the spirit, of it. Not even the Levites, the descendants of those who had been loyal to God at the time of the building of the golden calf at Mount Sinai. Classic proof that the Law would not work in reconciling mankind to God, for no-one could or can keep all of it all the time.

The third person involved was a Samaritan. The Jews and the Samaritans were bitter enemies. The Jews saw the Samaritans as a mongrel race of remnants from the 10 tribes of Israel mixed with other peoples of the area. They had retained a bastardized form of Judaism which they would abandon when expedient. The Jews thought themselves far superior. Listen to the antipathy of John when Jesus was rejected by the Samaritans.

52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them, 56 and they went to another village. (Luke 9:52-6)

Through this illustration Jesus was showing the Jews, and us, that living under the

Law did not bring about righteousness. It was an indication that the old religious order was about to change to a system of individual decision to enter the kingdom and attain righteousness, irrespective of race.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33)

Paul explained this change in the religious order well.

3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. 7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:3-11)

May we be careful not to fall back into the old religious practices of the priests and Levites. Instead, give all the praise and thanks to Jesus, that because of His sacrifice on the cross, we are able, through belief in what He has done for us; enter the glorious kingdom of God.

THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK

"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. 11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." (John 10:1-18)

One morning, I was lying in bed listening to the radio. There was a programme on about teaching religion in schools. Setting a benchmark, 55% of New Zealanders considered themselves Christian (most are nominal though), 30% atheist or agnostic, with 15% following other religions. In essence, the conclusion was that it was acceptable to teach 'religious moral values' without teaching any particular 'religion'. One universal God etc., etc. The one world church movement is growing, and sadly, is supported by many 'Christians'.

The Christians, and others, had not read, misunderstood, or rejected this parable. For Jesus was warning here about this 'politically correct', worldly conclusion. According to Jesus, there is only one way, one gate, to enter the kingdom of God. Either Jesus is lying, which means we shouldn't believe anything He says, or He is speaking the truth, informing us of an unequivocal fact, one which we ignore at our peril. He reiterates this truth in Matthew.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

The choices are the broad gate of inclusion and destruction, or the narrow gate of life, now and for eternity. This choice is mine. This choice is yours. Which gate will you choose?

The parable continues to say that there are two groups of sheep that will be combined into one flock, in the kingdom.

16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:16)

The two lots of sheep that are to join together are the Jews who choose to follow Jesus, along with the gentiles, whom the Jews of the time, and many still today, would not consider could ever be acceptable to God, without first becoming Jews. Peter, the Jew, had to learn this lesson through the vision he received from the Lord about all animals now being clean to eat.

15 "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the

beginning. 16 Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" 18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." (Acts 11:15-18)

I look forward to the day when we will all, Jewish and gentile followers of Jesus will be gathered into the one flock with one shepherd.

Thank you Lord.

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:10-13)

This brief parable should turn the church upside down! It did originally. But then the church became either, a part of the establishment (e.g. Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican), or indirectly associated with the establishment (e.g. most Protestant churches today - from 'protesting' to 'conformity'). Most of the people Jesus mixed with, those, whom He came to bring into His kingdom, had been rejected by the religious establishment of the time as being beyond salvation. But Jesus came to save the hurting and the lost. Not the righteous, but the sinners, as the parable states. This was anathema to the religious people of the day.

2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2)

We all know this and accept it in theory. We may run programmes to help the poor, or go out on mission trips, but I would suggest that most of our time and money (the best barometer) is spent on ourselves, maintaining ministers, buildings and programmes that predominantly fit in with the middle class establishment of our society. The emphasis is on meeting our own needs, to become comfortable within the environment in which we live. The early New Testament church was definitely not part of the establishment. It was persecuted. It went underground in many cases, simply to ensure its survival.

The Church Persecuted and Scattered

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. (Acts 8:1-3)

Persecution is promised still, to those who wish to enter the kingdom. For our lifestyle is to be radically different to that of the world.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)

The disciples of Jesus were a classic example of completely unsuitable people chosen to be 'ministers'. They were uneducated, rejected by the religious establishment, who only chose the best and brightest to become disciples of the Rabbis. Yet, in spite of their ups and downs when Jesus was teaching them, after His death, resurrection and ascension, they changed the course of history right through to the present day. A rabble of uneducated men became world changers! For Jesus knew their hearts!

What do we look for today in our ministers? The best and brightest, with quality theological degrees Is this the example Jesus provided to us? You will, of course, quote Paul, as a rabbinical style example. Yes he was trained. But the first thing that happened to him was to be broken of his training. Let us read what Easton's Bible Dictionary had to say about it.

As he and his companions rode on, suddenly at mid-day a brilliant light shone round them, and Saul was laid prostrate in terror on the ground, a voice sounding in his ears, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The risen Saviour was there, clothed in the vesture of his glorified humanity. In answer to the anxious inquiry of the stricken persecutor, "Who art thou, Lord?" he said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15).

This was the moment of his conversion, the most solemn in all his life. Blinded by the dazzling light (Acts 9:8), his companions led him into the city, where, absorbed in deep thought for three days, he neither ate nor drank (9:11). Ananias, a disciple living in Damascus, was informed by a vision of the change that had happened to Saul, and was sent to him to open his eyes and admit him by baptism into the Christian church (9:11–16). The whole purpose of his life was now permanently changed.

Immediately after his conversion he retired into the solitudes of Arabia (Galatians 1:17), perhaps of "Sinai in Arabia," for the purpose, probably, of devout study and meditation on the marvellous revelation that had been made to him. "A veil of thick darkness hangs over this visit to Arabia. Of the scenes among which he moved, of the thoughts and occupations which engaged him while there, of all the circumstances of a crisis which must have shaped the whole tenor of his after-life, absolutely nothing is known. 'Immediately,' says St. Paul, 'I went away into Arabia.' The historian passes over the incident [comp. Acts 9:23 and 1 Kings 11:38, 39]. It is a mysterious pause, a moment of suspense, in the apostle's history, a breathless calm, which ushers in the tumultuous storm of his active missionary life." Coming back, after three years, to Damascus, he began to preach the gospel "boldly in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:27), but was soon obliged to flee (9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33) from the Jews and betake himself to Jerusalem. Here he tarried for three weeks, but was again forced to flee (Acts 9:28, 29) from persecution. He now returned to his native Tarsus (Gal. 1:21), where, for probably about three years, we lose sight of him. The time had not yet come for his entering on his great life-work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

To become effective once more, the church needs to follow the example of Scripture and Jesus and become a grassroots organism. To truly reach out to 'sinners' and showing 'mercy' to those in need. To become outward rather than inwards focused.

Talk is easy. But are we ready to change? Are we prepared to meet the challenge?

PARABLES OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE & THE PEARL

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:44-6)

The kingdom of God really is available now!

It is hidden to non-believers, and sadly, to most believers also. Many believers are not even looking for it, for they are (incorrectly) taught that it is a future kingdom only. If it were not available now, then why would Jesus have told these parables? Jesus, in fact, is talking in the past tense here, about two people who have actually already found the kingdom. So logically, it has to be there to be found!

The kingdom of God is priceless!

It is a treasure in the field; it is also the finest pearl the trader has ever seen. It is easy for us to build a fantasy picture of what 'heaven' is like - fluffy angels and golden paving. Suspect it will be different when we do get there! But it is even more difficult to envisage that this beautiful, precious kingdom could ever exist on earth, amongst all the troubles and challenges we are facing in the world, let alone imagine what it looks like! In reality though, the kingdom already exists in those who seek it. We may not be able to see it, but it is there, within us.

20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-1)

However, in the end times this inner existence will be reflected outwardly also, in kingdom believers, in what is often called the 'double blessing'. Imagine being

filled with '*the fullness of God*'!

I had an aunty, Aunty Ina, who suffered badly from arthritis in her later years. However she would still cook (which won my affection!), but my greatest memory is of her sitting by the fire with her Bible by her side. In spite of her pain, the glow of the Holy Spirit shone from her. The kingdom within, was seen without!

The kingdom costs us everything!

The first man sold all he had, the second, all his precious pearls, in order to buy, (to inherit) the kingdom. To participate in the glory of the kingdom costs us our all. We cannot live in two kingdoms at the same time. Either we live in the world (follow the ways of the world while maybe acknowledging Jesus as Saviour) or commit our lives 100% to Him (making Jesus Lord of our lives). Jesus spoke in this way as He prayed for His disciples at Gethsemane;

14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. (John 17:14)

The kingdom costs everything, for as black is the opposite of white, so true kingdom believers will reflect the light of Jesus to the world, who will either accept or reject the light.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:8-13)

Are you, am I, prepared to pay the price of the kingdom?

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." (Matthew 13:47-52)

The parable of the net is similar to that of the tares and the wheat, talking about sorting out true from false believers, at the end of the age. Yes, there is a mixture of both true and false Christians in the church. Matthew Henry confirms this in his Bible commentary.

(3.) This net gathers of every kind, as large dragnets do. In the visible church there is a deal of trash and rubbish, dirt and weeds and vermin, as well as fish. (4.) There is a time coming when this net will be full, and drawn to the shore; a set time when the gospel shall have fulfilled that for which it was sent, and we are sure it shall not return void, Is. 55:10, 11. The net is now filling; sometimes it fills faster than at other times, but still it fills, and will be drawn to shore, when the mystery of God shall be finished. (5.) When the net is full and drawn to the shore, there shall be a separation between the good and bad that were gathered in it. Hypocrites and true Christians shall then be parted; the good shall be gathered into vessels, as valuable, and therefore to be carefully kept, but the bad shall be cast away, as vile and unprofitable; and miserable is the condition of those who are cast away in that day.

Henry, Matthew, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

We do need to be realistic, and concerned, about the fact that some of those who attend church year in and year out do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. Attending church, reading the Bible, being an expert in theology, while being good things in themselves, do not make one a true follower of Jesus. Jesus is not into religious form(ality) but rather, into relationship, a personal relationship with Him. It is so sad how many professing Christians are either unaware they need to, or do not choose to, develop their own individual relationship with Jesus, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Being a good person does not qualify you for a ticket to heaven! Yes a vibrant personal relationship, whether in the world or with Jesus, is always a work in progress, developing from one level to another. The King James Version says - 'from glory to glory'.

18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:7)

As a result of that relationship a teacher of the Word must bring out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old. We must, through our relationship with Jesus, receive new and personal revelation to pass on to others. Of course, this revelation must be in line with Scripture, but God wants to reveal more of Him to each succeeding generation. As our relationship with Jesus develops, so He reveals more of Himself to us. It is said that those who have been married for a long time get to look like each other. (Bad news for my wife Kathy – but surely good news for me!) It is the same with Jesus. I am sure I don't look like Him physically, but inside....? While we are still to bring the 'old treasures' of revelation received through the generations, we must also discover and present 'new treasures' to accompany the old. The old is good, but the new, inspirational.

There was a man of my father's generation, Jack, who worked on the wharves, unloading ships here in Napier. He was uneducated, yet He had great knowledge and revelation of the Word. He had at one time, a weekly teaching night, which men would flock to. No formal theological training, but a deep relationship with Jesus. The hungry came to feast upon the revelatory Word. Such is the revelation for today, of God's kingdom being built upon the earth. The Lord's Prayer has been recited, often in rote fashion, billions of times over the past 2000 years, yet it is only now that God is choosing to reveal the meaning of the phrase.....

10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

New treasure, a new understanding of living the kingdom life now, today, this minute, is being revealed to seeking, dedicated followers of Jesus around the world. His kingdom will come *on earth as it is in heaven*.

Thank you Lord.

PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." 12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:7-14)

While not strictly a kingdom parable, it certainly is a parable about kingdom behaviour. The story is about a feast, but the implications of what Jesus is saying extend far wider than eating! Jesus is teaching a lesson on motivation. Why do I do something? Am I thinking, "What is in this for me?" For that is the way of the world, the way of human nature. We are born selfish. Watch a child's behaviour. It is all too often about 'I'. "I will be good if you give me a play station!" We know it! We are manipulated by it! For we love our kids. Unfortunately, as we grow older, we don't change, we just get more subtle about it! Much of our behaviour remains motivated by self-interest. In this parable Jesus 'takes a dig at' our pride of position and self-serving generosity. A sideswipe at two of the three motivators of men - 'girls, gold and glory'! This story really gets to the heart of what true Christianity is. For genuine, mature, Jesus believers are required to put God and others before themselves. The Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus about the requirements of following in His ways.

"37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is

like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40)

We all know this, but do we live it? It worries me when I hear evangelists say, "Come to Jesus and life will be wonderful." Many too, will (falsely) preach health and wealth to accompany conversion. They are both right and wrong. But they are wrong viewed from the natural perception of the non-believers they are preaching to. Misleading in fact! For the non-believer will understand what they are saying to be more of the values they already have. But the reality of Christian living is that happiness comes not from receiving, but giving, not from power and position, but from humility, of placing others ahead of one's self. Of values that are very different, the opposite of those that apply in the world. The form of 'evangelism' applied by Jesus in the parable involving the rich young ruler was very different!

22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Luke 18:22)

Do we preach the sacrifice that brings true happiness?

29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life." (Luke 18:29-30)

That the meek, the humble, obtain the inheritance?

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)

May we be more honest in how we present the kingdom. And lead by example, through living a genuine kingdom lifestyle.

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." 16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' 18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' 19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' 20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' 21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 22 "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' 23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" (Luke 14:15-24)

We like eating! Jesus was partial to a good feed too, as we can see here. And He used 'dining' illustrations in a number of parables. For the whole point of a parable is to use a natural situation to illustrate a spiritual principle, and what better illustration can you get than food. Especially for me!

The parable itself can be viewed as a picture of the Jews, the invited guests, rejecting Jesus, while the gentiles from the roads and country lanes would eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. This interpretation, while containing a large element of truth, is not the whole story. There is an extra dimension here, one that relates to the difference in reaction to the kingdom between the rich and the poor. In a natural sense, a feast would logically be more attractive to those who did not have enough to eat rather than the well fed, who could afford to feast any time.

In the spiritual, Jesus was primarily referring to the Pharisees who were gorging themselves on the fatty, high calorie foods of Old Testament Law! They had it all!

They had no need of the 'feast of salvation'. Others too, were so involved in worldly pursuits that they did not have the time or inclination to seek spiritual enlightenment. A danger that faces us all! The reality is, the more money we get, the more possessions we have, the more effort we need to put in to look after them, and the more precious they become to us. It is ironic that prosperity preaching ultimately turns people away from God. Either they don't get rich and so become disillusioned and fall away, or they get rich and then become worldly orientated, and again fall away. Simply false teaching! Listen instead to Jesus.....

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (Matthew 6:25-6)

A similar theme is emphasised in the parable The Rich Ruler.

22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! (Luke 18:22-4)

Jesus summed up the situation succinctly when He said.....

29 People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last." (Luke 13:29-30)

Mary, when singing under the power of the Holy Spirit, understood this principle too.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

(Luke 1:53)

The reality is, the kingdom of God is of more appeal to the 'have not's than the 'haves'. These are the ones who attended the feast. Jesus was straightforward about it too.....

Treasures in Heaven

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Matthew 6:19-24)

What are your priorities in life?

THE PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. 3 "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' 5 So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. 6 About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 7 "Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' 8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' 9 "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' 13 "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matthew 20:1-14)

The primary meaning of this parable is an explanation to the Jews that the kingdom of God, while first offered to them, is not only theirs. In fact, many who come in later, that is the gentiles, will be their equals, indeed, may well surpass them. "*So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*"

There are of course, many sub meanings that have been preached about numerous times over the years. These will not be gone into here. What I would like to consider though, is the men who, in the first instance, were not hired. They stood

round and did nothing. The usual explanation of this is that they were ones living in the world and under satan's dominion or control. The parable of the lost son returning after a life of debauchery is considered to be a parallel example of this principle.

But, at the risk of being declared a heretic, I would like to put forward a more positive view of these unhired men. In normal circumstances the vineyard owner would hire all the workers he required at the beginning of the day. The chances of getting work would be unlikely if were not in that first intake, becoming almost impossible the further the day went on. All through the day they waited. They could have given up and gone home, seeing they had missed out on a job. The longer they stayed, the more desperate for a job they showed themselves to be. Their desperation for the job was recognised in the wages they were finally given. So it is with the kingdom.

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

We must actively seek the kingdom. It is not given to us on a platter. Ask and keep asking. Knock and keep knocking. The kingdom is given to those who are prepared to sacrifice their own wants and desires in order to conform to the image of Jesus.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16)

We need determination and perseverance, as illustrated by the late employed vineyard workers, in order to enter the kingdom.

¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and violent people have been raiding it.

My friend, do not give up! (I am talking to myself here too.) When times are tough, when we think God has given up on us - or we want to give up on God - let us remember the workers who had the patience and determination to wait through the hot noonday sun in order to get into the kingdom vineyard. Their wait was rewarded. Their wages were paid in full. Yes, the last, you and me, can become the first in the kingdom of God. The choice is ours.

Are we prepared to pay the price?

THE PARABLE OF THE TENNANTS

33 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. 35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. 37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. 38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' 39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? 43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. 46 They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet. (Matthew 21:33-46)

Under the Old Testament church, in the form of the Tabernacles of Moses, and the Temples that followed, the priesthood was primarily responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the people. God entrusted His church to the Jews, more specifically, to the priesthood. This parable talks about how the leadership, in particular, rejected and killed the prophets that God had sent over the centuries to provide correction and direction to the people. Being a prophet in Old Testament times was a high risk occupation! Stoning was a common fate! E.g. Zechariah.

21 But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the LORD's temple. (2 Chronicles 24:21)

Planting a vineyard is an expensive business and it takes time for the vines to mature and provide a good harvest. This is the nature of business. Take for example, on a much shorter time scale, the establishment of a 'Seekers Megamart'. It costs us \$20,000 to set up a new shop. We need a weekly turnover of \$4-6,000, depending upon location, to make it economic. We do not expect to start out with that turnover, but over a period of a year, with staff training, publicity and word of mouth, we expect the turnover to approach that level. At the one year point, we will make a decision as to whether to continue in that location, or not.

God was a lot more patient than me! His trainers were killed on a regular basis by the religious management! So, in a last ditch effort to get the 'spiritual vineyard' back on track, He sent Jesus, His son. We know the result. Jesus foretold that He was going to meet a similar fate as had the prophets earlier. The time of decision had come. The kingdom of God was to be transferred from Jewish to gentile custody. The Jewish religious leaders were finally held accountable for their actions over the centuries. Custody of the church has been placed in gentile hands until there is a reconciliation of believing Jews and gentiles at the end of the age. The 'playing field' has changed. Jesus sacrificed Himself for us. He is now our sole intercessor with God. No longer do we approach God through a priesthood (or 'pastorhood'). We are **PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE for our OWN SALVATION, past, present and future.** The kingdom of God is available to, and must be sought by, each one of us individually. For the kingdom of God is not found in a building or denomination, but within the individual believer.

20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
(Luke 17:20-1)

As leaders we need to be very aware of this New Testament reality and be

extremely careful not to become de facto priests. We can help point the way, but no-one can come to Jesus through us. It is between the individual and Jesus.

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

Likewise, it is the role of leadership to train the people to do the work, not to take it all upon ourselves.

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12)

It is only when leadership truly understand and applies this principle that we will come into end time unity.

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

I know it seems impossible. I realise it is our natural inclination to want to take on people's burdens. Being real, it feels nice to have people reliant upon us! But it is not the way of God for these days. We need to be so careful that we do not now suffer the same fate as the priests of the Old Testament, through disobeying God's instructions.

THE PARABLE OF THE YEAST

33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." 34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." (Matthew 13:33-5)

It is amazing, when you read the commentaries, how much meaning can be taken out of a simple sentence such as that contained in verse 33 above! Enough for a long and very erudite sermon! But I am not sure that Jesus was meaning it to be understood this deeply in such a detailed fashion. The main point that Jesus was making is that the true kingdom of God is infectious, that it will permeate the large amount of flour, which can be viewed today as being either the world, or the church as a whole. The point is, the kingdom is the most, the only, the truly powerful element of change that can affect the world and even reform the church. As we have seen in the earlier parables, the kingdom consists of those believers, those disciples (the two are effectively the same) who are completely sold out to Jesus. Jesus (through John) made this point in His comments on the church at Laodicea, widely recognised as being a picture of today's church.

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. (Revelation 3:14-16)

Why were they lukewarm? For the same reason, we in the Western world, in particular, are so today.

*17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.
(Revelation 3:17)*

We are wealthy (visit the poor in Africa or Asia if you don't think you are!) which creates self-reliance. In reality, in spite of what we might say, we live lives where the security of possessions and pension plans has become the focus of our actions and behaviour. So what is the answer?

18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (Revelation 3:18)

We need to 'buy' the 'gold' of repentance and testing, by submitting our lives fully to Jesus and letting Him refine us in the fire, so producing in us lives of holiness and righteousness.

The area was famous for an eye salve, called 'mounce'. Jesus is using this natural illustration to encourage us to apply a 'spiritual mounce' to our eyes in order to see, so be able to understand what He was saying. This surely is a message to the church today, to look for spiritual rather than material riches. Let us take heed of the inspired message through the author of the book of Hebrews.....

10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. 14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:10-14)

To those prepared to make the sacrifice, comes the greatest promise of all. Amen.

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:21-2)

We now look at two parables saying much the same thing. Two for the price of one!

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:1-7)

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

8 "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:1-10)

These 2 parables reinforce each other, although with different emphases, revealing the heart of Father God towards His children, that is, us.

Firstly, Jesus is again criticising the supposedly righteous religious people who do not see themselves as sinners. We have dealt with this previously.

Secondly though, these parables illustrate that God's nature is centred upon a desire to build a personal relationship with those He has created in His likeness.....

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

He put us in charge of the earth.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)

While God could have made us like robots, robots cannot form true relationships, as they are programmed, not having a choice (or no more than a pre-programmed one) about what they do. Real relationship can only come when two people choose to relate to each other, in free will. God set up a freewill test for Adam and Eve which, as we know, they failed.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:15-17)

And what was true of Adam and Eve was true in Jesus' time, and is still reality today. Many people, whether through choice, or a lack of knowledge, not having heard, do not have a personal relationship with the Father which, from New Testament times, must come through Jesus.

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:6-7)

I am sure God cries (not theologically correct, I know!) when He sees His 'sheep' or His 'coins' lost to Him! For that is the heart message of these parables. He will

go to great effort to restore the relationship, whether it be someone who has never known Him, or to one who has walked away, for whatever reason.

As a father loves and pities his children, so the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him [with reverence, worship, and awe]..... But the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord are from everlasting to everlasting upon those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him, and His righteousness is to children's children(Psalm 103:13,17 Amplified Version)

In order to come to Him, we must first, as both the parables conclude, repent of our sins.

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. (Luke 13:1-3)

On the first Day of Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came in power upon the church, as Jesus had promised He would. Peter confirmed the need for repentance as he told the people there.....

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

(Acts 2:36-39)

May we come back to Jesus today.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. 4 "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' 5 "But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. 6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14)

This parable was spoken in the Temple, just 2 or 3 days before Jesus was crucified. Jesus had been rejected by the Jews, in particular, the religious leaders. Because of their disobedience to God, being too enamoured with traditional religious form rather than the present substance of Jesus, they would miss out on the kingdom. As we have seen elsewhere, they would have understood, but again ignored the message.

Surely this contains a warning to us today as well? Are we letting our precious denominational beliefs and paradigms get in the way of entering the kingdom?

Jesus started His ministry with a wedding, at Cana in Galilee, and the final act of the age will also be a wedding, between Jesus and His church.

For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (Revelation 19:7)

The wedding guests, i.e. the church, are to be dressed in the fine linen of righteousness.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (Revelation 19:8)

Unfortunately, within the church, there are those who are not clothed in the wedding dress of righteousness. Sadly, there are many in this situation that will be thrown out to live in eternal darkness at judgment time. Jesus made the point here that there will be many who reject His saving grace, both outside and within the church.

This truth is taught in other parables also, such as the tares and the wheat and the wide and narrow roads.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. (Matthew 13:40KJV)

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Which road are you walking on?

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade." 33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything. (Mark 4:30-34)

A description of the botanic characteristics of the mustard seed is interesting.

The seed of both black and white mustard is similar in size, about 1.0 to 3.0 mm (1/8 inch)(11) so it is not the smallest seed but it is the smallest seed of those which "you plant in the ground" clearly indicating that the Lord was not comparing the mustard seed to all plants but only to those which were commonly grown. There would be numerous plants familiar to His audience with smaller seeds, of which the best example would be the seed of the black orchid. But there are few plants which grow so large in one season as a mustard, and few plants would be characterized by such rapid germination of the seed. Mustard planted one day could begin growing the next.

A grown black mustard would still be a herb, botanically speaking, but sometimes a very big herb, popularly considered a shrub. There are wild mustard plants over ten feet tall near the Jordan River, and even in moderate climate a mustard plant may grow that tall, provided it gets enough sunshine. It must, moreover, be remarked that generally trees in most parts of the Holy Land do not reach a large stature. The stem of a mustard plant also becomes dry and wood-like, which gives it the aspect of a tree.....

In summary, the three features of the mustard plant emphasized by the Lord are the small size of the seed, the large size of the plant in relation to the seed, and the rapid growth.(Bible Plants - Old Dominion University)

Again, we must be careful not to read more into the parable than Jesus was

meaning. While much speculation has been made about the birds and what they represent, the most likely explanation is that Jesus was making the point that the tree (large shrub) had rapidly grown big from a very small seed, large enough for birds to land on.

In Jewish understanding, prophecy generally has past, present and future applications. I would suggest that this perception also applies to this parable. Obviously, teachings of Jesus were only a very small seed at the time, eventually attracting no more than a tiny number of people.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) (Acts 1:15)

Over the next months, years and centuries, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom grew rapidly. For example.....

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:38-41)

Reality is, since that time, the kingdom has grown fastest where and when the light of the Holy Spirit has been allowed to operate in and through His people. The Dark Ages, so named because the light of the Holy Spirit was generally extinguished in the church, saw the kingdom basically shrivel and die, as the mustard plant does on an annual basis. The seed remained however, in small groups of those who continued to be led by the Spirit and were harshly persecuted for it.

After a thousand years or so, the flame of the Holy Spirit grew into the fire of the

Reformation and spread like wildfire throughout the world.

Since that time there have been ups and down's, but the growth of the kingdom plant has been fertilised by the Holy Spirit through revivals. Now we are receiving the understanding that the kingdom is not something just for when we die, or for when the world ends, but to be established upon the earth through the holy and righteous lives of His disciples.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10 KJV)

I quote from Doug Fortune, who has studied the Greek meaning of this statement in the Lord's Prayer.

*The word translated as "be done" is *ginomai* in Greek, its' meanings include- to cause to be, it is the "gen" in the English word generate, to become or come into being, be brought (to pass), be fulfilled. As we pray, Thy will be done, it is a creative declaration that reaches into the spiritual realm and serves as a catalyst for His will to be "gen"-erated, a spiritual genesis established in earth, thus causing it to be manifested in the natural realm. It is much more than just wishful thinking! It is a creative genesis! (In Earth as it is in Heaven by Doug Fortune)*

When I was a relatively new believer I completed a 30 week, (2 hours a week) course called 'Word of Life'. My only theological training! It was through this course that I came into the realm of the Holy Spirit, for which I am eternally grateful. At the conclusion of the course, the graduates participated in a 'Presbytery' where two outside prophets were brought in to prophecy over our lives. For me, the two prophecies were along similar lines but using different imagery. The first was about me being like the mustard plant, growing into a big tree, while the second was about climbing up a mountain, higher than others had gone, but being guided in my steps, my direction, by Jesus, who had walked the path before me.

Throughout the 25 odd years since I have pondered on these things as I have done

my little bit in life and ministry to be a disciple of Jesus. However, as I have written about this parable, I have had a new insight into what the Lord was saying to me that evening, long ago. For many are now getting the revelation that the kingdom of God is indeed like a spiritual mustard tree which is and will continue grow rapidly upon the earth in these end times.

My desire is to be a part of His kingdom now. Yours too?

THE PARABLE OF THE NET

47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 51 "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. 52 He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." (Matthew 13:47-52)

This is another parable about Judgment Day at the end of the age. This is one of the two dominant themes of the parables of Jesus, along with those dealing with riches and the love of money. Each comprises a quarter of Jesus' (parabolic!) teachings to the people.

Why did Jesus teach these subjects in this way?

These were then, and remain so today, two subject areas that upset people! In order that He would not be lynched before His time, Jesus spoke in this way. Yet He explained everything fully to His disciples in private.

33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything. (Mark 4:30-34)'

Hard though it is, and I am the biggest wimp at doing this face to face, it is important, indeed vital, that we make people aware that judgment will be faced by all, as this parable is teaching. It is a matter of eternal destiny!

5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath

against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. (Romans 2:5-8)

Once we truly understand and act upon this reality for ourselves, as the disciples said they did here, we will have a vital key to the kingdom of heaven. Through understanding given by the Holy Spirit, we will receive new revelation of the kingdom to accompany the age old truths and principles of God that have existed since time began, but were first recorded in written form after the exodus of the Jewish nation from Egypt.

Jesus came to earth and through His sacrifice, added the revelation of grace to the application of the law. We come into relationship with God through belief in Jesus, not through following the law to the letter all the time, which no human has been able to do. However, this does not remove the responsibility we have to live holy and righteous lives, based upon the principles of the law. For Jesus was the fulfilment, not the replacement of the law.

The Fulfillment of the Law

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20)

A true disciple does not just give mental assent to the saving grace of Jesus but

also demonstrates his or her beliefs through living by His example, applying the age old principles of the law to one's life, motivated by the revelation and application of love.

37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Getting the balance right in our lives is such a challenge, isn't it! Love! Law! Righteousness! Judgment! How often we lose the plot!

"Thank you Jesus for your forgiving grace so that I may get back on track."

OLD AND NEW WINESKINS

36 He told them this parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. 38 No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'" (Luke 5:36-9)

After being asked why His disciples did not fast, as was the religious pattern of the time, Jesus told these two brief parables to give a most necessary warning about 'mixture'. This was a warning both to the Pharisees and to us today.

Mixing the old 'religion' with the new 'revelation' courts disaster. Firstly, in the case of the Pharisees, it was mixing the old way of the 'law', as given to Moses, with the new revelation of 'grace' as taught by Jesus. You can't patch the old garment of the law with the new of grace, for to do so, you must destroy the new garment in order to get the material for the patch.

Secondly, and for us today, we cannot pour the 'new wine' of revelation into the old wineskin of church tradition, theology that owes more to the mind of man than the heart of God. This is a hard word for us to accept, for as Jesus says here, we naturally prefer the old wine to the new. We all too easily get comfortable, doing things the way they have always been done, and so miss out on the new revelation of the kingdom that our Lord is revealing to us today.

We are happy to believe in, and wait for, the kingdom up there in heaven when we die, living how we like now, rather than being prepared to allow our lives to be changed into the image of Jesus, in order to establish His kingdom upon the earth.

The logical question that arises is, "How do we get this revelation?"

According to God's Word, there is only one way. Importantly, we don't accept David's word for it! Rather each must seek out the truth for us through the revelation of our teacher and guide, the Holy Spirit.

9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"— 10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

Now, I understand that you may well be thinking that your church or denomination was set up by very godly men and has developed a tried and true theological structure that has withstood the test of time. And it teaches that heaven is only a post death experience. Perhaps also, a teaching that you will get zapped (raptured) out of an increasingly condemned and violent world, before it gets too bad to live in comfortably, and live happily ever after!

Teaching of a future, rather than a present, hope.

Yet the truth of the matter is that, unlike the Pharisees, we are to live holy and righteous lives now.

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to

God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:19-25)

If we accept the 'future heaven only' theology, the natural conclusion is that we can live our lives pretty much as we like, doing a few good things, but not having to live the kingdom lifestyle now. The writer of Hebrews sets us straight!

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

May we hear what the Lord is saying to us.

THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Jesus told the parable, and unusually, also gave the interpretation of it, so much did He want to make sure that we all got the point!

Jesus came 'to save' the sinner rather than the (self) righteous.

7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:7)

Unfortunately, both then and now, many of us humans believe that we are better than we really are! None of us are righteous, save through faith in Jesus.

10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10:12)

And confirmed.....

21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short

of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:21-3)

We are all very critical of the Pharisees, 'tut-tut' here and 'tut-tut' there, but when we honestly look at ourselves, we find we are no better than they were.

One Friday night I was at the meeting of a noted evangelist and teacher, Al Furie, who has experienced remarkable favour in being allowed to preach and teach multitudes in Cuba. At one time, he was to preach at the Toronto Airport Church for a week, and continued on for 6 weeks. At the end of this time he attended a meeting at the church where the Lord got hold of him and showed him that he was worse inside than many of those he had preached to! Unforgiveness and many other things were uncovered in his life, which he had to repent of.

Wow! How could it be! You see, Al was a highly respected Christian leader who had devoted his life to the Lord's work. Surely he didn't need to repent! But he did! And there is stuff in me - and in you - which is ungodly, no matter how righteous we appear on the surface. For we all sin and fall short of God's righteousness.

Yet it is so easy to 'become religious', as the Pharisees did, and believe that we are right in God's sight, through our own efforts. I have found this to be a particular problem in the highly dedicated, hugely well intentioned, Holiness movement. So many, in their dedication, have replaced the work of the Holy Spirit, upon which the movement was founded, with manmade rules and regulations concerning dress and behaviour. The life has gone. Judgment and self-righteousness have flourished in the Spirit's stead.

But, do not think that is just 'them'! For such problems exist in every church, in every Christian.

Right now, I have flicked over to read an email that has just come in. It reinforces the point! I quote from Gretchen.....

.....Being an American, and having grown up in the church here (becoming a Christian at age 5), I can testify that bitterness within the church is an epidemic! Yes! Moreso, I can tell you much about it because I grew up among the thorns of it within my extended family and circle of influence. And as I saw the widespread effects of it, I knew that the Bible is right: bitterness is a poison, its roots go deep, and it affects many, many people. Bitterness is a toxic state of the heart. It includes unforgiveness, envy, jealousy, hatred, resentment, selfishness, anger, self-pity, etc. Its symptoms include sarcasm, a sardonic wit (very edgy), negativity, criticism, passive-aggressive behavior (taking out anger towards someone behind their back), gossip, anger, fear, and depression (anger turned inwards).....

Many of these things we cannot see in ourselves. We need to humble ourselves, to be prepared to fully open up our life, to allow the Holy Spirit to show us where we truly are at in our walk with Jesus.

That is my prayer both for me, and for you, today.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS

The Parable of the Weeds

24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 28 "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." 37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

(Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

This parable is viewed on two levels.

Firstly, a picture of the church and the world. In the world we have both believers and non-believers, which can be viewed as wheat and tares. The problem with this

interpretation however, is that many in the world have no pretence of godliness, in fact, they are obvious weeds!

The more relevant interpretation though, relates to the church itself, described here as the kingdom of heaven, in which are found both wheat and tares.

Tares are not like the normal weeds which we pull out of the garden with great frustration, for they always seem to grow faster than the plants we have planted!

In Wikipedia we have a botanical explanation of tares...

*The words translated "weeds" ("tares" in the King James Version) is ζιζάνιον (zizania), plural of ζιζάνιον (zizanion). This word is thought to mean darnel (*Lolium temulentum*),[2][3] a ryegrass which looks much like wheat in its early stages of growth.[4] Roman law prohibited sowing darnel among the wheat of an enemy,[4][5] suggesting that the scenario presented here is realistic.[6]*

What interests me is that the Romans forbade the planting of darnel amongst wheat, which both Jesus and his audience would have known and understood the reason why, thus giving a real and relevant understanding to what Jesus was saying.

This parable, this teaching of Jesus, is particularly relevant to the church today where we promote 'Father Christmas Christianity' - a bag of blessings without any mention of sacrifice. I am so sad to have to say it, but our churches are filled with tares who have come to church, not because they are repentant sinners who have understood the need for and requested God's forgiveness, but through being promised a 'better life'. That is, one of more money and less problems. This is not what the Bible teaches. Look at the 'trouble - free life' Paul had!

How many preach this sort of Christian lifestyle?

God is, of course, here to comfort us in our troubles, but not to remove them from us.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

Walking with Jesus does bring problems, for the world does not like it! Yet with Jesus walking by our side we have comfort, for He has overcome the world!

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Are we prepared to make the 'wheat sacrifice' of being 'overcomers' or are we simply satisfied to be 'tare' 'pew warmers' on a Sunday?

Remember, as the parable says, and confirmed in Corinthians, we will all be called to judgment on the final day.

*10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.
(2 Corinthians 5:10)*

Am I ready? Are you ready?

THE PARABLE OF THE 10 MINAS

The Parable of the Ten Minas

11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' 14 "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' 15 "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. 16 "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17 "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 18 "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19 "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' 20 "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' 22 "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 24 "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 25 "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'" 26 "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.'" (Luke 19:11-27)

This is a most interesting parable from several perspectives.

Firstly, Jesus indicated that His kingdom was not coming straight away. We have now waited 2000 odd years and are only starting to realise that the kingdom is not just a heavenly one, but is to be established on earth also! How long that will take,

we surely don't know!

Secondly, (verses 14-15), not everyone wants the king (Jesus) to be king over them. Not all the world will accept Jesus, in spite of what some are erroneously preaching today. In spite of what people want, Jesus has been appointed king, and He does/will reign and rule over His creation.

Thirdly, there is judgment! In verse 27, the 'king' wants his enemies to be killed in front of him!

Fourthly, and most importantly, for it comprises the bulk of the parable, there are 'degrees' of believers. We all share the same salvation but not the same reward. We do tend to get the two mixed! A great excuse for not living the life!

However the Bible clearly warns us...

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

This parable of the 10 minas emphasizes this. The greatest rewards will be given to those who are the most diligent for the Lord. As I am wont to say, to become disciples rather than believers!

The Parable of the Sower comes to a similar conclusion, that not all Jesus followers are the same. The good seed is lifelong Christians.

8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (Matthew 13:8)

I do not need to continue, for I believe that if you want to hear, you will hear, understand, and apply this truth in your life. It is up to you!

What will your reward be?

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' 21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' 22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' 23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' 24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' 26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(Matthew 25:14-30)

Like the Parable of the Ten Minas, the major emphasis of the talents, is maximizing the spiritual abilities or gifts we have been given in and for the Lord's service.

Too often we hear, maybe even from our own mouth, words like, "I have nothing

to offer God/the church/others for I have no talents, not like xxxx down the road.....!"

This, as the parable says, is a copout! There are several points to be made.

Firstly, all the servants (Christians) of the master (God/Jesus) had at least one talent. No, we are not all the same in terms of gifts given, but every believer can, indeed must, make a contribution to the ongoing work of their Saviour and Lord, for the kingdom to grow.

For we are all, as Paul explains, different but vital parts of the one body...

One Body, Many Parts

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (1 Corinthians 12:12-20)

Secondly, there are those who have been given what are called, the 'ministry gifts'. This does not mean that they have a title, or are paid, or are responsible to 'do it all', but that God has given them talents to help train US to DO THE WORK and become MATURE in Christ.

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists,

and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

I also hear, "I would love to have his or her talents!" But would you really? For, the greater the giftings, the greater the responsibilities! And, from experience and observation, the greater spiritual attacks also!

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I also hear, "I would love to have his or her talents!" But would you really? For, the greater the giftings, the greater the responsibilities! And, from experience and observation, the greater spiritual attacks also!

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

The same would apply to the other ministry gifts as well.

Of course, there is a wider range of spiritual gifts mentioned in several places, such as...

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous

powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

Thirdly, in our walk with Jesus, we are all required to develop spiritual fruit in our lives.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-5)

I would suggest that if you and I fully developed these character traits in our life, we would reflect Jesus to others. What a talent that would be!

Our talents are not fixed. As we develop in our walk with Jesus, He may well give more talents to us. We are told to always desire the greater gifts.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

Finally, the conclusion of this parable is the same as the previous one. A serious warning! If we don't use our God given talents for Him, we will be banished into outer darkness! It is not enough to simply believe. We must put our beliefs into action in order to receive our heavenly reward.

"Lord, help us to fully utilize Your talents, given to us, for You".

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' 7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 9 "No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' 10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. 11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' 12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. (Matthew 25:1-13)

This parable, unlike most of the others we have looked at, is about 'kingdom future' rather than 'kingdom now'. It looks at the return of Jesus.

6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. 8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) 9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God." (Revelation 19:6-9)

The 'virgins' represent Christians. Not literally, of course, as 4 sons attest in my case. Definitely not immaculate conceptions! But, beyond the joking.....

The heart of the parable concerns the lamps and the oil. What do they represent? There is considerable discussion, and often confusion, about this. For people with varying theologies, approach the parable in different ways.

As I have been pondering this, wondering how to present it, the Lord has given me some revelation that I would now like to share with you. It is always much easier to write when this happens!

The lamps and oil can be looked at from three perspectives.

Firstly, from the perspective of Jesus. In the church there are both true and false believers. This can be regarded as those with and without oil in their lamps. The true will be saved by the blood of Jesus, the false banished from the wedding feast, from being with Jesus in heaven.

28 "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.''" (Matthew 13:28-30)

Those adhering to traditional and evangelical church traditions will readily grasp this understanding.

Secondly, from the perspective of the Holy Spirit. Oil is associated with the Holy Spirit. Right from Old Testament times, in the first worship centre, the Tabernacle of Moses, oil was used to light the 7 lighted lampstand, or menorah in the Holy Place, the realm of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not only about spiritual gifts, but He also is our guide, teacher and friend in daily living.

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he

lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:15-17)

While comprehended and lived by some individual believers through the ages, this principle is not understood or accepted by most of the church today. This revelation is for the 'kingdom church', not a congregation meeting in a building, but a living vibrant, amorphous group of disciples, fully sold out to becoming the light of Jesus in the world.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. (Ephesians 4:8-13)

Burning Holy Spirit oil, of obedience to the Father's will, in our lamps, creates the light of Jesus in our life.

The parable concludes with the warning not to let our 'life light' of Jesus go out, for no-one knows the hour and day of His return.

How is the oil supply in your lamp today?

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

The Parable of the Two Sons

28 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 29 "I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. 30 "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. 31 "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. (Matthew 21:28-32)

Have you ever sung the song...

Create in me a clean heart, O God
And renew your Spirit within me.
Create in me a clean heart, O God
And renew your Spirit within me.

The sacrifices acceptable to you,
O Lord, are a broken spirit.
A broken heart, a contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

How contrite is your heart? But..... it is only a song, David..... I am worshipping as I sing it.....you know what I mean.....

What do you mean?

It is so easy to let the religious words flow off our tongue and then do..... nothing!

So now, we can start to understand this parable of the kingdom.

For we are all guilty, at times if not all the time, of uttering words, that sound right for the situation, but which we do not convert into actions.

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (James 1:22)

Our God is a God of action, not talk. We are not just to preach the word, but to be the living word. "I am not a preacher," I hear you say - with relief! But nor are we to be just hearers, but rather, doers of the word! No-one is excluded! Not me, not you.

Talk is cheap, action priceless!

Jesus goes on to rebuke the religious, through defining the true meaning of 'belief'. Belief here is a verb, a doing word, a word, a state of being, that requires action! It is not only of the mind, but also of the emotions, and most importantly, of the will.

Who will be obedient to the Lord?

Jesus tells us. It is those who need Him most. It is the most sinful who repent. For they know where they have been and don't want to go back there! They truly understand the meaning of 'turning their life around'.

Many who are reading this will have been blessed to have been brought up in Christian homes where church is a lifestyle inculcated in you from birth. It is easy to sing the songs and say the words, for they come naturally. We can even make a commitment, say the sinner's prayer and live a good life, but not truly know and

live for Jesus. Have been there and done that! I am talking from experience!

For me it took a rejection of this 'churchian' lifestyle and a period of 10+ years living in the world, firstly with success, then monumental failure, to bring me to true repentance.

We are all sinners.....

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans3:23)

The only problem is, many of us brought up to live a good, or maybe, religious, life, do not truly understand our need to repent, as much as the thief or the prostitute does.

For being good will not get us into the kingdom.

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.
(Luke 15:7)

Another warning to the Pharisees of that day and this!

19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19-20)

We will all perish unless we genuinely repent (turn around and walk away from) our sins.

2 Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too

will all perish. (Luke 13:2-3)

It took me 42 years to truly understand and act upon this in my life! A slow learner!

How about you?

THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

This parable teaches the kingdom truth of forgiveness.

The master, God, through His Son, Jesus, forgave each and every believer our sins, on the cross. 10,000 thousand talents of gold, (many millions of dollars in today's terms) is but a limited physical illustration of the total sacrifice Jesus made on your behalf and mine.

Neither you nor I can live in the presence of God as we are in the natural, for God and sin cannot coexist.

This foundational truth was graphically illustrated when Moses brought the twin tablets of the 10 Commandments, provided by and written upon by God (pure God), down Mount Sinai, only to discover the Israelites had built a golden calf and were worshipping it as a God substitute.

Moses had no choice other than to smash the tablets, as God cannot live in the presence of sin. The only other alternative would have been for all the people to die instead. The smashing of the tablets therefore, was an act of forgiveness on God's part. It was His self-sacrifice, an Old Testament picture of what would happen with Jesus, in the New.

Forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus. Our forgiveness of others is required in order to receive forgiveness from God!

25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." (Mark 11:25)

Did I, did you, read that! Do we put it into practice?

We all too often forget the conditional verse after the Lord's Prayer, which says exactly the same thing.

14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)

The Lord's Prayer is a key indicator that God intends to establish His kingdom here on earth.

10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

And it also contains the call for forgiveness.

4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. (Luke 11:4)

Forgiveness then, as the parable teaches, is at the centre of the establishment of God's kingdom.

By observation too, it is clear that lack of forgiveness is a huge problem, both in individual believers and in the church as a whole.

Holding on to grudges kills spiritual, and often physical, life! The root of bitterness, of unforgiveness, makes us captive to sin.

For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." (Acts 8:23)

Bitterness grieves God. It can only be overcome through kindness and forgiveness.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:30-32)

For a united church, for God's kingdom to be established upon the earth, total forgiveness of one another for the supposed wrongs we feel have been committed upon us, is an essential and foundational requirement.

How is your 'forgiveness quotient' today? Zero! 100%! Or, more likely, somewhere in between.

What are you going to do about it? What you do regarding forgiveness is solely up to you, not the other party involved. As I have found out for myself, you too will be surprised to find out what difference forgiveness makes in your life. A huge burden

will be lifted off your shoulders.

Try it and find out.

In doing so, you will take one step towards seeing the establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:1-17)

While not strictly a 'kingdom parable' The Vine and the Branches is an entirely appropriate one to conclude this series, as it sums up the requirements of kingdom living so beautifully.

The first key to kingdom living confirmed here is the importance of being in the vine. Of being in Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, and only Jesus!

Most Christians will say, "David, I am in Jesus!" But are you really? Do you follow a human leader, or do you follow Jesus? Do you follow a particular churches

theology, or do you follow Jesus? Do you do good works of your own choosing, or do you follow Jesus? Do you have one foot in the world, or do you follow Jesus? Do you have faith in faith, or do you follow Jesus? And so on.....

My friend, I also have to ask myself these questions, for I am human too. It is so easy to slip into a religious lifestyle, thinking we are following Jesus, but in reality following a human, the ways of an institution, or our own will.

We can do nothing without Jesus. Without growing on the vine, we, the branches, cannot produce godly fruit. Yet, how often do we try and do things, even good things, in our own strength. For there are gOOD things and there are GOd things. One too many 'O's! Ooooooh Dear!

In a similar illustration elsewhere, we, as Gentiles, have been grafted into the, originally Jewish, olive tree. Like the Jews, we too can be pruned out if we do not live holy lives!

17 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. (Romans 11:17-21)

This leads on nicely to the second part of the parable which instructs us to obey God's commands if we wish to remain in the vine of the kingdom.

Of course, as we all know, God's primary command is.....

The Greatest Commandment

35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is

the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:35-40)

Obedience to God's will is the key to entering into the kingdom. From the Old Testament.....

Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always. (Deuteronomy 11:1)

to the New.....

23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (John 14:23)

Indeed, we are to be slaves to righteousness!

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:15-16)

As we near the end of our analysis of the 'Parables of the Kingdom' it seems appropriate to finish with a prayer, as instructed by Jesus.

9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)

Amen.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER – AGAIN

This parable is so important that I want to repeat and finish with it, looking in greater detail than when we looked at it earlier. For it is a key parable in putting into perspective the history of the church - and in showing that there is still more to come. Hallelujah!

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." 9 Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." 10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" 13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." (Mark 4:1-20)

This, one of the best known and most important (for Jesus took the trouble to

explain its meaning) parables, contains a number of important truth's, not all of which can be explained here.

I would like to deal with but two principles that are less understood.

Firstly, we see the lesson that is to be learned from the different types of ground in which the 'seed' of God's Word was sown.

Without delving into the different types of soil, the overall message is that all new Christians need to be nurtured in their faith in order to avoid falling by the wayside.

I have huge respect for evangelists, those who have the courage to go out and witness in the highways and byways and make 'converts' through the 'sinners prayer', which incidentally, is not found in the Bible, although the principles behind it are.

However, many 'count converts' by this method, while failing to understand the basic message of the Parable of the Sower. As the popular saying goes, 'there is many a slip twixt cup and lip'. Sadly, many studies have found that over 90% of conversions in crusades, etc., have failed 'to stick', for they have been planted in the wrong soil.

To understand this, it is necessary to look again at the 'Great Commission'. For there, Jesus did not say to go out and make 'converts', but rather, 'disciples'.

The Great Commission

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "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 of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

What is involved here?

FIRSTLY, we must 'go out'. That is what evangelists do so well. Whether it is out into the streets or travelling across the world, the infectious enthusiasm of the evangelist takes the message of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus, to many people.

However, that is not all that is involved in obtaining a sound, long lasting conversion.

SECONDLY, we are required to make 'disciples' of people. Discipleship does not come through making a decision, but rather, through a complete change of lifestyle to one of becoming like Jesus.

To understand what Jesus means by discipleship, it is necessary to go back to the times in which He lived.

When a boy reached 13, he came into adulthood. The best and brightest would be chosen to become 'disciples' of one of the Rabbis of the day. They would follow the Rabbi round, imitating his every word and action. For their aim was become like the Rabbi.

Jesus is our rabbi. We are to become like Him. We may not be the best and brightest of the crop, but then, the disciples of Jesus were rejects from the Rabbis selection process also!

Discipleship requires both ongoing help and example, and, as we know ourselves, takes a lifetime. It is a process, not an event. So conversion without ongoing follow

up is ineffective in maintaining over 90% of new believers in the faith.

THIRDLY, there is a requirement for baptism. Why? Not only because of the symbolism of burying the old life and taking on the new, but also, because it is a visible witness to others of a commitment made. An initial test of faith!

FOURTHLY, discipleship involves teaching the ways of Jesus. While the teachings we offer are good, the best form of discipling is on a one to one basis, where people can share their experiences personally and learn from one who has been through the challenges of walking with Jesus.

FIFTHLY, and finally, the key to discipleship is learning to be obedient to God's commands. Need I say any more! We all need to repent for the times we have failed to do so! But I trust we are changing.....

18But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

(2 Corinthians 3:18 KJV)

There certainly is a need for our current approach to evangelism to be reconsidered. We must find ways to change a lip service commitment into a life changing experience. Discipling requires an intensive, time consuming, follow up process. Are we prepared to help the evangelist, through discipling, plant the seed in the good soil of the parable, producing **a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown?**

Now we move from the soils to the crops. Interestingly, seed sown in the good soil does not all produce the same crop. That means, not all Christians are the same!

In our democratic world, where one man has one vote, we are taught that all we need to do is to 'come to Jesus' for everything to be prosperous and wonderful now, then fly off to our heavenly mansion without suffering any tribulation, to live

as Jesus does, in paradise! Okay, maybe a slight exaggeration, but I trust you get the point! The equality of all Christians is a view widely held in the church.

But it is not Biblical!

As we have also seen in the Parable of the Talents, we are all given talents, to which we respond in different ways. In the Parable of the Wedding Feast too, we are required to keep our lamps topped up with oil in order to receive our reward.

The reality is, as Jesus explains, that there are 30, 60 and 100 fold Christians. Yes, there are different 'performance levels' and rewards according to what we have done for Jesus. We are simply, not all the same.

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. (Matthew 16:27)

We all have the same, free salvation, but will be judged according to our works.

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. (1 Corinthians 3:11-14)

And again;

7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. (Ephesians 6:7-8)

We are to go 'all out' for Jesus.

*23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,
24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the
Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-4)*

Finally, we have the final promise of Jesus, as given to John in Revelation;

*12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone
according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12)*

Are you a 30, 60 or 100 fold follower of Jesus? For we are able to determine our own reward!

We will now complete our look at this parable, by seeing how it **relates to the church as a whole**.

Before approaching this subject we need to understand that while God remains *the same, yesterday, today and forever*, our understanding, our revelation, of Him is growing, and will continue to develop until the day that Jesus returns, for Jesus is the full revelation of the Father.

*3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being,
sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he
sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1:3)*

At the end of the Dark Ages, marked by the Reformation, God started restoring His truths to the church. This ongoing restoration can be viewed as occurring in 3 principle stages, in line with the crops produced in the Parable of the Sower.

TRADITIONAL/EVANGELICAL CHURCHES (1500+) (Revealing Jesus and Baptism) (30 fold church) The first truths to be re-established through the

Reformation era were those of salvation through faith (Luther) and baptism (Anna Baptists). Movements that followed through people such as Wesley, Carey and Finney emphasised holiness and missions, amongst other things. The churches that embraced these truths are broadly known as Traditional or Evangelical churches. eg. Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Brethren, etc.

PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC CHURCHES (1900+) (Revealing Holy Spirit)

(60 fold church) Round the turn of the 20th century the revelation and power of the Holy Spirit re-entered the church in a major way through the outpouring at Azusa Street in Los Angeles and the Welsh Revival. Speaking in tongues was restored. Churches such as the AOG were established. From the late 1940's onwards, through the Latter Rain Movement, spiritual gifts such as healing, and later, prophecy, returned. In later years of the century this revelation and application of Holy Spirit power 'invaded' many traditional and evangelical churches, becoming known as the Charismatic Movement.

However, the pattern of God is always in threes, as indicated in our parable. So far, the church has had the two major transformations, those of Jesus and those of the Holy Spirit. Logically then, there must be one more major development, the church of the Father, the 100 fold church, still to come.

I do understand that this may well be a new, even strange concept for you to grasp, but I wish to show through the scripture upon which WWJ Ministries is based, that this is a logical progression. For Revelation 12:11 talks of a people, a church, who would overcome satan. You must surely agree that we have not yet done so.

11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb (**Jesus**) and by the word of their testimony; (**Holy Spirit**) they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (**Father**) (Revelation 12:11)

For us, the church, to overcome satan, 3 conditions apply. The church must operate in the power of salvation through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus, and through our testimony, which comes out of our mouth but from our heart, the seat of the Holy Spirit. This reflects our current two church understanding, as above.

However, to finally overcome satan, there must be a church of sacrifice, based on doing the will of the Father. His will is expressed in the Lord's Prayer.

your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

The Father's will is to see His kingdom established upon the earth! This is today's revelation for His church. His kingdom will be established through a people '100 fold' sold out to God.

KINGDOM (APOSTOIC, BRIDE, OVERCOMERS etc.) CHURCH (2000+)

(Revealing the Father) (100 fold church) Not a denomination, not a building, but a people dedicated to Jesus across all forms of church and non-church, who will relate (network) together informally through the power of the Holy Spirit, so enabling them to build the Father's kingdom here on earth.

Yes, a people who will finally fulfil the promise of Jesus.

18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:18-20)

This is the 100 fold church of the Parable of the Sower.

Are you prepared to make the sacrifice to see God's kingdom established now?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

For these teachings of Jesus, found in greatest detail in Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7, form the heart of the gospel of the kingdom. Significantly these chapters include what we know as the Lord's (really the disciples) Prayer which includes....

*In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. **Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.** (Matthew 6:9-10)*

Then we went on to have a look at the church according to Jesus, including the churches of Revelation which Jesus Himself, through John, commented on.

This was followed, from the Biblical accounts, an analysis of the early Jewish church and the primarily Gentile churches set up by Paul.

At this stage, of course, we had to revert to the history books in order to follow the progress of the church through the next, nearly 2 millennia.

Finally we have considered the kingdom parables in order to see what the church of the future, the kingdom church, will look like.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Lord is doing a new thing in His church today. It is very different to the old. For He is working directly in the hearts of His faithful believers personally, in order to make us fully sold out citizens of His kingdom. This is not a movement led by a person, but rather through the deep working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individual's right around the world.

36Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to

prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."
(John 18:36)

20And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-1 KJV)

2. It is in this way that the united kingdom church is developing, for it is a spiritual unity, rather than a locational or denominational one. As we have seen, it is very obvious that the current denominational model has never been, and never will, be able to produce the unity promised for the faithful kingdom church that is necessary to develop before the return of Jesus.

13until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

3. The primary focus of this kingdom church will be SOLD OUT LOVE, both of God and our fellow humans. This love cannot be programmed or taught but must come from a deep conviction of the Holy Spirit within, to turn our natural self-oriented human nature into the sacrificial nature of Jesus. This is not easy. We will have trials and tribulations along the way, but we will now understand that they all have a purpose. The one of building the character of Jesus in us.

23And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. (1 John 3:23-4)

4. The result of our unconditional love will be unconditional obedience to the instructions of the Father, as revealed to us through the Holy Spirit. To HEAR and to OBEY God's voice.

3We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

(1 John 2:3-6)

Then we can look forward with confidence to the return of Jesus.

6Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 7Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. 8Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) 9Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Amen.

So we can finally conclude that.....

THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE ONES WHO ARE OBEDIENT TO THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THEIR LIVES.