# What is the Church Model?

​And why it can't be an organisation

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According to the Bible, what is the church model that Christ instructed us to follow? What did the apostles teach and practise regarding the church structure? Is it wise to join a religious organisation that aligns with our beliefs? Should our church have a designated leader? What are the biblical offices that exist within the church? Is it appropriate to claim tax deductions for tithes and offerings? Should the church seek incorporation by the state? Should it have a central point of operation?

We find the answers throughout the Bible, line upon line, here a little, there a little (Isa. 28:9-11).

​**1) Called Out of This World**

The word "church" is derived from the Greek word '*ekklesia*' (Strong's Greek Dictionary (SGD 1577)). It refers to an 'assembly' of people, a (religious) congregation, that has been called out of this world (of darkness) into the body of Christ. It does not refer to a building, temple, or organisation incorporated by the State.

The term '*Christian*' was first used to describe the disciples of Christ in Antioch (Acts 11:26; cf. Acts 26:28).

The Church is often described as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17, 12:12-13, 27; Eph. 1:22, 4:4; 5:23; Col. 1:18, 24, 2:19, 3:15). It symbolises the united community of believers who have accepted and embraced Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, being baptised into him. They set their hearts and minds to love and worship the One True God and do His will (Lk. 22:42; Jn. 6:38; Ps. 40:8). This includes loving your neighbour as yourself (Lk. 10:25-28; Mk. 12:29-31; Gal. 5:14; Deut. 30:16).

We are all one in Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female. And if we belong to Christ, **then** we are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. Through faith in Christ Jesus, we are all children of God.

Gal 3:26-29 BSB  You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.  (27)  For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.  (28)  There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.  (29)  And if you belong to Christ, **then** you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.

Just as a human body is made up of different parts, each with its own unique function, the Church is composed of diverse individuals with various gifts and talents (Eph. 4:11-13).

The Church is not a physical building, institution, or organisation; it is a living organism, with Jesus as its head, guiding and directing its actions. Individuals, not members of a specific religious organisation, compose the Church (Isa. 55:3; Mat. 11:28; Lk. 6:47-48; Jn. Chapter 9; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3; 1Cor. 12:27). An example of this can be found in Revelation chapter 3 concerning the Sardis Church (Rev. 3:1-6).

As the body of Christ, the Church is called to love and serve one another (Jn. 13:34-35; Mat. 5: 43-48; 1Pet. 1:22; Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:2; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Col. 1:24-25).

God's love and grace are expounded in the Church, and believers are encouraged to grow in their faith and spiritual maturity (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Tim. 4:15; Eph. 4:15; Heb. 6:1-2).

## (2) Identifying the Early Church

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The early Church comprised individuals and small groups spread out in various locations. The early Church (believers) were identified by their location (Acts 5:42, 16:13; Rom. 16:1, 1Cor. 1:2; 2Thes. 1:1).​

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

Believers' homes served as the primary gathering places for the early Church, but they also met by the seaside, illustrating that they were not confined to indoor spaces (Acts 5:42; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15, 19; Col. 4:15; Phil. 1:2). The early Christians adhered to Christ's teachings and adopted a decentralised structure, where each believer had the freedom to serve and operate independently, without centralised hierarchical oversight or a single leader. This decentralised nature promoted unity, inclusiveness, and equality.

A notable example of this approach is the encounter between Philip, one of the early disciples, and the Ethiopian eunuch, as documented in the book of Acts (8:26-40).

Act 8:35-40 BSB  Then Philip began with this very Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.  (36)  As they traveled along the road and came to some water, the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is there to prevent me from being baptized?”  (38)  And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.  (39)  When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.  (40)  But Philip appeared at Azotus and traveled through that region, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

The eunuch, having travelled to Jerusalem to worship, was on his way home when he encountered Philip. Prompted by an angel of the Lord, Philip approached the eunuch and explained the passage from Isaiah Chapter 53 that the eunuch was reading. This encounter led to the eunuch's conversion and baptism. It underscores individual initiative and the absence of centralised authority within the early Church. Through the actions of individuals like Philip, who were obedient to the prompting of God’s holy spirit, the message of Christ spread, and the Church flourished during its early years.

After the eunuch was baptised, the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away. He never saw Philip again, as Philip's role in his life had come to an end. The eunuch had now become part of the body of Christ, just like Philip. In this new community, there was no centralised hierarchy or single leader that the eunuch had to acknowledge or obey. He was not obligated to join an organisation, adhere to any constitution, or sign a confidentiality agreement. He realised that salvation comes through faith in Jesus, not membership in any organisation.

The eunuch went on his way, rejoicing, recognising that Christ was his King and the sole leader for all of us. Furthermore, he acknowledged Christ’s significance, recognising him as the Saviour and the Lamb of God who sacrificed his life to be our Passover. He gladly received Christ as his Messiah, Lord, and Saviour.

This newfound understanding liberated and empowered the eunuch. No longer bound by human authority or societal constraints, he embraced his identity as part of the body of Christ. He would have found comfort in the truth that his worth was not determined by his family line, physical or intellectual attributes, or social status but rather by his covenantal relationship with God in and through Christ.

The eunuch's faith journey was far from over; it was just the beginning of a lifetime pursuit of knowledge, spiritual growth, and service to others.

The eunuch, a profoundly devout individual, demonstrated a deep understanding of the fundamental principles of God’s will. His knowledge extended beyond the basic tenets of the faith; he grasped the covenantal relationship God seeks with His creation, expressed through His Law and Commandments. He also understood the biblical calendar and its significance in observing various holy days and feasts, which in this case was specifically the Passover that leads to the redemption found in Christ.

He recognised that these commanded assembles provided opportunities for believers to gather in worship and celebration, deepening their relationship with their heavenly Father and comprehending the grace and mercy bestowed upon us in Christ. He realised that obedience to God's laws was not a burdensome obligation but a way of expressing love, thanks and reverence towards Him. The eunuch understood that adhering to these commandments was vital for maintaining a righteous and holy lifestyle.

Moreover, the eunuch gained a profound understanding of discipleship. In his encounter with Philip, he would have recognised the importance of aiding fellow believers to grow in their faith and equipping them with the tools necessary to establish a direct and personal relationship with God through Christ.

Through repentance and baptism, the eunuch realised that each person has the potential to cultivate a deep connection with God without relying on anyone else as an intermediary besides Jesus. He recognised the importance of encouraging others to seek God's guidance and wisdom independently when needed, promoting a sense of self-reliance and spiritual growth. He would also have grasped the significance, magnitude and necessity of working out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).

## (3) The Right to Self-Governance

Every Church has the inherent right to govern itself under the direct leadership of Christ, a principle originally established by Christ and the early disciples. This foundational concept remains unchanged. It’s crucial to acknowledge that this is the framework in which the Church is meant to operate until Christ's return. Evidence of this can be seen in the establishment of the seven Churches in Asia Minor during the first century, and it continues to hold true today, albeit in a spiritual context (Rev. 2:1-3:22).

Christ holds all seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven churches.

Rev 2:1 BSB  To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

Christ, as the leader, is present walking among all the Churches. For where two or three are gathered in his name, Christ is among them (Mat. 18:20).

Based on an individual's faith, beliefs, observance, and obedience to Christ's instructions and God's will, one can infer that every church or individual can be categorised into one of these seven church identities at any given time. Therefore, considering the spiritual state of the church and/or individual, it seems that each church is assigned a dedicated angel responsible for overseeing their progress, growth, and guidance.

​Regardless of size or location, every church must acknowledge that only Christ is the leader. No other individual can be elected to or fill that role on earth. Everything is figuratively and literally in his hands (Jn. 3:35).

The New Testament illustrates that each of the seven Churches operates independently, with self-governance, and is not subject to a centralised earthly authority or the authority of a single person chosen by or from the brethren.

When Christ died, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, symbolising that all individuals now had direct access to the throne of God (Mat. 27:51; Eph. 2:18, 3:12; Heb. 4:16, 10:19-20). This dismantled the hierarchical structure of the physical temple of the First Covenant from top to bottom.

When discussing a positive aspect of the Church in Ephesus, one thing becomes clear: Jesus praises them for their strong resistance against the Nicolaitan doctrine, which he also **hates** (Rev. 2:6). The term "Nicolaitans" essentially refers to the idea of triumphing over the people, or in other words, conquering or subduing the laity. This term is derived from a combination of two Greek words: "nikos," meaning to conquer, and "laos," referring to the people or laity. See the paper '*The Tower of Babel: A Spiritual Prophecy.*'

The Nicolaitan belief was particularly concerning because it established a spiritual hierarchy among believers, elevating specific individuals to the position of leader or an exclusive priesthood held in higher esteem than the rest of the laity. Consequently, they would assert their authority over the people.

Nowadays, this often results in the merging of church and state via incorporation, consolidating all power and control of each "individual church" under one person and/or centralised power. As a result, this person can mandate doctrine to every church and its members, regardless of whether it aligns with biblical teachings. This goes against Christ’s commands (Matthew 20:25-26; Mark 10:42-43; Luke 22:25-27).

## (4) The Early Churches view of the God(head)

The early church continued to maintain a monotheistic identity of God that Israel was given (Deut. 6:4; Mk. 12:29-30; John 17:3; Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5, 6:16; Jas 2:19). They did not believe or perpetuate that God was a trinity or three gods in one. That ideology infiltrated the Church over the next three centuries, culminating at the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE. At this council, God's holy spirit (the means or power in which He does all things) was redefined as a separate personage or entity.

During the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, a theological position emerged that elevated Christ to co-eternality and co-equality with God the Father, which differed from the early Church's scriptural understanding. Furthermore, in 381 CE, the conceptualisation of God’s power as a distinct personage led to the development of a triune godhead.

Following the teachings of Jesus Christ, the writings of the apostles, and the scriptures themselves, the early Church recognised Christ as both their Saviour and Lord, prophesied to come (Isa. 7:4, 9:6-7; Micah 5:2; 1Jn. 4:14). This belief was grounded in the understanding that God chose Jesus from among the other Sons of God, and he was the only Son of God to be begotten (i.e., born) into the Adamic line (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:7; Rom. 8:3).

Psa. 45:6-7 BSB  Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever, and justice is the scepter of Your kingdom.  (7)  You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you above your companions with the oil of joy.

1Jn. 4:9-10 KJV  In this was manifested the love of God toward us, for God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.  (10)  Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Just as David acknowledged the sovereignty of 'The Lord' (referring to God the Father) in Psalm 110:1, the early Christians recognised that Christ, while Lord, was ultimately subordinate to the divine authority of God the Father. This understanding of Christ's lordship within the greater divine hierarchy was a central aspect of early Christian theology and had significant implications for their understanding of salvation and the nature of God.

Mat 22:41-45 BSB  While the Pharisees were assembled, Jesus questioned them:  (42)  “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?” “David’s,” they answered.  (43)  Jesus said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord’? For he says:  (44)  ‘**The Lord** said to **my** Lord, “Sit at **My** right hand **until I** put Your enemies under Your feet.”’  (45)  So if David calls Him ‘Lord,’ how can He be David’s son?” (Emphasis added).

Jn. 17:3 BSB  Now this is eternal life, that they may know **You**, the **only true God**, **and** Jesus Christ, whom **You** have sent. (Emphasis added).

Christ himself stated that the Father is greater than he (Jn. 14:28) and that he submits his will to that of his Father (Ps. 40:8; Jn. 4:34, 5:30; Mk. 14:36). Christ also prayed to God, his Father, and instructed everyone to direct their prayers to the Father only (Mt. 6:9; Lk. 11:2). A being who is the God does not pray to oneself or to another being, for He is the object of worship. Christ recognised the Father as his God in the same way his disciples did.

Jn. 20:17 BSB  “Do not cling to Me,” Jesus said, “for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go and tell **My brothers**, ‘I am ascending to **My Father** and **your Father**, **to My God and your God**.’” (Emphasis added).

​The paper 'Who is God?' offers greater insight into God's true identity and the relationship between Him and His Son, Jesus.

## (5) Continuing In the Law

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The disciples and early church continued to walk in the ways of our Lord in observing the Law of God (Mat. 5:17-19, Jn. 8:29, 8:55, 15:10; cf. Rom. 3:31; 1Jn. 2:3-6; 1Cor. 11:1, 17:9; Col. 2:16; cf. Jn. 14:15, 21).

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

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

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

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

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The disciples and the early Church kept God’s holy days, feasts and New Moons (Lk. 23:56; Acts 2:1, 20:16, 27:9; 1Cor. 11:20-34, 1 Cor. 5:7, 1 Cor. 16:8; cf. Col. 2:16). See the paper, '*God's Biblical Calendar for* more information.

## (6) What Are the Offices of the Church?

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To be regarded as an Apostle of Christ, it was accepted that one had to have been given the call of God personally by Christ, taught by him directly, and seen him alive after his resurrection (Acts 1:17, 22, 25).

The other offices made available to the Church were elder and deacon (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; Phil. 1:1).

​It was understood that there were to be multiple elders in each Church respectively (given the eligibility in Titus 1:5-9). For this reason, when elders are mentioned, it is typically in the plural (Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:4, 15:6, 15:22-23, 20:17, 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1).

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

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Elders of a Church are there to assist the brethren. They help keep the peace (Acts 15:1-2), pray for others (James 5:14), teach others (1Pet. 5:1-4) and lead by example (Phil. 3:17; 1Cor. 4:16, 11:1). They should be able to feed the flock of God with a ready mind, and not for power, authority, control or monetary gain (1Pet. 5:3). It is not to be viewed as a glorified position, but as a serious undertaking before the Lord. Rather than seeking to be clothed in vanity, pride and the authority to exercise lordship over others, we should instead clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 13:14).

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

Sometimes, elders are called bishops, pastors, or overseers of the flock. Thus, the same rules apply to the role of pastor or bishop as they do to the role of elder.

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​Everyone was part of the process when important decisions had to be made.

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

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

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

​Our Lord instructs us **not** to assign ourselves spiritual titles such as 'Rabbi' or 'Father.' These titles denote spiritual superiority and sovereignty over others.

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

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

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

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

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

Rom. 12:10 TCENT  Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Take the lead in honoring one another.

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

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## (7) Make him King

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During Christ's ministry, he perceived that the people were about to come and take him by force to make him King. His disciples were likely caught up in the crowd's desire to make Christ king. However, Christ withdrew once more to the mountain by himself.

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

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When Christ was on Earth, he did not seek to enact the role of king and leader of Israel, pre-empting the will and timing of God the Father. Despite the people's wishes for him to be their ruler, he chose to retreat to the mountains for solitude instead. This reflected his humility and showed how he prioritised a greater purpose for wielding power on Earth. His decision to isolate himself in the mountains also demonstrated his unwavering commitment to his divine mission and his resolve not to conform to humanity's expectations.

Psa 110:1 BSB  A Psalm of David. The LORD said to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

Through his example, Christ demonstrated to his followers the importance of renouncing the allure of honours and positions in relation to man's concept of the Kingdom of God while instead focusing on the Kingdom to come. He emphasised that our primary aim should not revolve around electing a temporary leader to follow or achieving such a position in this present age. Instead, Christ instructed his disciples to prioritise enduring principles such as love, justice, and humility. He warned against succumbing to the temptation of seeking earthly power and recognition, as these can divert us from our true calling.

Jesus' teachings encourage his followers to trust in God's plan rather than in human leaders who represent worldly political systems. By adopting this perspective, we can steer clear of the traps of chasing after worldly power and focus on the values and principles that align with the Kingdom of God.

It is significant to observe that after Christ's ascension, none of His disciples raised the question of who among them, or anyone else for that matter, should be appointed as leader of the Church. Christ's message and example finally resonated with all of them. They all recognised Christ as the sole leader of the Church following his ascension. No one dared to elevate themselves above their brethren or companions (cf. Ps. 45:7). This understanding was completely and unanimously accepted and never questioned again by the disciples.

## ​(8) Christ - The Only Leader

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If Christ had truly intended for someone to lead the Church after his ascension, he could have easily entrusted its leadership to another person, just as he assigned the care of his earthly mother to John before his death (Jn. 19:27).

Christ intentionally made no provisions for anyone else to lead the Church in any capacity before his ascension to Heaven. This was not a mistake by Jesus; he did it deliberately to prevent disputes and people from contesting a position they were not entitled to. It also ensured that Christ held the position of leader of the Church both in Heaven and on Earth.

No one other than Christ can lay claim to the head of the Church on earth or in heaven (cf. Isa. 9:7; Phil. 2:9; 1Cor. 3:1-9; Eph. 1:22-23).

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

Jesus said he would personally build or edify the church, saying, “*I will build my church*” (Mt 16:18).

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

Yet, despite these proofs, there are still men in the churches today who have appointed themselves to the position, supposedly, the role of leader of God’s Church! This opposes Christ, who commands us not to be called leader(s).

Mat 23:8-11 LITV  But do not you be called Rabbi, for One is your Leader, the Christ, and you are all brothers.  (9)  And call no one your father on earth, for One is your Father, the One in Heaven. (10)  Nor be called leaders, for One is your Leader, the Christ.  (11)  But the greater of you shall be your servant.

No servant rules, commands, or dictates his will over others.

Gal. 5:13-14 EMTV For you, brothers were called to freedom; only do not use freedom for an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (14) For all the law is fulfilled in one word, in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

A servant does not assume titles or positions of authority above others or equal to their master. They do not bully, harass, belittle, ostracise, or vilify those they are meant to serve. Instead, they focus on selflessly serving others with humility. They prioritise the needs and well-being of those they serve, always striving to anticipate and fulfil them.

Servants understand their role is to support and assist rather than control or dominate. They approach their tasks positively, seeking to bring joy, comfort, and satisfaction to those they serve. A servant is empathetic and compassionate, working to create a nurturing and inclusive environment. They treat all individuals with respect and dignity, regardless of background, status, or position. In doing so, a servant builds trust, fosters strong relationships, and cultivates a sense of unity among those they serve.

Ultimately, a servant's goal is to make a positive impact on the overall well-being and success of the individuals and communities they serve (Col. 3:23-24; 1Cor. 9:19, 10:31; Mat. 25:40; Rom. 6:18, 12:11; 1Pet.4:11).

The Bible clearly states that Christ alone, chosen by Almighty God, is the appointed leader of the Church in both heaven and earth.

Regrettably, many individuals, driven by their sinful delusions of grandeur and pride, dare to assign themselves titles that convey the position of leader of the body of Christ, which is not rightfully theirs but Christ’s alone. These self-proclaimed titles, filled with false authority and misplaced importance, include grandiose designations such as Pastor General, Coordinator General, Chief General, Chief Elder, Head Pastor, Pope, and President.

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

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We must not ignore Christ's words urging us to follow him (Matt. 4:19, 8:22, 10:38, 16:24, 19:21).

Christ said, “*And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Christ is with each one of us. His abiding presence represents the continual role of our leader. '*Always*' does not imply only once he returns. Christ’s ascension into heaven did not nullify his position as leader of the Church on Earth; it magnified it.

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## (9) Wanting to Be a Leader in the Early Church

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In one of his letters, the Apostle John highlights a person who viewed himself as a leader. This insight shows how easily power can corrupt, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely.

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

Many of us have also witnessed church “leaders” who deny entry to specific individuals and prevent others from fellowshipping with the group for questioning false teachings or doctrinal discrepancies. Some leaders have even expelled individuals without revealing the reasons. The congregation is then cautioned against communicating with anyone who has been unceremoniously removed. Many leaders also hinder opportunities for redress or an open hearing.

Once the original decentralised Church model has been distorted and replaced by a centralised, hierarchical framework, it becomes evident how easily issues and accusations are managed with bias. In many cases, proceedings resemble nothing more than a kangaroo court.

Spiritually, this rejection of John continues today among those who position themselves as leaders of a Church or are appointed to such roles. These 'leaders' overlook John (and the other apostles, including Christ himself) by refusing to heed their guidance on how the Church should operate.

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

The Apostle Paul states we are all God's fellow workers (1Cor. 3:9). We should recognise that by following a man or an organisation, we are still of the flesh and "*even now you are not yet ready*".

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

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## (10) Kingdom Not of This World

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

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

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It is essential to understand that once we incorporate a Church, it becomes part of this world and '***from*'** the world. It is now party to a contract, be it a (working) legal relationship with the state, and ultimately under the authority of Satan, who is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

Every Church registered as an organisation does so under the permission, issuing and legislating **of this world**. Thus, there is no getting around the fact the Church that Christ established cannot operate as an incorporated body. Anyone can belong to an organisation, but only those who listen to Christ's voice belong to the truth.

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Jn. 18:37 BSB  “Then You are a king!” Pilate said. “You say that I am a king,” Jesus answered. “For this reason I was born and have come into the world, to testify to the truth. **Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice**.” (Emphasis added)

Motivated by envy, the chief priests handed Christ over to the State. Today, the "chief priests" symbolically represent leaders of organisations who have similarly surrendered the body of Christ, the Church, to the State in pursuit of incorporation. By seeking incorporated status from the State, individuals can usurp the power and authority that rightly belong to Christ (cf. Mat. 27:18; Acts 13:45; Rom. 1:28-32).

Mar 15:9-11 BSB  “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked.  (10)  **For he knew it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over**.  (11)  But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas to them instead. (Emphasis added)

*​*​As we progress, we see the parallels between the organised religious groups of Christ's day and religious organisations today. This is discussed in further detail under section 25 of this study, *'He Who Has An Ear Let Him Hear'.*

## (11) Thy Kingdom Come

When we examine Christ's model prayer, we see another example of how the Church is not to establish a centralised power base with a hierarchical power structure (Mat. 6:10; Lk. 11:2).

It says, "... ***Thy******Kingdom come****, Your will be done*...".

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"*Thy Kingdom Come*". Firstly, this implies a choice.

We see from Cain that man would seek to establish his own version of the Kingdom of God that would compete for the hearts and minds of men. And how would one distinguish between the Kingdom of God that our Heavenly Father is about to introduce and the one that man has already done? The answer: Truth, by necessity, incorporating submission to His timing (2Sam. 7:28; Ps. 119:160; Jn. 17:17; cf. Jn. 15:3; Eph. 6:12).

​The model prayer reminds us to make God our focus and look forward to His future Kingdom. It highlights that the only genuinely divine hierarchical kingdom we can look forward to is the one God Himself will establish and endorse, taking effect upon the seventh angel sounding his trumpet.

Rev 11:15-17 (TCENT)  Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.”  (16)  And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before the throne of God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,  (17)  saying, “We give thanks to you, O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun to reign.

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If we try to supersede God's timing, we no longer abide and submit to the Father and His "*Will be done*". We are now following our own will, being self-willed (cf. Acts 13:22; 1Jn. 2:17; Esp. 6:6).  Thus, we can no longer be considered brothers or sisters to Christ if we are unwilling to conform to the will of God.

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

Scripture tells us, 'Do not be conformed to this world.' In relation to the Church, this could refer to the belief in or the adoption of a centralised, hierarchical governance model here on earth as acceptable or, worse, necessary. Instead, we ought to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, aligning our thoughts to those of God and His Son. Only then will we be able to test and approve what is good, pleasing, and the perfect will of God.

Rom, 12:2 BSB  Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

## (12) Overcome the World

The Bible prominently emphasises the importance of overcoming the world (Jn 16:33; 1Jn 5:4; Col. 3:2).

This world wants us to believe that we should take things into our own hands (cf. Gen. 3:1-24) and desire a (centralised) hierarchical working model of the kingdom of God in this present age.

From a spiritual standpoint, a parallel can be drawn between partaking in the fruit of good and evil and rejecting Jesus Christ, which the Tree of Life symbolises. Just as Eve, the wife of the first Adam, was tempted by Satan in Genesis chapter 3, the Church continues to face similar temptations. The devil preys on our physical desires, our materialistic cravings, and our pride in life, as mentioned in 1 John 2:16. For instance, he deceives us into believing that organisational structures are beneficial, providing spiritual guidance and leadership. Some even offer a wide range of theological resources that, on the surface, may seem to align with scripture.

We fall into the trap of thinking that these organisations are pleasing to the eye, as they make us appear virtuous and as if we are the chosen instruments of God on earth. Additionally, we are led to believe that these organisations make us wise, thinking we have the capacity, foresight and understanding to establish God's kingdom on earth. It inherently gives us a false sense of control over our salvation if we pledge our loyalty to it. However, we must remember that Christ declared his headship over the Church in heaven and earth (Mat. 28:18).

So, how can we say we love the children of God if we enslave one another in a matrix of hierarchical captivity and systems and structures that the Lord condemns? Our love for one another is expressed by our love for God and the keeping of His Commandments.

In Genesis 11:1-9, we are reminded of the story of the Tower of Babel, where humanity sought to build a tower that would reach the heavens and make a name for themselves. However, the Lord saw their pride and arrogance and decided to confuse their languages, scattering them across the earth. That event serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of human ambition and the dangers of building systems and structures that go against God's will. See the study titled *'The Tower of Babel - A Spiritual Prophecy*'. It reveals that the story behind the building of the Tower of Babel is a prophetic blueprint revealing the rise and demise of religious organisations.

Enslavement, whether physical or metaphorical, is a form of oppression that contradicts the very essence of God's love and commandments. As followers of Christ, it is our duty to actively work towards dismantling these oppressive systems and structures and, instead, foster an environment of love, compassion, and equality. Our love for one another is not just a mere expression of words but manifests through our actions and commitment to following God's commandments. Only by embracing this love and living out its principles can we truly claim to love the children of God.

1Jn 5:2-5 BSB  By this we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments.  (3)  For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome,  (4)  because everyone born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.  (5)  Who then overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

## (13) Thou Shalt Not Covet

Exod. 20:17 NET  “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Covetousness, the strong desire or eagerness to obtain and possess something without regard to law or justice, also applies to the Kingdom of God.

When we look at the 10th Commandment from a spiritual standpoint, in this context, thy neighbours' house, which we are commanded not to covet, can also extend to include the House of God.

We will only be given far-reaching responsibilities and oversight upon our resurrection to spirit beings. The belief that we can claim and exercise some of those responsibilities now, within an incorporated body licenced by the State, not only breaches the 10th Commandment but all the Ten Commandments one way or another on a spiritual level.

The '*male servant,*' so to speak, whom God appointed to rule over His House is His Son, Christ (Mat. 12:15-21; Zech. 3:8; Isa. 49:3). The spirit of covetousness, in this instance, is in wanting Christ's position, power and authority, and the establishment of what is essentially a competing kingdom.  The neighbour's wife, spiritually, is the Church, Christ's bride.

Many religious organisations boast because of their sheer number of members and/or the size of their operations. Having carved such a prominent place in this world has left many feeling on top of the world. But what good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul? (Mark 8:36).

Therefore, any form of support, whether it be financial contributions like tithes and donations, active participation in gatherings and feasts, or assistance in material distribution, towards an incorporated organisation or rival kingdom to that of God is deemed a violation of the 10th Commandment. This action also contradicts the First Commandment, as it involves placing another god before or beside God the Father. As a result, it becomes an idol in the hearts and minds of individuals, thus breaching the Second Commandment. Furthermore, it is akin to committing spiritual adultery, forsaking the true Christ as the bridegroom of the Church.

Jas 4:4 BSB  You adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world renders himself an enemy of God.

Withholding the worship and devotion owed to God and the faith we are to have in Christ also constitutes theft, thereby violating the 8th Commandment.

By involving ourselves with any spiritual Egyptian house, we inevitably take the Lord's name in vain, thus breaking the Third Commandment. When the Lord says, "Come out of her, my people," it is not merely a suggestion.

The Tenth Commandment emphasises the importance of contentment and discourages the desire for possessions or power that belongs to others or is not currently relevant. As a result, any actions or support aimed at establishing or maintaining a centralised, hierarchical incorporated Church model contradict this commandment, as they involve coveting power, control, and truth, no less the Kingdom itself that rightfully belongs to God, to be given at His discretion and timing. We cannot serve two masters (Mat. 6:24). Similarly, we cannot belong to the world, be friends with the world, and still claim to identify as the Philadelphian Church.

## (14) Wanting to Be Like the Most High

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Satan sought to elevate his throne above all angelic beings, including Christ, and to make himself like the One True God, the Most High.

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

In establishing their own kingdom now and appointing their own ruler on earth, with doctrines and calendars to match, those running organisations have also fashioned themselves like the Most High in defining and executing truth, power, authority, and the plan of salvation. It is truly one of the greatest deceptions that Satan has perpetrated upon the Church.

Many organisations claim that people must join them, viewing themselves as possessing power, authority, and legitimacy from on high. In doing so, they have constructed thrones for themselves above the stars of God, including Christ’s, and made themselves 'like the Most High'.

## (15) Korah's Modern-Day Rebellion

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We should also note the correlation between wanting to establish a working hierarchical organisational model of the Kingdom of God now and following Cain's example, Balaam’s actions, and Korah's rebellion (Numbers Chapter 16).

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

Korah accused Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves above the congregation of the Lord. He did not recognise or respect the authority God had given them.

Korah led a band of 250 prominent leaders throughout the congregation in defying Moses and Aaron, both of whom were confirmed of God by outward signs and miracles. Compare;

Act 2:22-23 LEB  "Israelite men, listen to these words! Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—  (23)  this man, delivered up by the determined plan and foreknowledge of God, you executed by nailing to a cross through the hand of lawless men.

Samuel Barth, in his article, '*The True Sin of Korah'*, makes an interesting observation.

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*It seems to me that the greatest failure and transgression of Korah was not that he raised concerns—or even challenges—to the leadership of Moses, nor that he raised questions about the leadership structures emerging among the Israelites. The sin of Korah was in thinking of himself as “outside the community”; he betook himself and his followers from being part of the People of Israel, and they became a faction, catalysts for further factionalization.*

*Later, this theme seems to recur as we read, “But as the community gathered against them, Moses and Aaron turned towards the tent . . . ” (Num. 17: 7).*

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*The Hebrew verb for “gather” is hikahel, from the same Hebrew root as the word kahal/kehillah, which means “congregation.” So the phrase might be translated as “the community congregated against them.” Korah has now served as a catalyst to encourage his followers to become their own “splinter congregation” against Moses and the People. This is not just a group within the community that possesses different views or a different style, but one that is formed for the main purpose of active opposition, even active destruction. The initial action of Korah, who betook himself from being a member of the People of Israel, has grown into an insurrection, a poison in the midst of the community that is so negative it leads to the destruction, by God, of all involved.*

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Envy, jealousy, and pride consumed Korah and his followers. Their desire for power and prominence led them to establish their own '*splinter congregation*' in opposition to Moses and the people. They disregarded God's plan and rejected His chosen leader.

This is no different to those today in the congregation of Israel (the Church) who have formed their own '*splinter congregation*' or be it '*faction*' under the guise of an (incorporated) hierarchical organisation.

1 Cor. 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree together, so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be united in mind and conviction.

They, too, have chosen to disregard God's plan and reject His chosen leader, Christ, as their sole leader here on earth. Like Korah and those of the initial rebellion, they believe that they are capable of leading the congregation with one of their own at the helm.

It is worth reading Jude's entire letter as he addresses the great falling away from the faith and our need to keep and defend it.

​Do not be deceived; the day of the Lord **has not come** operationally when we are gathered together under one centralised working model of the kingdom of God, under one leader. However, it is crucial to recognise that Jesus alone is that leader. We should not look to another man to centralise our efforts while patiently waiting for the Lord's return.

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

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Every religious organisation believes they are the operational side of the Kingdom of God here on earth now, with Christ taking over the helm upon his return. In waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to come, they feel they have been given the responsibility and authority to see its (worldwide) implementation and oversight and persuade people to gather together under it.

However, it’s vital to note that scripture reveals Christ’s rejection of any centralised, hierarchical religious organisation. At their core, they all oppose him and the authority his God and Father bestowed upon him. Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. For further information, refer to the paper, ‘ The Tower of Babel: Its Spiritual Meaning'.

## ​(16) In Spirit and In Truth

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God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

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

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

In addition to this, Christ did not address her by name. Jesus addressed her only as '*woman*'. Thus, we may conclude that Christ is also getting us, the Church, to consider what is being spoken of from a spiritual standpoint.

Biblically, a woman is a symbol of the Church (Gen. 37:6-10; Pro. 31; Jer. 6:2; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23; Rev. 12, 19:7). Thus, the spiritual message we can construe is that those whom we follow(ed) and look(ed) up to as spiritual guides, 'our fathers' so to speak, all worship(ed) on their own religious mountain, i.e., religious organisation.

Christ is showing us that we are not to get caught up in that type of thinking, where we debate which mountain (which, in this case, represents an organisation) we belong to and worship with. Thus, the true Church of God is not identified with any organisation or denomination. It is made up of individuals who have been called out from among them to worship God under the direct leadership of Christ in spirit and truth.

## (17) Christ Separates his Flock

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Christ tells us that a reason he came was to create division, namely, with the sword of truth (Mat. 12:34; cf. Rev. 6:4).

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

One of Christ’s roles is to separate us from our (spiritual) fathers, i.e., leaders of organisations and the organisation itself, including its ministry. This separation then expands to include an incorporated Church as a whole, again symbolised by a woman or a daughter. Jesus separates us from our spiritual mother, namely, the harlot religious organisation or one of her many daughters that we were either born into or joined (cf. Rev. 17:3).

​God is spirit, and those who worship Him MUST worship in spirit and “in truth”. Christ is making it plain that the true worshippers will be outside the bounds of religious organisations because they, i.e., organisations, “are of this world” and “from this world”. They are purely the construct of man, established on a Babylonian-Egyptian hierarchical system, electing one of their own, in place of Christ, to be head of his Church on Earth. God does not ordain these structures, nor do they play any part in His plan of salvation. See the study paper, 'The Tower of Babel-Its Spiritual Meaning*'.*​

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

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​Thus, in some cases, this decision requires some individuals to forego or postpone their local astronomical new moon so that the first day of the month aligns with Jerusalem's calendar. Consequently, this necessitates the existence of two calendars. There are now those who observe the local astronomical new moons to determine the first day of the month and those who do not. This is simply another ‘golden calf’ or ‘god’ that the congregation demanded of its ministry to '*make*'.

God established only one calendar for all humanity; we don't have a choice or option regarding which one we want to use. There aren't multiple versions of the truth, faith, or the body of Christ. God’s calendar is meant to be observed in the same way by everyone, everywhere.

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

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

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

If any person defiles the temple of God, which we are, by observing a false calendar, such as the ‘Temple Calendar’ or ‘Hillel Calendar’, God shall remove that person. See the paper, '*God’s Biblical Calendar–Understanding how to determine God's day, months and the first day of the year'.*

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## ​(18) Tax Deductions for the House of God?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Every ‘plant’ that our heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted (Mat. 15:13; Ps. 127:1).

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## (19) God's Kingdom Does Not Come With Observation

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

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Lk. 17:20-21 KJV And 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: (21) Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Emphasis added)

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

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

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

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

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## (20) Christ Refused Power and Authority In This Age

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

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

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

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

Many people don't realise that the temptation to offer Christ the Kingdoms of the World did not end there. The devil still offers the same temptation to the Church, the body of Christ today.

How we structure and practice our worship directly impacts the identity of the God we worship. For instance, when Satan tempted Christ, he didn't offer him authority over just one Church but over all of them. Similarly, Satan tempts individuals with the power and authority to govern multiple Churches globally, often through an organisational incorporated model.

There is only one body of Christ. There cannot be one part of the body that functions as intended, with each church operating autonomously under the guidance and support of elders under the sole leadership of Christ. In contrast, another operates from a centralised, hierarchical structure under the authority of a leader elected by the laity to oversee the entire church (1 Cor. 10:17, 12:12-13; Rom. 12:4-5; Jn. 17:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:17). Therefore, regardless of how we present it, every form of the church in this era that is incorporated, centralised, or hierarchical ultimately belongs to Satan. He can only offer Christ what has been given to him, not what belongs to the Father.

In response to Satan's offer to rule over (spiritual) kingdoms, our Lord used the sharpest weapon: scripture. Christ declared, "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him alone." This statement refuted every centralised, hierarchical spiritual system rooted in earthly foundations. Moreover, it also identified its father, as mentioned in John 8:44.

​Sadly, for many, the temptation to be part of a kingdom (i.e., religious organisation) and, in some cases, exercise power and authority in this age is just too hard to resist.

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

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We have been called to patiently endure, keep God's commandments, and keep our faith in Jesus. Any office we should look forward to is in the kingdom to come when Christ returns.

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

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

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## (21) The Wealthy Young Man

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

Some religious organisations' treasures also extend to owning grand halls, media networks, and other social programs, such as schools.

Some view the sheer number of people who belong to an organisation as a reflection of its wealth. For this reason, they attract people who long for a sense of inclusion and community. For this reason, some people seek to join them in their Feasts and festivities despite having disagreements with their doctrines or calendar.

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

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

Symbolically, the wealth or property spoken of today could be the stake people have in their organisation. It could be in the security, community, and confidence it provides. Many have invested years, even decades, in building relationships, friendships, reputations, positions of power and authority, and a wealth of knowledge related to what their organisation preaches.

​Sadly, few would be willing to part with all these "riches" to follow Christ. For many, the thought of starting all over again, questioning everything they know, learning and unlearning, often in isolation, and looking to Christ rather than another man to lead them is too high a price to pay.

No doubt, there will be those who read this study and, having learned what organisations symbolise and represent, will be grieved yet continue to remain with their organisation of choice.

Christ tells us not to focus on storing treasures on Earth but on storing treasures in heaven, where they can’t be destroyed or stolen. Our hearts will be where our treasure is.

We cannot serve God and wealth (Mat. 6:19-24). Interestingly, the word wealth (SGD 3126) is often translated as mammon. It means confidence (figurative wealth, personified), the same type of confidence some people have in their organisation.

## (22) Abraham Looked Forward To Spiritual Jerusalem

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Upon hearing the call, Abraham obeyed and went to a place where he did not know where he was going. By faith, he lived in tents as a foreigner in a land of promise.

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

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Even after arriving in the Promised Land, Abraham continued to live in a tent, choosing not to build or conquer a city. In contrast to the practices in Babylon and Egypt, he did not seek tithes or offerings from others to use as he pleased. These are a few reasons why God called Abraham out of Babylon and continues to call us out of spiritual Babylon and Egypt today.

It is worth mentioning that once Abraham arrived in the Promised Land, he never entered another city built by man. This holds a spiritual significance, as it illustrates that after leaving Babylonian and Egyptian-based religious organizations, we are not to enter into another one once we embrace the freedom of Christ and its true meaning.

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

## (23) Do Not Make For Yourself Idols

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​The Third Commandment tells us not to make for ourselves images that are in heaven above or the earth below.

Exod. 20:4-5 ISV "You are not to make for yourselves an idol, **or any likeness of what is in heaven above**, or on earth below, or in the water under the earth.  (5)  **You are not to bow down to them in worship** **or serve them**; because I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the iniquity of the parents, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me,

Establishing a version of the Kingdom of God, now, on earth, no matter how good we believe our intentions are, is just that, an image of the Kingdom God will implement on the return of Christ. Thus, it becomes an idol. In doing so, we take the Lord's name in vain (Exod. 20:7), usurping the power, timing, and position of both God and His Son.

We are not meant to worship or serve anything that is an image of God, His Son, or His Kingdom. We are commanded ‘*not to bow down to them in worship or serve them’*. Bowing down in this context does not refer to physical prostration. Instead, it implies treating someone's or something's word, doctrines, beliefs, and traditions with the same authority level as God.

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

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God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:24; Deut. 1:17, 10:17; 2Chron. 19:7). Because so many churches today have followed the model Cain has set up, God has done what He forewarned and has taken them back to (spiritual) Shinar, where it all began. Because they disbelieve the truth and delight in wickedness, God has sent them a strong delusion so they believe the lie (2Thes. 2:9-12).

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

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This scroll is spiritually in the midst of every religious organisation today. And there is no one to blame for this except ourselves. We, individually and collectively, have brought this upon ourselves because we have followed in the ways of Cain. This punishment is just and it will indeed be painful. The pain will be so bad it will pierce our hearts. (Mat. 8:10-12, 24:50-51, Jer. 13:25, cf. Mat. 22:1-14).

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

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

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

## (24) He Who Has An Ear, Let him Hear

Today, we watch incorporated religious organisations battle it out amongst themselves as to which one of them thinks they have the ultimate power and authority (cf. Mat. 24:6-7). Some organisations even dare claim they possess 'the candlestick' of authority. There are not one, but seven candlesticks, each representing a spiritual Church (Rev. 1:20). And the only one possessing any candlestick of power is Jesus, the Messiah. He alone holds all seven churches in his hand.

Rev. 2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

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

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

If we have ears to hear, the entire message to the Philadelphia Church is a stern rebuke to anyone participating in religious organisations. Christ is the holy one, the true King, the High Priest, and the Messiah. He has the key of David, akin to the so-called 'candlestick of power,' and not a man or his organisation.

Christ opens and closes at his discretion. Though many of us have been shown the door by our previous organisations, Christ has set an open door that no one can shut before us.

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

Christ also acknowledges that we 'have but little power'. We are merely sojourners, the salt of the earth. We lack the influence or reach of organisations and, in some instances, the literal strength of a marching army. Yet, by standing apart from them, we uphold his word and do not deny his name, as our Lord, leader, and King.

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For all intents and purposes, we can infer that Christ asserts that belonging to an organisation is paramount to belonging to Satan's synagogue (Rev. 3:9). Organisations tell their members they are spiritual Jews, specifically the body of Christ. Our Lord informs us they are not. They will realise that Christ loved those who despised the riches of spiritual Egypt and what this world offers.

Christ states, "*To the one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God*." Christ brings us full circle. We need to ensure we don't get conquered or captured by one of these cities (i.e., the centralised, hierarchical city model after Cain) or the ideology or theology of its mightiest hunter, i.e., (Nimrod), the leader and be subdued under his control and authority.

Rather than playing a part in a man's organisation, with the fear that the leader can remove them at any time, Christ is making the distinction that we will be made a pillar in the temple of his God. No man will have the power to threaten, intimidate, castigate, move or remove us from the body of Christ.  This should greatly encourage all those who have been removed, kicked out, or ostracised from their former organisation/association for wanting only to worship God, keep His Commandments, follow His Son, Jesus, and keep his words and faith in him.

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

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

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## (25) Let the Dead Bury the Dead

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Our allegiance should not be to the spiritually deceased. We must not be afraid to follow Christ. We should have the courage to leave it all behind and not look back.

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

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For those still in, connected to, or remotely tracking organisations via their calendar, doctrines, etc., it is time to repent, turn to God, and acknowledge Christ as our only leader and Lord.

​For those still in, connected to, or remotely following and supporting organisations via their calendar, doctrines, etc., it is time to repent, turn to God, and acknowledge Christ as our only leader and Lord.

Now that we have seen some of the spiritual idols the Church has made and worships, we have a duty to guard ourselves from them.

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

Repentance is a deeply personal and transformative journey that requires introspection and a willingness to change. It is a call to acknowledge and address any shortcomings or misalignment in our beliefs, actions, and affiliations. By turning away from the distractions and temptations presented by religious organisations, we create space in our hearts and minds for a genuine connection with God.

Amid the myriad organisations and ideologies competing for our attention, we must recognise Jesus Christ as our head. His teachings, as documented in the Bible, offer timeless wisdom and a moral compass that transcends any earthly institution. By acknowledging Christ as our only leader and Lord, we affirm our commitment to aligning our lives with his teachings and example.

Organisations often shape our thoughts, beliefs, and priorities with calendars, doctrines, traditions, hierarchies and policies. While some organisations may have positive intentions, they are still fallible human constructs that ultimately steal our crown. Repentance invites us to critically evaluate the alignment between these organisations and God's will. It calls us to break free from unhealthy dependencies, misplaced priorities, or misguided allegiances.

By breaking free from the influence of organisations and cultivating a personal relationship with God in Christ, we embark on a transformative journey that leads to spiritual growth, peace, and fulfilment.

End.