

### 3.

## THE FORM OF THE CHURCH

Every kind of life, whether it be plant or animal, has its own particular form. As it grows up, it conforms to its parent's pattern. It turns into that recognizable form from whence it came. For example, every variety of tree grows into a familiar shape. A banana tree always looks the same. An apple tree adopts a typical shape. People who are familiar with trees can tell what type a tree is simply by seeing its shape from far off.

The same thing is also true for animals. Dogs always have a familiar shape and cats similarly exhibit certain common characteristics. Thus, we can recognize any kind of plant or animal by their form.

This outward shape or form is the result of the life which is in them. The cat life always produces the cat form. The dog life always grows up into the dog shape. The familiar life forms which we see around us are not a result of some kind of self-effort on the part of these creatures. Further, it is not something which is produced by other beings around them directing their development. Instead, it is the innate life which is in these creatures which produces the familiar form.

In exactly the same way, the life of Jesus Christ as it grows up within believers, always produces the church. This is a principle which is of the utmost importance. It is

the divine life of God which produces the form of the church, His bride. Further, it is only this ZOE life which produces the church. If we are to work together with God in building up the house which He desires, we must thoroughly understand this most basic fact.

When we wish to work together with God and construct His eternal house, we must learn to build according to the pattern which we have seen on the mountain. This pattern is a living pattern. Jesus' church is a living being. His bride is built by His life. Therefore, it is only by building with and by His life that we can arrive at the result which He desires. Unless and until we understand this most basic and essential truth, we are in no position to be building up the house of God.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN

Many believers are building today. But far too many of them have very little idea of what they are doing. One of the most common errors which they make is that while reading the New Testament, they think that they discern a pattern for their building. They then begin to copy this pattern. They labor strenuously to reproduce the form which they believe they have seen.

Of course each leader or group imagines that they have hit upon the pattern which most closely resembles that of the book of Acts and/or the epistles. They believe that their way is the most biblical. Perhaps they are installing a certain kind of authority structure. Maybe they are selecting deacons or pastors in a special way. Possibly they are initiating certain types of meetings, ceremonies, or practices. It could be that they are insisting on a certain set of doctrines or beliefs.

But the problem here is that copying a pattern which they believe they have perceived is a serious mistake. This is putting the cart before the horse. We can never put into practice some pattern, doctrine or exercise and produce something which pleases God. The pattern which we think we see can never, ever produce the life of Christ. On the

other hand, the life of Christ *always* generates the proper pattern or form which God desires. This is truly a question of life and death. When we work to replicate a pattern, it invariably results in something lifeless, something dead. We do not have the power to give life. Only God can do this.

Perhaps we believe if we produce something which is close to the Divine pattern, that God will rush down and bless it. It may be that we think if we manage to get really close to what we see in the Bible, He will come and live in it. Perhaps He will come and breathe life into what we have made. But no, this will never happen. Our Lord will never give life to the image which we have built for Him no matter how biblical we believe it to be.

Therefore, much of our work remains dead and ineffective. So often it remains a lifeless thing which we must constantly try to prop up with programs, activities and human enthusiasm. It always demands our attention to keep it moving. We must always keep the lifeless structure working by human energy, effort and organization.

Since it does not have its own life, a human structure always requires the services of those who have some spiritual life themselves. Since the religious form itself is not living, it must draw nourishment from those who do have a living relationship with Jesus.

So, the zeal, enthusiasm and love for Jesus which members of humanly controlled groups have is turned into support for the plans and purposes of the institution. The members are used to run programs, greet newcomers, and any number of other such things which keep the machine moving.

Such organizations need men and women to feed upon for their sustenance, as a leech does upon a living body. Sometimes, when the organization has used up all the life which is in some of its members – when they have given all they can to help and have run out of steam – it spits them out and looks for others to take their places. This is one of the unfortunate results of building with earthly materials rather than the divine ones.

## HOW THEN DO WE BUILD?

We can work together with Jesus building His church by ministering Him to one another. He declared that He is the "Life" (Jn 11:25). Therefore, when we share Him with one another, we are building up the church. As we follow Him, He will lead us to use the gifts and ministries which He has given us to edify others. Through our intimate relationship with Him, we will receive living revelation, wisdom and direction. Then we can disseminate what we have received. This life then will take on the form which He desires.

Believers who are in intimate fellowship with Jesus every day are full of His life. These individuals are constantly doing something because their Lord is leading them day by day. They are visiting the sick. They are sharing the gospel. They are on the lookout for the needs of others and asking God for ways to meet them. They are giving to the poor. They are praying for one another and constantly seeking how to minister Christ to one another.

They are together frequently because the Spirit of God is stirring them up to seek the others' company and fellowship. They are meeting together, praying together and worshipping together. They are being built up and joined together by the Holy Spirit.

Here there is no need for human control. There no necessity for one man or group of men to be planning or organizing this. Their direction is supernatural. The life of Christ will produce all the aspects of the church which we find in the New Testament.

All the elements of the church must be a product of the supernatural life. When we meet. Where we meet. How the meetings are conducted. The use of gifts. The function of various ministries. Our relationships with other members of the body. When we get together. When we should pray. How, when and where we should evangelize. The exercise of any kind of leadership. Every single aspect of the church must be a product of the Divine life. Every facet, move-

ment and activity of the body, must be a result of the life and direction of our Head. If and when it is not, then it is only a dead, religious form.

Jesus has risen from the dead. He is alive today and able to lead us. As He lives in and moves through the different members of His body, the form of His church will manifest itself.

When we minister Jesus Christ to one another, the habitation of God is being constructed. When the Spirit of God flows within us and then out through us, His supernatural building appears. It is the life of God who lives in us which then is ministered to others through us. It is Jesus Himself, living in and moving through His people who is preparing His bride. This is the way, in fact the only way, that the church can be constructed.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must only build in Life. We do not have to try to arrange the church the way we think it should be. We do not need to plan, control and organize people into the form we think the church should take. There is absolutely no need for men and women to try to manage others so that their group takes on an appearance which they think is biblical. We are not called upon to use human means and methods to try to achieve supernatural goals. The secret of building the living church is to minister Jesus to others. His life will only and always produce the bride for which He is yearning.

God is not depending upon our organizational abilities to get a group of people together and hold them together. He is not waiting anxiously for us to use our gifts to impress an adequate number of individuals so that we can constitute a "church." It is not necessary for us to mold others into something which we imagine God desires. Our God does not dwell and will never dwell in such temples made with human hands. He is looking for a living house. This house is a result of His life growing up within men and women.

We know from the scriptures that Jesus is seeking a bride. Let us consider the example of an earthly man as an illustration. Normally, this man is very interested in the

beauty and the form of his future wife. These things are important to him. So, can he just go out and buy a mannequin? This object may be exceptionally attractive and well formed. But will it satisfy him? Of course not. This man is also seeking someone living, someone who is full of life and can respond to him in many different ways.

In the same way, Jesus will never desire to enter into a marriage union with an empty form no matter how "good" or "right" it may appear. He is looking for someone who is alive with His own life. Consequently, we must never make the form our goal but learn to allow His life to create His bride the way He desires her to be.

### FALSE APOSTLES

There are today in the Christian community many people who call themselves "apostles." It may be that some of them do actually have this ministry. It is hoped that many of them have received and are building according to a heavenly vision.

However, there is unfortunately such a thing as "false apostles" (II Cor 11:13). There are those who claim to be sent by God, but in fact do not have the necessary preparation and vision to fulfill this ministry. They perhaps have sent themselves or have been sent by other men to try to do the work of God. While they may succeed in establishing a series of groups under their leadership and control, it may be that what they are constructing will not stand the test of judgment day.

There are a few of these who seem to be "cookie cutter" apostles. A cookie cutter is something which stamps out the same pattern over and over again from a soft, moldable piece of dough. These "apostles" then are those who imagine that they have discerned a New Testament pattern. They suppose that they have understood the form of the church.

And so they go from group to group which is open to them and "set things in order." This means that they arrange the leadership and the activities of the group to

conform to their ideas. When the others are young, inexperienced, or pliable enough to submit to their control, then they put their pattern in place. Thus they believe they have "planted another New Testament church."

But there is a small problem. This formula cannot and will never attract or produce the Life of God. All that can be done with such efforts is to arrive at something which perhaps looks like the church but is not living. It may be that such efforts can produce something which appears very scriptural. It is probable that these builders have many verses to support much of what they are doing. But as we have been seeing, being biblical is not enough. Merely being scriptural does not produce life.

For example, the pharisees of Jesus' day were very familiar with God's word, yet they failed to see Him in it. They were very biblical, but they missed Him. We must be building with the Life of the One who is revealed in the Bible. Merely imitating what we think the early believers did will only produce something dead. A dead, superficial form is nothing in which God will care to live.

The New Testament pattern which we need to see and with which we need to build is a living Person. Let me repeat this. The New Testament pattern is a Person. It is not an arrangement, an authority structure, or some kind of biblical "order" to which we must adhere. When we build with Jesus, the house of God is edified. When we plant this living seed, the living church grows up from it.

### THE FLOWER EXAMPLE

Let us use here the example of a flower. Suppose we want to have some kind of flowering plant. Perhaps it could be a Morning Glory. Here we have two choices. To arrive at our goal, we could go to a store which sells such things and buy a few items. We could get some colored silk material, some green wire, some glue, paint and everything we need to produce this plant. From these items we can begin to work. We can glue, cut, tape and paint. We can make leaves, stems, buds and blossoms. Soon, we may

have something which resembles the flower which we desired.

Today there are some who are expert at this sort of thing. I have seen silk flowers which are indistinguishable from the real thing. They are so realistic and so well made that they seem to be genuine flowers. You can even buy perfume to put on them which makes them smell like the real thing. But there is one small problem. They are now living. They are artificial. They look like the real thing but they are false. They are a mere imitation.

How many works for God today fall into this category! They have a very scriptural appearance or structure, but lack the abundance of Life. They look good and have all the features one would expect from reading the New Testament. They have leaves, stems and blossoms, but are not living. Perhaps they have elders, deacons, meetings etc. but it is not the life of God which is filling and animating every part of the structure. The form is not a result of life and therefore can never satisfy the Lord.

If we wish to have a flower, there is another way to go about it. However, it is a much slower way and upon examination looks a little foolish. Yet it is the way of life. First you take a little brown thing, the seed, and drop it on the ground. Then you bury it. Next you throw a little water on it. Then you wait and wait. With time and proper care, the life which is in this little seed will grow up. The power of the life which is that ugly, little brown seed will produce the beautiful flowers which you are desiring.

In the same way, when we wish to build the church, we must understand this life principle. We must have patience. Sometimes we must work in ways which may seem foolish to others. Our work is simply to minister Jesus Christ whenever and in whatever way the Holy Spirit chooses. We do not have to know very much. We do not need a formal religious education. We do not need to do anything with our own strength or intelligence. We only need to patiently serve others with the eternal food, the life of Jesus Christ. We can do this having complete confidence that this Life will produce the New Testament pattern. The

ministry of the Holy Spirit will always result in the church. It will never grow into anything else.

As a flower grows, at first it looks nothing like the picture you might see on the seed package. Probably it is just a little green sprout which is very unimpressive and could be confused with a number of other plants or even weeds. But with time and nourishment, all the features of the flower begin to appear. We begin to see leaves, stems and buds. Finally, the whole flower is in bloom.

In the same way, when we simply minister Jesus, in the beginning things may seem small and insignificant. Yet we are admonished not to despise "the day of small things" (Zech 4:10). It may be that all the "features" of the church are not in evidence. Perhaps all the gifts and ministries are not yet in full bloom. It may be that certain parts are lacking. But God speaks to us about this in His word. In Mark 4:28 we read that it is "...first the blade, then the head." The little green shoot (the "blade") comes up first and then after time and nourishment we see the fruit (the "head").

We can trust in the seed. The life of Christ will always produce and will only produce the true, living church. There is no need for us to get in a rush and begin to fabricate something on our own. Let us wait patiently. Let us continue on sowing and watering knowing that in His time, His desire will come forth.

We know for example that in the church we see certain gifts and ministries. We read in the New Testament about evangelists, pastors, teachers, apostles and prophets (Eph 4:11). We are told about gifts of healing, miracles, wisdom, knowledge, prophecy and many other things.

We understand that the early church met daily from house to house (Acts 2:46). The apostles were teaching in the temple and in homes (Acts 5:42). Some later were sent out to teach and preach. Deacons were selected (Acts 6:5). Elders were pointed out or recognized (Acts 14:23). Churches were planted. We can identify many different parts of this plant. But how did all this come about? Was it a result of human effort or of the flow of Divine Life?

## WHAT JESUS FORGOT

I don't know how it happened, but it seems that Jesus forgot to teach His disciples about how to set up a church when He was on the earth. He spent a lot of time with them. In fact, it was about three and one half years. They were together all this time, eating, traveling, ministering and sleeping. Yet He seems to have forgotten to teach them the basics of how to organize a church. In the four gospels we find no record of such instruction.

Jesus did not explain about how to have meetings. He made no mention of how to select elders or deacons. He seems to have neglected to teach about how to organize, how to run things, how to have home meetings, prayer meetings, large meetings and small meetings. It must have skipped His mind to instruct them about how to take offerings, pay the pastors and other expenses. He gave no hints about how to have children's groups, young people's activities, retreats or conventions. He had so much time with them and yet He taught them nothing about how to do all these and many more seemingly necessary things.

Actually, we do find at least two verses in which Jesus teaches us about the church. One of these is when He pointedly says: "I will build my church" (Mt 16:18). This verse should speak to us profoundly. He never said: "Please go and build My church for me according to the following instructions." He insisted that *He* would do the job. He was going to do the building.

Our function is to go out into all the world and preach Him. We are to announce the good tidings about His person and work. While we minister Him to others, He will build up His house. Undoubtedly we are co-laborers with Him. We do have a part to play. Yet it is not us constructing something for Him, but Him working through us.

A second verse in which Jesus speaks to us about building the church is John 16:13. There we read that Jesus will send us the Holy Spirit and that when He comes, He will lead us into all truth. Instead of teaching the disciples

a set of instructions, He said He would send them the Holy Spirit. By obeying the Spirit, all His heart's desires would be realized. The order of these things is very important. First, God did indeed pour out His Holy Spirit. Next, we have a record of all that He did in and through His people.

All the features, the gifts, meetings and ministries, of the church which we read about in the Bible were a result of men and women following the Holy Spirit. These people had no New Testament. They had no detailed instructions from Jesus either. So they were forced to rely on the Holy Spirit day by day. They had to simply follow Him in faith and trust. They were guided by His life and His life produced the churches which we see in God's word.

So if we wish to see these same things happen in our time and place, what should we do? We must do things in exactly the same way as the New Testament believers. First we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then we must follow Him in all that He is leading us to do. When we do this, we can be completely confident that His leading will produce the things which we see in the book of Acts and the epistles. God's life will always and only produce the church.

On the other hand if we simply try to repeat a pattern we think we see in the New Testament, we will fall short of the goal. We will produce an empty form without the essential content. The substance of the New Testament church was the life of Christ ministered by the Holy Spirit. All the features which we see were the direct result of the growth and operation of this life. If we too wish to see God's house edified, we must build in the same way.

Actually, Jesus did not forget anything. He taught His disciples all that was necessary to live and be led by the Holy Spirit. He taught them humility. He taught them submission to Himself. He taught them to love one another. All the critical ingredients to build up the church were evident in His teaching. What He did was prepare them to receive and walk in the Holy Spirit which He would send them.

## THE NECESSITY OF THE BIBLE

I would like to state clearly and emphatically here that I am not against the Bible. Nor am I teaching that it is unnecessary to us to be biblical in our walk and our work for the Lord. The only question is how we use this Book.

The Bible is absolutely necessary for us in our Christian life and walk. It has for every believer many important functions. First and foremost, it reveals to us the person of Jesus Christ. Instead of a set of rules or instructions, the main object of the Bible is to reveal God to us. He can be seen on every page. If we fail to penetrate behind the words and letters – if we only see the form but do not understand the Life which has produced this form – we have completely missed the message.

This Person who is revealed in God's word is our food. He is our spiritual nourishment. We must learn to eat and drink Him every day. How then is this done? When we open the Bible, we must at the same time open our spirit to Him. Instead of trying to accumulate information about God from His word, we must learn to actually have communion with God in His word. We must encounter a living Person there and have intimate fellowship with Him as we read. This is the spiritual reality of communion. Eating and drinking Christ in His presence, through His word.

I recommend that every believer spend much time in God's word every day. This is essential. As we fill ourselves with His Holy word, our spiritual man will grow (I Pet 2:2). We will receive spiritual nourishment. We will be full of the divine life. Thus we will have something real and living to minister to the other people around us. Instead of telling them something we have learned mentally, we can share with them Someone whom we know intimately. This then is how we can work together with God to build up His holy habitation.

When we pray, we can pray in the Spirit. When we worship, our worship can be the variety which is acceptable, "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23). When we minister,

we will share the spiritual substance which has been nourishing us. All this is a result of learning how to feed upon God's word. If you do not know this secret, if you are not finding His sweet presence when you open His book, then you need to have some real changes in your life.

Anything which is inhibiting your spiritual relationship with Jesus needs treatment. Whatever there is in your life that does not please Him needs repentance. If you are not comfortable with complete transparency and intimacy with our Savior, you need to seek Him for understanding of what it is that is hindering this relationship. Then you need to make the necessary adjustments so that when you are meditating in His word, you can also enjoy His speaking and His presence.

The Bible is absolutely essential for a healthy Christian walk. Through it God reveals Himself and His will to us. In it He speaks His direction. In its pages, we understand His plans and purposes. God's word convicts us of sin. It shows us where we are short of His glory and will. It challenges us, showing us where we are failing to manifest His nature. It reveals to us how He has led and used others, opening up new vistas for our spiritual life and work.

Concerning the church, the Bible shows us what the finished product looks like so that we can seek Him to produce this same thing in our midst. If we see that certain features of the church are lacking, we must pray that Jesus would lead us into these things. Instead of trying to correct any lack ourselves, we must turn to God.

No human plans and procedures are necessary. We must let Him convict us of any attitudes or actions which are inhibiting the flow of His life. We must open up our hearts and spirits for Him to do any further work which needs doing. When we see things in the Bible which are lacking in our part of His body, it is He alone who can and will produce them.

Let us suppose for example that some are sensing a lack among the youth. Perhaps they are not being adequately touched by the ministries which are going on. So what do we do? Shall we institute some kind of activities

and programs and find someone who will shoulder the burden of supervising this? Is this God's way? There is a good chance that this would merely produce another empty form.

But there is another option. Those who see the lack can begin to pray. They can begin to intercede with God that He would meet this need. In time He will raise up someone with an anointing and ministry in this area. He will find someone that He has prepared to meet this need. Then instead of another church program, we will have an anointed ministry which God will use to build up His church.

Further, when we see things happening among us which have no foundation in God's word, we then need to be corrected by this. For example, when someone is exercising unscriptural authority over another, we know that this is not of God. When there is sin, when there is an unhealthy emphasis on so-called "liberty," when some strange doctrine or practice is prominent, then the Bible is essential to convict us. This holy book is somewhat like the picture of the plant which we are desiring to see. Any practices or habits among us that do not conform to the picture should be discarded.

In no way am I negating the necessity of the Bible. I am only saying that this book can be used in two ways. It can be used as a source of Life or it can be used as a legalistic tool to minister death to others. Paul says that he and his co-workers were "...sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit." He enlarges this idea further by explaining that the "letter [of the scriptures] kills" (II Cor 3:6).

This is to say that we can misuse the Bible. We can use it to teach a pattern. We can insist on the superficial appearance of what we think we see and miss the substance of it. We can actually bring spiritual harm to others and even death through such ministry. Or we can use it as a source of life. Through our intimate relationship with Jesus in His word, we can then share this life with others to build them up. Paul's conclusion then becomes our experi-

ence. "But the spirit [of the scriptures] gives [ZOE] life" (II Cor 3:6).

### THE FORM IS IN THE LIFE

One conclusion we can draw from our previous discussion is that when we are working together with God to build His eternal habitation, we do not need to worry very much about the form it will take. We do not need to invest a lot of time and energy organizing, planning and manipulating the structure. We have no need to try to control anything or anyone. If God is not in control, our efforts are futile. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Ps 127:1). Our principle need is to learn how to minister Jesus Christ to one another and to a perishing world.

As we have already mentioned, we can have complete confidence in the seed of life. The pattern of the church is in the seed of life which we are sowing. For example, if we plant a seed of corn will wheat grow up from this seed? Of course not. And if we plant a bean seed, will a tomato plant sprout from the seed? Never! Therefore, if and when we are ministering Jesus Christ, His life will produce the church and nothing else. We can trust fully in this fact. Our faith must rest in the ability of Jesus Christ to do what He said – build His church. As we simply do our part in obedience to His Spirit, His house will be edified.

The Christian life should be one of great simplicity. We must become like little children. Our goal is not to become great and have a large organization under our authority. We have no need to try to control the way things are going. There is no necessity for us to organize others into some kind of church group. The simple object of our work is to help others be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. In this way and only in this way is the house of God constructed.

This kind of ministry involves a great faith in Jesus Christ. It means that we must follow our invisible leader

every day. We have to trust that He knows what He is doing and will lead us. We must learn to depend completely on our spiritual communion with the risen Savior. Here there is no need for form or formula. We do not need some kind of special doctrine or practice to assure ourselves that we are doing the right thing. We know we are pleasing to Him because we are walking in a faith relationship with Him.

On the other hand, the natural human being likes an earthly kind of security. He appreciates something already planned. He wants to know what will happen tomorrow. He puts great confidence in things which are visible and tangible. Therefore, he yearns for something organized, well-run and "safe." He wants a kind of earthly structure upon which he can depend.

If we are to build up the eternal dwelling place of God, we must build in life. As this life grows up within each one, the form of the bride will appear. How God must be pleased with this sight! How the heart of the Bridegroom must long for a living bride who is like Himself. When she is full of His life and nature, when she is moving by His own Spirit and responding to His every desire, how He must enjoy her presence. This then is the kind of church experience which attracts the presence of the Lord. This is the kind of house in which He will be pleased to dwell.

## DOING NOTHING

Here in this writing we have been emphasizing the danger of building a merely religious structure. We have been seeing that it is only the Life of God which produces the form which He desires. But does this mean that we are supposed to do nothing? For fear of doing the wrong thing, shall we just sit back and watch? Certainly not! The results of this revelation should be that many more brothers and sisters are free to follow the Holy Spirit and do what He is leading them to do.

Once we have acquired a godly fear of building with wrong materials, once we have seen the danger of human

effort, we should be even more equipped to do what Jesus is leading us to do. We no longer need to wait for the "leaders" to tell us what will happen. We no longer must depend on the institution approving what our Lord wants us to do. Every member of the body is free to follow the Holy Spirit. Each one can build according to His leading.

Everyone has something to do. Anyone can evangelize. Perhaps some sister or brother might open his or her home for Bible study, prayer or counseling. Those with gifts can visit others, ministering their portion to them. Healing and prophecies, worship and prayer are not limited to some religious building. These are things which we can experience from "house to house," (Acts 2:46) every day. No member of the body should be inactive. Each one has a part to play. Every joint of supply (Eph 4:16), every member of Christ's church is necessary for the edification of the whole.

Complacency is not recommended here. We will be responsible before the Lord if we do nothing with the wonderful things which He has given us. So, get busy. Moving in the fear of God, obey Him in what He is leading you to do. Many others are depending on your portion of Christ for their growth and well-being.

## THE PROBLEM OF MIXTURE

We have been speaking here about a church experience which is born of, led by and filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the ideal. But as we look around us we see much construction which is not made with such divine substances. Many groups manifest a mixture of the human and the divine. The works of men and the work of God seem to be occurring in the same context.

Many situations are not black and white, they are not all one thing or the other. While it is clear in many groups that men's hands are at work, sometimes we also see evidence of the Holy Spirit. For example, in some human religious organizations, we can see men and women being born again. Some are growing in their faith. Others are

being set free from some problem or other. What then are we to think about all this?

God is very humble. He does not insist that we be completely right about everything before He will work with us. If He insisted on our doing everything right, He would never work with us at all. So our Lord humbles Himself and tries to fit Himself into our works whenever and however He can. He finds ways and means to work around and through our human constructions. Since He sees spiritual hunger among His children, He finds ways to meet their needs.

For example, He might give a pastor an anointed message. He might inspire a brother or sister to pray for another for healing, deliverance or some other need. He may stir up some to intercede for the group and the leadership. He will no doubt use the many different members to spread the gospel to the unsaved. These and many other such things God will do among us in spite of any human religious structure we might have.

Perhaps many mistake this work of God among them as His blessing on what they are building. Since they see that He is using them to some degree, they then suppose that He is approving of everything they are doing. They become deceived, thinking that the fruit they see is a result of their religious structure.

The truth is that God is responding to open hearts. When He sees spiritual yearnings among His children, He will do whatever He can to meet their needs. He will find ways to work around the constructions of men to accomplish His purposes.

Therefore some may ask: "Why then is the structure so important?" "What difference does it make how we build?" "Why is this author so concerned about only constructing with God's materials in God's way if the results are the same?"

The problem with errant construction is that it greatly hinders the work of God. It gets in His way. While He may find ways to work around and through it, it is a kind of roadblock in the path of what He truly wants to do in and

with His body. There is so much our Lord wants to do and would do if only we gave Him the room to do it.

If so much of our building were not useless effort, He could work through us much more efficiently. If we would learn to work alongside God, using His materials, our work for Him would be much, much more effective. If what we have done in the wrong way, using the wrong materials was used a little by Him, imagine what He might do if we really worked according to His plan.

God's power and blessing will be found in much greater abundance when we do things His way. Many more unbelievers will be converted. Many more lives will be truly transformed. More marriages will be restored. More healings will take place. More real disciples will be made for Him. These and many other benefits will occur when we learn to work together with Him using His materials. When we learn to abide in Him, we will bear much fruit and this fruit will be the variety that lasts forever, passing the test of judgment day (Jn 15:5).

So then should we tolerate mixture? Certainly not! If we purge out the "old leaven" we will be holy to the Lord (I Cor 5:7). If we work together with Him to cleanse His temple, His presence will be much more powerfully manifested among us. As we begin to build together with Him using His materials, He will actually begin to live permanently among us.

This experience of having God live and move among His body is one which very few have known in any kind of powerful way. Yet, it is His will. When we fulfill His criterion and construct something which is truly His house, He will come and make His home among us. This will result in a potent kind of Christianity of which many have never dreamed. Let us then never be satisfied with a construction which God only visits now and then, but seek one in which He is pleased to dwell.

In the New Testament Jesus made a kind of whip and cleansed the temple. But a careful reading of the scriptures seems to show an interesting fact. It appears that He cleansed the temple twice, once at the beginning of His

ministry and again at the end. In the gospel of John, this event is recorded immediately after Jesus' first miracle. During the Passover, He made a whip of cords and drove out the money changers and animals. This was at the beginning of His ministry (Jn 2:13-16).

But in the gospel of Luke, after Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, we read: "Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it" (Lk 19:45). This incident then is something which He did at the end of His ministry.

It is possible that we could consider these events to be prophetic. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, God did a cleansing work in His temple. He drew His people out of the old religious form of Judaism and began a new, clean construction. However, during the intervening years between then and now, man has done much to again pollute what God considers holy.

But let us think about this for a moment. Could it be that in these last days, at the end of the "church age" He might want to cleanse His temple again? Is it possible that in this "last hour" Jesus might again wish to rise up in His people and do a purifying work?

My belief is that this is so. My contact with men and women all over the globe leads me to believe that this is His plan. This revelation of His temple is not something isolated or unique. It is a vision which God is giving to many of His people, in many parts of the world, in these last days.

With all this in mind, the question now becomes: Are you willing to work together with God in this effort? Are you ready to forsake all empty religious forms and move with the Holy Spirit in the work He is doing today? Can your heart respond to the call of God to purify His temple and build His true house? If so, now is the hour. Today is the day to lay aside all human endeavors and earthly means and methods. Now is the time to repent of all that we have been doing which is only wood, hay and straw. It is now, at the end of this age that we must heed His call and help prepare His bride for His coming.