

"Church" or Kingdom? A True Ecclesia, Part 19

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Good morning everyone! As always, I want to thank you for taking time to listen to today's message. My hope and prayer is that you are a faithful listener and that you are telling others and trying to sound the alarm with me.

I want to remind you again of a new column on my website, called Michael's Minutes. You can find it by clicking the Comments button. Michael sent in Part 1 of an excellent article called Enemies of State. It's great and I highly recommend it.

This past week, I saw an interview with a couple comedians. And they said that all they wanted to do in life is just make people laugh and lift people's spirits - and just be liked by everyone. And I thought, wow, wouldn't that be neat to walk into a room and people just be so glad to see you and brighten everyone's day and make people feel good and happy. I mean, really who wouldn't want to be that guy?

I know that humanity just doesn't care to be around the "Debbie Downers" and the gloom and doomers - and I hate to think that people look at me that way. But the reality is, I'm trying to bring hope. I'm trying to show people the way out. The reason why the comic is so well liked in our society is because he has a lot of constant work in brightening people's days. There's a need and he's filling it.

Well, we can fill that same need - the same void - by bringing people to the truth of what God's Word has been saying for all these years. It's filled with hope - lasting hope for today and tomorrow. The message of the King and His Kingdom and His offer to be a citizen in it - right now - is the greatest hope one can have. Not just in the bad times - but for all times.

The day I realized that I had a choice in Whose Government I would be a citizen of - was one of the greatest days in all my life. I was about 27 years old when I realized for the first time that the Commonwealth of Israel was not only a Government Ordained by God - the Creator of the Universe - but that the Commonwealth of Israel is the only Government Ordained by God - I was literally filled with joy and hope. A huge void was filled.

I no longer was an outcast. I was no longer a citizenless man - but was a citizen of the very Government / Kingdom of God that the King of kings and Lord of lords had planned from the foundation of the world. This is the object of His affection. It's the

apple of His eye. It's why He has done all that He has done - and here I was - right smack dab in the middle of it knowing that He was looking at me - pleased that I had come to the understanding of King and Kingdom and I made the choice to embrace it and walk in it.

In many ways, I could look at passages of Scripture and identify with the people that were talked about - call them by brothers - call them my Founding Fathers. How awesome this was - and is - today. We have a choice. As a man thinketh in his heart - SO IS HE. Do you believe this? I know in my heart that the King and His Kingdom is real - the Commonwealth of Israel - is real - and I'm a card carrying member - a citizen - an ambassador for the King of kings and Lord of lords.

For the last two weeks, I've been trying to conclude our study on what I believe Ecclesia is supposed to look like. We are examining the New Haven Colony Covenant. So far, we have seen that they clearly said they were establishing Civil Government. And in their document, yes, they used the English word 'church' - but they used it interchangeably with Civil Government. They were establishing Civil Government. The very first thing they agreed to was that the Scriptures hold forth everything necessary for their interactions between themselves and to God.

They agreed that magistrates would be chosen from among them and those magistrates could only serve if they met the qualifications for magistrate as described in the Word of God. They even specifically listed Exod. 18:21, Deut. 1:13, with Deut. 17, and 1 Cor. 6:1, 6, 7. There can be no doubt, when you read the document, that these people were totally committed to establishing Civil Government according to Christ - according to the dictates of the Scriptures.

Let's now try to finish reading the last couple paragraphs of the document. Quote:

Mr. Theophilus Eaton answered, that in all places they choose committees in like manner. The companies in London choose the liveries by whom the public magistrates are chosen. In this the rest are not wronged, because they expect, in time, to be of the livery themselves, and to have the same power. Some others intreated the former to give his arguments and reasons whereupon he dissented. He refused to do it, and said, they might not rationally demand it, seeing he let the vote pass on freely and did not speak till after it was past, because he would not hinder what they agreed upon. Then Mr. Davenport, after a short relation of some former passages between them two about this question, prayed the company that nothing might be concluded by them on this weighty question, but what themselves were persuaded to be agreeing with the

mind of God, and they had heard what had been said since the voting; he intreated them again to consider of it, and put it again to vote as before. Again all of them, by holding up their hands, did show their consent as before. And some of them confessed that, whereas they did waver before they came to the assembly, they were now fully convinced, that it is the mind of God. One of them said that in the morning before he came reading Deut. xvii. 15, he was convinced at home. Another said, that he came doubting to the assembly, but he blessed God, by what had been said, he was now fully satisfied, that the choice of burgesses out of church members and to intrust those with the power before spoken of is according to the mind of God revealed in the scriptures. All having spoken their apprehensions it was agreed upon, and Mr. Robert Newman was desired to write it as an order whereunto every one, that hereafter should be admitted here as planters, should submit, and testify the same by subscribing their names to the order: Namely, that church members only shall be free burgesses, and that they only shall choose magistrates and officers among themselves, to have power of transacting all the public civil affairs of this plantation; of making and repealing laws, dividing of inheritances, deciding of differences that may arise, and doing all things and businesses of like nature.

THIS being thus settled, as a fundamental agreement concerning civil government, Mr. Davenport proceeded to propound something to consideration about the gathering of a church' and to prevent the blemishing of the first beginnings of the church work, Mr. Davenport advised, that the names of such as were to be admitted might be publicly propounded, to the end that they who were most approved might be chosen; for the town being cast into several private meetings, wherein they that lived nearest together gave their accounts one to another of God's gracious world upon them, and prayed together and conferred to their mutual edification, sundry of them had knowledge one of another, and in every meeting some one was more approved of all than any other; for this reason and to prevent scandals, the whole company was intreated to consider whom they found fittest to nominate for this work.

Query VI. *WHETHER* are you all willing and do agree in this, that twelve men be chosen, that their fitness for the foundation work may be tried; however there may be more named yet it may be in their power who are chosen to reduce them to twelve, and that it be in the power of those twelve to choose out of themselves seven, that shall be most approved of by the major part, to begin the church (the Civil Government).

THIS was agreed upon by consent of all, as was expressed by holding up of hands, and that so many as should be thought fit for the foundation work of the church, shall be propounded by the plantation, and written down and pass

without exception, unless they had given public scandal or offence. Yet so as in case of public scandal or offense, every one should have liberty to propound their exception, at that time, publicly against any man, that should be nominated, when all their names should be writ down. But if the offence were private, that mens names might be tendered, so many as were offended were intreated to deal with the offender privately, and if he gave not satisfaction to bring the matter to the twelve, that they might consider of it impartially and in the fear of God.

Friends, this is what an Ecclesia looks like. All you and I have ever known is something called quote unquote "church" and it doesn't look anything like the New Haven Colony Covenant.

When they used the word "church" they were talking about Civil Government.

Ecclesia is when men and women, boys and girls, families, come together in the same general area - and form a community - and that community chooses to have a Civil Government that is based solely on the Word of God.

You might say, that is impossible today. There is no way that could happen - no where - not in America - not in Canada - not in Australia - there is no way that men's governments would even begin to allow such a thing. Maybe, maybe not. No one said this is easy.

I'd like to remind you of a pretty significant story in the Bible. It's also found in the book of Exodus when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. Yahweh had predetermined that His people had had enough and it was time for them to leave Egypt. At that time, Egypt and pharaoh were a world power. Their control over people was vast. But God told Moses to go tell pharaoh to let His people go. We all know the story. We all know about the many times pharaoh said Go - then changed his mind - then God sent plagues.

Ultimately, Yahweh delivered the children of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians. Do we serve the same God?

If our God desires that we let Him build Ecclesia with us - is He big enough to do the same thing today He did in the many examples we see in Scripture?

Turn to Luke 1 and let's remind ourselves again of Who this God is we claim to serve. Beginning in verse 30:

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.
[31] And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

[32] He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

[33] And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

[34] Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

[35] And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

[36] And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

[37] For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Turn over to Luke 18. Let's begin with verse 18:

[18] And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

[19] And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

[20] Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

[21] And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

[22] Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

[23] And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

[24] And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

[25] For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

[26] And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

[27] And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Once again. My question to you today is, do we believe this? Do we serve the same God? Oh, we love to quote verses about Jesus being the same yesterday, today and forever, and I am the Lord thy God, I change not. But do we really believe it?

The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Believe me, I'm not stupid. I'm not naive. I know what we are facing. I have seen the enemies of God face to face. I've seen their guns. I've seen their jails. I've seen their railings and mockings and tortures. But I am not deterred. I serve the same God that

Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael served and my God can and will deliver me from the burning, fiery furnace. One way or another - I'll be delivered.

I've put myself in the shoes of David as he faced Goliath and against all odds - against everyone else around him - I saw David slay the giant. Listen, friends, the story of little David killing the giant is not just a cute little bedtime story we tell the kiddies at night. It's a story about men and women who put their faith and trust in Almighty God who then - through the power and might of God Himself - can slay the giants in their own lives. The story of David and Goliath offers hope for every generation of people who learn from the faith and what was in the heart of David so that we will forever know that with men things may be impossible - but with God all things are possible.

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

[33] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

[34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

[35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

[36] And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

[37] They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

[38] (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

[39] And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

[40] God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Do we serve the same God or not? I'm telling you that in the midst of doom and gloom surrounding us everywhere today - the promises that are offered to us by the King through His Kingdom - fill the void better than any comedian in business today. Placing our faith and trust in the One Who created it all - and has made us joint-heirs - has made us kings and priests in His Kingdom - that's where real joy and comfort and encouragement comes from as we seek to obey His Will in our lives today.

While we are here in Luke 18 - as is the case in nearly every single page of the last 27 books of the Old Testament - let's deviate for a few minutes and once again see Fulfilled Bible Prophecy hit us right between the eyes - if we will let it. Verse 28.

[28] Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

[29] And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

[30] Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Did you see it? If we simply believe what we read - we understand - beyond any shadow of a doubt - this is Jesus speaking to His disciples - in the first century - 2,000 years ago - they would receive manifold more at that time - and in the world to come - life everlasting. They had reached the end of a world. And there was another world coming. Verse 31.

[31] Then He took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

No one has written to me with an objection when I have repeatedly made the statement that All Bible Prophecy was fulfilled by the Messiah - by Jesus - in the first century. But I want you to know that there are futurists so-called "teachers" out there who would easily yield to this statement but would say that these verses of Scripture regarding the Messiah fulfilling them - are limited to His death, burial and resurrection. They would say that many more prophecies were yet to be fulfilled and that Messiah did not fulfill all of them in the first century.

It is interesting that here in Luke 18, we see that an argument could be made that Christ was specifically targeting the upcoming events of the cross and that

all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished

is referring to the cross. And that's fine. But I want you to look a little closer with me to another passage of Scripture that I quote often. Turn over to Luke 21. This is the parallel passage, Luke's version of the events that Matthew described in Matthew 24. As a side note, amazingly enough, there are some futurist teachers out there who actually say that Matthew and Luke are talking about two different things. No way. Verse 5

And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

[6] As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

[7] And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

[8] And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

[9] But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

[10] Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

[11] And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

So, as we read here, anyone with at least one tenth of brain power - can and should be able to see that Luke is describing the same things that Christ was saying that Matthew was recording in Matthew 24. Skip down to verse 25.

25] And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

[26] Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

[27] And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

[28] And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

[29] And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

[30] When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

[31] So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

[32] Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

[33] Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Now, Christ is no doubt describing prophetic events that would occur AFTER the cross. Agreed? Matthew 24 and Luke 18 are talking about the establishment of the Kingdom and this is after the cross. And if we will accept the clear Words of Christ - He is saying

that the event would occur approximately 40 years from the time He said it. (This generation).

So, we just saw from Luke 18 that Christ would fulfill all the prophets concerning the cross.

Now, we are in Luke 21, and we are reading about the end of the world, the destruction of the temple, the coming of Christ, the establishment of the Kingdom - right?

Go back up now to verse 22.

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

He is not talking about Fulfilling Bible Prophecy exclusively at the cross. He is now using the same language that He used when saying that He fulfilled all the prophecies concerning His death - now He is saying exactly when ALL THINGS which are written were to be fulfilled. Friends, these things are just as clear as anything can be.

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Alright. Back to Ecclesia.

If we were living in the days of the New Haven Colony Covenant, and we had just witnessed the establishment of that - no doubt what would be called - a called out Christian community of believers - when the preacher began preaching Romans 13 - would there be any doubt whatsoever as to the meaning of the passage?

Could there be any debate as to whether Romans 13 was talking about God's Government or men's secular governments?

Here was a Government - a Civil Government - where everyone agreed would be based on Christ and on the Scriptures. The magistrates were men chosen under the strict guidelines of the Scripture. They were men who feared God and gave themselves to the study of the Law of God. They were the ministers of God to thee for good. Who could argue against this understanding?

This was not secular government where the quote unquote "rulers" could care less about Jesus, they could care less about the Laws of God, they demanded obedience to their laws, their statutes, their treaties - and anyone who dared say otherwise could be imprisoned, tortured or worse.

This was a called out Christian community of believers who were attempting to build a Christian community based on the Bible. And Romans 13 instructed them that and anyone living in that community to obey this Government and for anyone who would not obey this Government they would bring to themselves damnation.

And once again, we are brought to another major difference between the teachings of the "church" and the "churchmen" versus the teaching of the King's men and the Kingdom.

I have heard people tell me that whether or not Romans 13 is teaching men to obey God's Government ONLY - or whether it is teaching men to obey men's government - is not an issue of grave importance. In fact, it's one of those - and I'm telling you this phrase is quite irritating - but it's "an agree to disagree" issue.

Today's message is not a Romans 13 message. But I want you to turn there quickly, just for one key verse. We'll read several, but there is one key verse I want to look at this morning. Verse 1.

[1] Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.

And that word there should be authority. Be subject to the higher authority.

For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

[2] Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

[3] For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

[4] For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

We have seen from their own document, the New Haven Colony Covenant and their desire to have a Christian community Governed by the Scriptures. I would hope by now - especially if you have been following along with these messages beginning with the Matthew 24 series - that you would agree what we see here is the closest thing to the Biblical meaning of Ecclesia that we have seen - in - for lack of a better phrase - comparatively modern history.

If America was ever great - at anytime in its history - it was when communities like this one were springing up across the land. And there were more than just this one. Knowing what they said about their offices of magistrates - men ruling - making judgements and decisions based on the Scriptures - it should easily be seen that God would then say about this type of Government - obey it. Conform to it. Follow it. Yield to it and do not resist it. If you resist it - you will bring to yourselves damnation.

It's that verse of Scripture that I believe is so overlooked that it simply cannot be said that if we get this wrong - it doesn't really matter because it's 'an agree to disagree' issue.

There are only two sides. Romans 13 is either talking about God's Government, God's ministers who fit the qualifications to hold a particular office - or it's talking about men's governments - who are filled with people who not only do not fit the qualifications for offices such as judge - or minister - but they demand that those Biblical qualifications - if a man would actually meet some or all of the qualifications - that man would be disqualified from holding a particular office in secular government. Romans 13 is talking about one or the other type of Government and whoever gets it wrong - receives to themselves damnation.

Well, by the looks of the way things are going in American society - I think it seems apparent that men's governments have brought condemnation.

Last week, if you recall, I talked about how that there is an element of, I guess, we would refer to them disparagingly as the ultra-rich, ruling elite, the New World Order, whatever you want to throw in there - but there are people out there who have made their life's goal to rule the world - and rule the world according to their dictates.

I've told you about one such group of men. Cecil Rhodes and Andrew Carnegie. I took these comments about Cecil Rhodes from a history website of the UK. This is what they said:

Cecil was a firm believer in the adage that 'to be born an Englishman was to win first prize in lottery of life', and he sought to bring such enlightenment to the many different states in South Africa by uniting the whole continent under British rule. To achieve this aim he realised that he needed funds on an even grander scale to pay for both military muscle and to bribe local tribal chieftains.

Such funds arrived when gold was discovered in the colony in 1886. By the time he was 34, Cecil had monopolised the control of the entire Kimberley diamond fields, with an estimated income of £200,000 from his diamond interests, and a further £300,000 from gold. As one of the richest men on earth, he devoted much of this personal wealth to acquiring territory and mining concessions for the advancement of the British Empire.

In the European 'scramble for Africa', Cecil was focussed on rapidly expanding British interests, at times it appeared at almost any cost. At the head of a military expedition Cecil entered Matabeleland, and through bribes and some underhand dealing he eventually founded the colonies of Northern and Southern Rhodesia

(more recently renamed Zimbabwe and Zambia). Through his vision and determination he had, almost single handily, expanded the British Empire by some 450,000 square miles.

Notice here that he apparently worked at raising money for the advancement of his agenda - the advancement of the British empire. And by their own words, he needed all this money *'to pay for both military muscle and to bribe local tribal chieftains.'*

In the 1950s, a writer for the Chicago Tribune Press Service, named William Fulton, wrote a series of articles on Cecil Rhodes and the Rhodes' Scholarship from Oxford. In one of his articles, he wrote the following, quote:

“New York, July 14 — Cecil John Rhodes, the empire builder, held a lifelong ambition to bring about ‘the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British Empire.’ Today many American Rhodes scholars are working assiduously to make the dream of their imperial patron come true. Rhodes cherished schemes for a world-power federation dominated by Anglo-Saxons. His American scholars returning from England are the leaders in the drive to sink Uncle Sam deeper in the morass of the affairs of other countries.”

There is literally volumes that have been written and I could on for days talking about the goal of Cecil Rhodes. In a nutshell, Rhodes dreamed of a one-world government. That is what he amassed his fortunes for and in his last will and testament - that's what he left his fortune for - one world government. When he was alive, by their own declaration, they said he was trying to colonize the entire continent of Africa for the British.

He enlisted C.I. Scofield as the religious arm and Scofield twisted the Scriptures into what is now a full-fledged Hollywood screenplay with all the imagery of 666, the anti-

christ, the left behind series, and first and foremost - that Bible prophecy stipulates that an antichrist figure will elevate himself in the world to unite all the nations into a one world government - and all so-called "Christians" should get behind this concept and rejoice and be glad because one world government is the plan of God and with all the bad things it brings - it's all okay because it means that Jesus is coming soon.

We are in a battle today. We are in a battle against the ultra-rich. They have an agenda. Their agenda is world conquest.

We should have an agenda. It should be community conquest. It should be in building Christian communities of believers.

A couple years ago, I was speaking to an attorney and I was explaining to him the way I believe and the way I live. I told him about the Biblical commonwealth of Israel and about trying to live separate from the world, and trying to live according to the Laws of God and claiming Christ as King, etc., etc.

I fully expected him to scoff and tell me how stupid I was - but interestingly enough - the exact opposite occurred. He actually engaged me in the conversation and would you believe he said that my argument was "defensible." Now, I want you to understand I was not speaking with him for the purpose of him defending me. We were having a conversation and I was telling him about the Kingdom of God. But he was looking at what I was saying through his eyes of legalism and quote unquote "the law" as he understood it.

He was actually telling me that my beliefs were "defensible." I had arguments and standings that could be defended - and as his mind worked - defended in men's courts. He started talking about international law and laws of nations and some things that I had very little knowledge of. And he was getting somewhat excited about what he was

saying. To this day, I don't know why, necessarily - but he was - at the least - intrigued by the conversation.

Then, all of a sudden, he kind of stopped. He looked at me and said, "Are you telling me there are others who believe the same thing you do?" I said, "Yes." Then he said, "And you are all living in the same general area?" I said, "Sadly, that's the problem. We are pretty much scattered. There's a family here and a family there, but no, we are not in the same general area." He immediately said, "Well, then none of what I said applies."

I get it. From the standpoint of what he was trying to say concerning his understanding of man's laws - a community or a nation seeking status to be a community or a nation - at least under their understandings - and not that that matters mind you - not according to what we believe - I'm just saying that according to their understanding - a community or a nation - needs people and a common ground.

There are some Ecclesia minded people that may not agree with this, but I believe that Ecclesias are called out Christian communities of believers who live in the same general area and are trying to dominionize their communities - for the King and the Kingdom.

I want you to be careful when using the Internet for word studies. For instance, I received an email from a man who cited a definition out of Strong's Concordance. And when I saw it, I instantly knew something was wrong - because I had that same definition memorized for many years. Sure enough. I looked at what he had cited as a definition from Strong's and what I have in my Strong's - and it wasn't the same. The modern Strong's Concordance online version - does not give the same definitions as the original.

I have an edition from the 1970s, and I have concerns that even that one is not like the original from 1890.

In my edition, the definition of church is that it is a combination of the Greek word *ek* 1537 and 2564 *kaleio* - to call out. a calling out, ie, a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation.

Now let's stop right there for a second. Congregation. Today, when you hear that word, you immediately think of congregation as in a group of people meeting in a church building, singing songs, preaching, etc. But that's not what that word meant exclusively in 1890.

Do you have an 1828 Webster's Dictionary? If not, you can find one online. I haven't done a lot of comparing, hopefully they haven't changed that also.

But in 1828, congregation meant this:

The act of bringing together, or assembling.

Once again, in our eyes and ears in 2019, we are thinking "church."

Look at the word assembling in Webster's 1828.

A collection or meeting together. Hebrews 10.

This is a reference to not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

Assembly, Webster's 1828:

A company or collection of individuals, in the same place, usually for the same purpose.

A congregation or religious society convened.

Let's chase this further --- society.

Webster's 1828

Society. The union of a number of rational beings, or a number of persons united, either for a temporary or permanent purpose. Thus the inhabitants of a state or of a city constitute a society, having common interests; and hence, it is called a community.

Now, let's go back to Strong's definition of church. He says it is a Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven, or both.

Go back to Webster's 1828.

Community. Properly, common possession or enjoyment; as a community of goods. A society of people, having common rights and privileges, or common interests, civil, political or ecclesiastical; or living under the same laws and regulations. This word may signify a commonwealth or state, a body politic, or a particular society or order of men within a state, as a community of monks; and it is often used for the public or people in general, without very definite limits.

It seems to me that the understandings of words have changed quite a bit.

I think I may have told you a couple messages ago, but I was watching an old episode of Gunsmoke, I think. And in the episode, there was a group of people who were traveling to the west. And the statement was made that they were traveling out west in hopes of establishing a congregation. Most of us today would find that odd because they were already a group of people, a collection of people that were traveling together - so they were a congregation already. But the inference from what was said was that they were traveling out west to settle down and their settlement was called a congregation.

Today, whenever we think of the word congregation, we are immediately drawn to the times where we entered the four walls of a building somewhere and someone stood up and told us to take a hymn book and turn to page 128 sing about the blood of Jesus.

Then, someone else stood up and sang a song by themselves, or a special choir sang

special music, prayers were made, an offering collected, a message preached - an invitation to join the church was made - then the people were dismissed to go back into the world and live in community under laws that are not God's Laws. That's what we think of when we think of congregation. But for goodness sake, even the writers of the 1960s television show Gunsmoke, knew that congregation was a group of people united under God for the purpose of establishing a community.

I want you to know that I do not claim to know all the answers in regards to how we implement Ecclesia today. I don't know the particulars, the details, the how-tos. But I believe that if God's people will begin taking the steps to come out of men's governments and choose to walk in His Government - He will provide the answers.

A single man here and a single man there trying to live outside of men's governments - trying to live in the Kingdom of God without an Ecclesia is very difficult.

In closing today, look with me to Ecclesiastes chapter 4. Let's read beginning in verse 1.

So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

[2] Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.

[3] Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

[4] Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

[5] The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

[6] Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and

vexation of spirit.

[7] Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.

[8] There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.

[9] Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

[10] For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

[11] Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

[12] And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

The Kingdom of God, the plan of God is community. It is for a joining together as an army. This is why several weeks ago when I was showing you how Ezekiel 37 was fulfilled in Christ and in the first century, the book of Ephesians talks about equipping ourselves with armor as an army going out to battle. It's spiritual armor, spiritual weapons. We wrestle not against flesh and blood - but against principalities. Against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

We need to be engaging those who oppose the Kingdom of Christ. But we need to do it under the authority and power of an Ecclesia. Where two or three are gathered together in my name - there am I in the midst of you.

With each step of obedience, He says that He will reveal more to us.

My prayer is that at the Kingdom Conference 2020! this coming Spring, men with a heart towards the Kingdom will begin to put their heads and hearts together and seek God for real answers and steps towards how we can begin building Christian communities of believers.

On Oct 20, 2019, Greg Dixon, who was 87 years old, had been working in church for the greater part of his whole life - who had been preaching the doctrine of rapture for that entire time - passed away. He joined the ranks of Wendell Zimmerman, who died in 1992, W.E. Dowell, passed away in 2002, Jerry Falwell passed away in 2007. All these men preached vehemently, loudly, with no reservations that they would be raptured. Yet each of them, one by one, have passed away - having never seen the rapture they so believed would take them away.

Friends, there is no rapture. There is no second coming. The second coming of Jesus Christ took place in the first century exactly like He said it would and to the exact people He said He was coming to and for.

To some people out there, this seems to be the worse news of their lives. But to others - it provides the greatest amount of hope. It is not the plan of God for the enemies of Christ to prevail. We can bring down strongholds. We can bring into captivity every thought, every imagination, every high thing that refuses to conform to Christ. We have the plan, the blueprint for success. We just need to begin understanding who we are in Christ and then begin walking therein.