

015 To Equip The Saints 1 **To Prepare God's People**

As we have mentioned in an earlier study, the body of Christ – The Church – is going through an unprecedented time of change, challenge, and upheaval. It has become very easy to look at the church today as a weak, ineffective, non-entity that is riddled with religion, and thus we cast it aside, and write it off as a ‘*has been*’.

Of course, that is exactly what the devil wants the world, and even disillusioned Christians to believe.

Yes we have to face up to the fact that there are so many – even millions – of Christians who have been hurt and whose lives have been wrecked by so called Christian leaders. These folks have chosen the ‘*opt out*’ clause, and are adrift with their life, no secure relationships except with others who opted out.

Having gone through Brian's wonderful studies on the Amazing Unconditional Love of the Father towards us, and the Lord's only command – Yes the ONLY command Jesus gave whilst on earth was to love one another, we now understand more that we need to approach all our studies from that basis of real Father love.

As we look at the Christ given ministries to the church, we must under-gird all of them and their operation from the basis of total Love and acceptance.

Sadly that is not always the case as we shall see, but that can be changed by His grace in answer to our humility and repentance.

So let's have a look at this subject of Equipping the Saints, taken from

Eph 4:10-15

10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

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14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

The ‘Head’ man

In an earlier study we looked at 1 Samuel 8:6–19. This is where the people asked to be made like ‘other’ nations and rejected the leadership ways of the Lord and wanted a king. They had their new king named Saul and as 1 Samuel 9:2 states, he was a ‘*head*’ man, not a heart man.

Prophetically here is such an amazing picture of the church, which within a 300 hundred years of inception had become a ‘*head*’ organization with the ascendancy of ‘The Bishop of Rome’. When we read of the atrocities that occurred in the name of God and the church over the last 1700 years, we could almost become ashamed that we belong to it.

They rejected the Lord’s Headship and manor of leadership of His church and chose the path of self-rule, domination, and control. That developed into what is called today a Denomination.

Many churches and Christian organizations are still governed by the Deacons or the Church Board made up of good men no doubt, but chosen for their professionalism, i.e., bankers, accountants, business men. We set up our churches as charitable organizations fitting in with government requirements so as to maximize the tax benefits.

Now I am not against maximizing any tax benefits, but the question has to be asked, how much of this is of the ‘*head*’ man.

The last 1700 years has brought some of the greatest influences and challenges to the Christian Church. The result of much of these outside influences brought upon the Church, is that we have built into our systems and thus into our lives, then into our culture, such strong religious traditions, manor of thinking and conduct, stuff that has become so sacrosanct.

However, the reality of this is that much of it is not from God, has no Biblical base, not born of the Spirit, and is not under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The ones that dare to be different and challenge the religious systems are treated as ‘insurgents, rebels, mutineers, and backsliders’. They are often shunned by the ‘establishment’ and not recognized as a genuine church and are treated as ‘off course’.

This reminds me of King David’s day, when there were thousands who drifted in the wilderness and lived in caves to get away from King Saul – the ‘*Head and Shoulders Man*’. The man made king, so Israel could be like every other nation.

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In this day and to this generation, it has to be Different

Throughout history, there have always been those groups who knew it had to be different.

Throughout history, there have always been groups of people who stood for righteousness and Biblical truth, not accepting the law of man but rather sacrificing themselves to the law of God. Many of these Godly folks gave their lives and were imprisoned or martyred by the 'Established Church' and branded heretics because they were willing to stand in the courage of their convictions and do it God's way.

We are living in a time when history is repeating itself all over again.

In the early 1900's there began the fresh move of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of the Spirit, the release of the gifts of the Spirit, and a new awakening to the power of God in healing.

Out of this, the Pentecostal movement came into being. I have had the joy and privilege of knowing personally some of those early pioneers and heard about the sacrifice, rejection, and abuse they endured from 'The Church'.

However, this time it is different.

What is different?

Why is it different?

The difference is, the advent of the outpouring of the Pentecostal experience this time, could not be stamped out by the 'Established Church'. The move of the Spirit has grown and now in one way or another affects every church and denomination. The move of God developed into the Charismatic move and now it is moving on again with the Kingdom emphasis.

Why is it different this time?

There are two dynamics that have made a major difference.

The first is God's timing. This is now God's day. He is bringing ALL things to a head. Happenings and events in the world are having a major impact on the day in which we live. The world stage is being set up right now for the 'grand finale'.

The second dynamic is that God is taking his church back.

In Revelation 19: 7 – 8 we find that the bride has made **HERSELF** ready with fine, clean linen **WHICH WAS GIVEN TO HER**, which is **Righteousness**.

Rev 19:7-8

7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

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This is not something to happen in some sweet by and by. The scripture teaches us very clearly that we are ALREADY clothed in HIS righteousness. There is no more to have. We have it ALL now.

Then in Revelation 21: 9 – 27 is the most fantastic picture of the church. But actually the angel said it is the bride, the Lambs wife.

Rev 21:9-22:1

9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.

12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.

14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.

16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

17 He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using.

18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.

19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

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*26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.
27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful
or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Now I know there are a number of interpretations to this chapter and some teach this is the New Jerusalem that is going to descend from heaven and hover in some mysterious way over the top of the earthly Jerusalem.

Personally I struggle with that kind of teaching because I find it has no foundation in the 'whole' essence of scripture. Remember I said right at the beginning of the studies, what you believe must have a total – Geneses to Revelation - thread.

Here in these verses, God's Word states very clearly that it is a description of the Bride of Christ, the true Church that Jesus Himself said HE is going to **build**.

*(V 10 above) One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "**Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**"*

*10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, **and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.***

Ask yourself the question. Who did the angel say to John that he was going to show him?
Answer. "The Bride"

Question. What did the Angel show John?
Answer. The New Jerusalem.

Did the Angel deceive and lie to John by showing him something different than what he said he was going to show him? Most certainly not.

The book of the Revelation is a book of word Picture's, presentations, and word symbols describing in an earthly format what is actually Spiritual, Heavenly and Eternity itself.

The presentation pictured as the New Jerusalem is one of the most wonderful and beautiful description of the Church. This is how God sees His church – you and me.

We shall come back to this beautiful picture in a later study in greater detail.

Again that is in the here and now. He is not going to build that in some future by and by. He is building that in you and me right now.

Young David, before he was made king, was living in a cave called the cave of Adullam. It was here as an outcast, an, 'off course' heretic, that these isolated lonely groups began to gather to him.

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The lonely found companionship, the fearful found courage, the hopeless found hope, the lost found destiny, the weak found strength, the timid found might. Here he made this motley bunch into a mighty fighting force that in the years to come defeated and conquered all the enemies of Israel.

The 'Heart' Man

Why did that happen? The answer is simple, as the scripture tell us; David was a man after Gods own heart.

Saul was Head.
David was Heart.

Now I know you are asking, what has this all got to do with Equipping the Saints and Apostles, Prophets etc?

If you don't understand and see the difference between the last 1700 years of 'HEAD' rule in the church and now how the Lord is bringing back the 'HEART' leadership, you are going to miss and misuse everything related to the Ephesians 4: 11 ministry gift of the Lord.

If any of the verses we have looked at in Revelation 19 and 21 are to be seen in reality in the earth today, then we have to face the challenges of our convictions, dare to be radical, deal ruthlessly with our religion and build an army (Equip the Saints) that will defeat ALL the enemies of the Church (for the work of service) until:

Eph 4:13-16

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

The Spoken Word

There is one other very important point that has to be mentioned. Now to some it is no big deal. To others it is just custom and tradition. Unfortunately to others it is status and position.

It is amazing how much there is in the Word of God that teaches about speech and what we say.

Right from Genesis and the very first chapter, we are being taught by the Lord about the Power of the Spoken word.

It was the spoken word from the very lips of God himself that created everything that exists in the entire universe. The narrative states over and over again "and God said ...and saw it was Good."

But also note that it was the spoken word in chapter 3 that brought the seed of confusion, questioning, doubt, deception, and then destruction.

Gen 3:1-5

*3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "**Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?**"*

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,

*3 **but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"***

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

NIV

No wonder Jesus and the apostle James taught so intently about the spoken word.

Words are creative. They can create pictures in people imaginations. Just think of our Glass Ball and Postage stamp. They can create atmospheres of joy or sadness, peace or anger. They can lift up or tear down. They can bring clarity or create confusion. They can perpetuate a false idea or bring new understanding.

In this next stage of what the Lord is doing in His church, he is removing the confusions. One of which is the thing of titles.

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In the scripture, the ONLY one to have any Title is the Lord Himself. That is how it should be today. The scripture shows that ALL ministry gifts whether in Romans, Ephesians, or Timothy are functions and not title.

Again so much of the last 1700 years is still in us, “seeking recognition.” Bishop so and so. Apostle this or that. Elder so and so. Deacon this. Pastor so and so.

The difficulty with all this is what is being communicated and what is being received. Some use those terms in as pure a way as possible, but there is always the problem of the hearer. What is it that is being conveyed to their understanding?

Now there are those who call themselves apostles and are not at all. This even happened in Paul’s day. There are those who call themselves Elders and are not. Often they are deacons. There are those who call themselves Pastors and are not. They might be evangelists or prophets or even apostles.

We club them all together under the title Pastors but what are we communicating in peoples understanding and concepts.

This very thing can become the limiting factor on a person’s real gift and calling, because people cannot see you in the full function of your call because of the concept they have of the word Pastor.

According to the Lord in Eph 4:11, the shepherd (poimain) (pastor) is not a position or a title but a ministry. The one who shepherds the flock.

Now I personally believe in any fellowship, there can be a number of shepherds caring for a group of people, just as there can be a number of evangelists as well as teachers.

It is that ministry team together that brings the whole ministry to the body.

It is also of major importance to note that these are direct gifts of the Lord to his church. None of them are appointed or ordained by the people or any other person in fact.

Only the Elders and Deacon are appointed and ordained by human hands, and the Ministry Team does that.

Acts 6:3 and 6

Acts 6:3

*3 Brothers, choose seven men (deacons) from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. **We will** turn this responsibility over to them*

6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

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Acts 14:21-23

*21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,
22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.
23 **Paul and Barnabas appointed elders** for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

and a number more scriptures.

The use of the terms Leader, Leadership team allows for the redevelopment of right concepts in peoples understanding. It is also New Testament teaching.

Heb 13:7 Rom 12:8 Acts 1:20.

Heb 13:7

*7 Remember your **leaders**, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*

Rom 12:8

*8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; **if it is leadership**, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

Acts 1:20

*20 "For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms, "May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, "May another take his place of **leadership.**"*

If we are to be in this finale that the Lord wants us to be, we are going to have to be humble and do it totally His way in everything.

The purpose of this study is not to teach anyone how, but more to provoke to prayer, seeking His way, challenging the thought patterns and religious concepts. Encouraging radical change, daring to be different and give the church back to HIM. This will take humility, prayer, scripture searching, and positive teaching.

But what a bride we shall become – if only – there are a few good men and women that are willing.

We will take this on in the next Study.