

Part 1: Congregation, Church or Body?

The Fellowship or Church as we know it is not even close to what Yahushua and His Apostles established and built as seen in the New Testament scriptures. They started a church without physical walls; **a church where we are the stones, living stones, joined**

Are we fulfilling the **great commission** as set out by Yahushua or are we trying to keep alive a **dead building** used twice a week?

together with the mortar of love to form its spiritual structure. The Lord's church, our church, is not a building made with hands; for we are the building and the spirit of YHWH dwells in us. Because we do not build with wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver or precious gems **we are free to invest the Lord's resources in the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned. We are free to love the violent, drunk, perverted and profane and to reveal YHWH's forgiveness through Messiah.**

We **should not** invest in the works of the flesh by erecting steepled monuments we will suffer no loss by the fires of testing which will one day consume them all. **When we say church, what comes to mind? Do you think of your denominational affiliation, Fellowship, or the steepled building with its pulpit, platform, alters and pews?** Imagine: many of today's church goers confuse the building with the church. What a vision. Can you see it: Yahushua returns and millions of buildings rise to meet him in the sky while all of YHWH's children wave goodbye. Don't laugh! If someone asked you directions to your church, what would you tell them? Is it the white building on the corner?

Many, if not most, who attend today's churches and groups suffer from a deep spiritual dryness that has settled into their very bones. It seems to manifest itself as a hunger that penetrates the very soul.

Because they have not followed YHWH's original plan many, aware of their need, go about like blind men groping in the darkness seeking what they sense they do not have. Many actually find the truth they hunger for and the joy that comes with the quickening of YHWH's spirit within. For a season this new light from

YHWH illuminates their heart and beckons them to follow but, afraid to leave familiar surroundings or endure the rebuke of their loved ones, they remain captive in a religiously dead system that feels great but has grown cold. A denominational system which is determined to be right; even if it has to deny the truth to do it. **Winning the doctrinal argument becomes more important than discovering YHWH's truth.** These poor captives are like grapes left too long on the vine, poor souls withering and wrinkling with age. Their skin thickening and no longer sensitive to the truth that surrounds them. The time of enlightenment passes and with it the joy of serving Jesus. Finally, legalism sets in and the Spirit moves out.

The fruit of YHWH's vine must be picked in season if it hopes to satisfy the purpose for which it was planted.

Many, out of fear, fail to respond to YHWH's call. Truth that they resisted builds hardness of heart and the Spirit of truth who called them out of darkness has been ignored and can no longer be heard. In their brief season of light they dared to ask questions of leaders; they compared their church assemblies to YHWH's original plan and found them wanting.

Their questions about these differences only drew the standard denominational answers and a warning not to make waves. Their questions, far from being welcomed, were seen as a threat and they, as rebellious for asking them. Even on that rare occasion when a leader might admit to deviating from the original plan of YHWH, he shrinks back and suggests that it's not important enough to risk confrontation and possible division, so he refuses to make the required changes. Some try to steam roll over you with some intellectual sounding nonsense that makes black white and white black in an effort to persuade you of your error.

Some leaders, for fear of losing the questioning member suggest the member stay in the church or fellowship and bring about the required change from within. Of course, if the member continues to raise objections, remaining unwilling to compromise the word of YHWH or their own resolve to obey it, they're asked to leave, making internal change impossible.

If things remain unchanged, the fires that once burned within are quenched by a religious system whose size and weight smother every remaining spark of reform that once glowed with the zeal to destroy hypocrisy and replace it with the pure undefiled truth of YHWH's word. Some brethren have dared to ask themselves questions like, **"Where is the power, unity, love, miracles and simple worship found in the pages of the New Testament in the early church?"**

If you've ever asked this question, then take a moment, listen to your heart, beloved; listen closely; listen to that still small voice within and you will hear YHWH ask, **"Where is the early church?"** YHWH desires to bless His church the same way today that He did in the first century but what we now attend, in most cases, is not even close to a first century church.

The first century church was His; can we say this about today's church? YHWH longs, once again, to pour out blessings upon those who practice church according to His **original plan**. The early church did, but what little of it remains is all too often regarded as totally weird and occultic.

Why would the Believers-Christians of today regard those who worship in early church fashion as a cult? If you compare these two forms of worship with each other you will soon discover that they are very different. **Anything different is viewed with fear and suspicion**. Who is he that attends a church that doesn't believe his church to be correct and true? Along comes an assembly that worships in the manner of the early church; does this man compare this assembly to the New Testament? No! He compares it to his church and seeing the differences declares it to be a cult.

Can the early church be found? Are there those today who worship and live as the early church did? You may have to search high and low to find it as one seeking treasure in a field or a pearl of great price (*Matthew 13:44-45*). YHWH's kingdom on earth is His true church and finding it is indeed as finding treasure. To find it you may have to search for it with all your heart. You may have to travel far and wide or be used, if called, to build one according to YHWH'S **original plan**, trusting YHWH to teach you how.

The answer to the above question is **yes**, the early church can be found if you know where to look. To build one according to YHWH's plan we must first destroy whatever now stands on its site. I'm speaking of our heart.

To do this we must put away all hand-me-down doctrine, return to the model and specifications given in the New Testament and approach this **original plan** with a servant's heart and integrity. We must be determined to build according to His plan and not our own. Yahushua did not build His kingdom on the backs of the Pharisees, nor within the walls of the temple; if we are to enter into his labors, neither can we.

We cannot build on the traditions of men nor can we build His church within the walls of a denomination. We must first come out, as He did, then we'll be free to follow His voice and His direction alone. If we are to find our way back, then we, like the prodigal son, must come to ourselves or if you prefer, realize our error and return home. Home to the structure that Yahushua built; home to the foundation of the Apostles; home to the early church.

Can we truly say today, as we look at today's church that it bears any resemblance to the church of Acts? Indeed, outside of YHWH's word can we say that it exists anywhere but in our hearts? Perhaps it does if we'll open our eyes, take the blinders off and look outside the mainstream institutional church to the unnoticed fringe; to the ridiculed, persecuted and discarded.

Look close: you won't be able to identify them by their clothes, education or speech. The only way you'll be able to recognize them is by their love and the fruit of their lives. They most likely won't be meeting in rented or purchased buildings. They won't be teaching or preaching from elevated platforms and they won't acknowledge any difference between layman and clergy. **They will recognize all who truly follow Yahushua as co-laborers, joint heirs of salvation and fellow priests in the service of the kingdom. They will be a peculiar people, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood called to build YHWH's kingdom according to His specifications. They will follow His original plan with the integrity of a master builder.**

Today's institutional churches have lost this vision. They no longer follow the **original plan** of Yahushua but have instead modified it making their own improvements. They add their own specifications and ignore the plan of YHWH as if they had some special permission given them to redesign the work of Yahushua. They wonder why they can't get their people excited about ministry; many won't even review a simple Sunday school lesson and shy away from reading or praying aloud.

Why is this happening? Could it be they've lost sight of YHWH's plan for their lives; YHWH's vision? **Remember, where there is no vision the people perish** (*Proverbs. 29:18*).

Let us now consider laying down the hypocrisy; the self-serving trappings of a man made religious system to return home to the church that Yahushua built. Let us now heed that admonishment of the Lord given to the church of Ephesus in Revelation chapter two and remember from where we have fallen, repent and do the first works.

We have left our first love behind, the time has now come to return to Him and do the first works (*Revelation. 2:4-5*). It is the way of the early church not to further the cause of division by recognizing denominations which separate many of our Lord's most faithful and loving disciples from each other. This obscene practice exists and continues in direct contradiction to YHWH's **original plan** (*1 Corinthians. 1:10-13*).

In Paul's day the prideful among YHWH's flock were trying to divide into factions under the names of Cephas, Apollos and Paul; today we divide under Luther, Westley, Meno Simons, and many other names adopted for the same shameful purpose. It was wrong in Paul's day and it is wrong today!

Many of those who are held captive by denominational restraints are victims of their own natural family. We came into the institutional church through our family, which is to say, we were born into it. Because we were born into it we have become convinced of several things. First, it must be true because my family belongs to it.

Second, it must be true because our leaders are educated and know much more than we. Third, it must be true because it's what we are. Like being English or German, we were born Methodist or Baptist or something else. It is as though it can't be changed. Like your race or color; your label is your label, Right?

How much knowledge of YHWH's word do you really have? Have you really examined and compared it with your denomination's doctrine? Can you honestly say you can be objective after a lifetime of doctrinal brainwashing? Can you research each of your denominational doctrines and compare them to YHWH's word without bias?

Come on, admit it. When you hear something foreign to your denominational doctrine you immediately become defensive and assume your position to be correct even though you've never researched it in scripture. When challenged did you listen with an open heart or did you run to your leaders so they could reaffirm all that you want to believe? Did they show you that choice, out of context, verses that support your argument? Was knowing the truth as important to you as being right? Perhaps your leaders were right and what they showed you was the truth. How do you know unless you, yourself, search the scriptures with an open heart? This will be very hard to do unless you are truly guided by the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit); the Spirit of truth.

You must not try to make YHWH's word say what you want to hear but rather what YHWH's word is truly saying. You must know your bible, not just those church taught, pet doctrines, but as one who allows it to speak to them. You must put away your preconceived ideas and your hand me down denominational doctrines.

You must search for truth no matter who it offends for to do less is an offense to YHWH.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV): Study to shew thyself approved unto YHWH, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

You say, "My pastor or leader wouldn't deceive me, he or she's a godly person, and has much more knowledge than I." True, they might not willingly deceive you, but what if they, themselves, are deceived? There are many educated church leaders most of which don't agree with each other. There are educated Methodists, educated Baptists, educated Catholics, educated Pentecostals, educated evangelicals, and educated charismatics and most of them don't agree.

When leaders don't agree; when the educated teachers don't agree, where does that leave you? It leaves most people confused, so rather than trouble themselves or search for answers they simply accept whatever they're taught continuing on as their ancestors did before them.

Like poor, dumb sheep they follow blindly, not knowing where it is they're going, but hoping against hope that the one at the front wearing the bell (making the most noise) does. Too often, the one in front is not Yahushua, as hoped, but another sheep following the denominational road map rather than the narrow, clearly marked road found in YHWH's word.

Not all who attend the church or fellowship are biblically illiterate. Many know the bible well, but have learned to interpret it as their denomination does. They have learned to defend the denominational position rather than the truth. What's worse they've allowed themselves to be deceived into believing that what has been taught to them, without exception, is the truth. Their doctrinal positions are fixed, like the denominations they belong to. By this we mean, they cannot or will not change them.

A coal miner coming home in the dark is unaware of the coal dust that covers the exposed areas of his body because he can't see them. As he draws closer to the light he becomes increasingly conscious of these dirty areas. The more he sees the greater his need for cleansing.

This same principle applies to our understanding of YHWH's word. The closer we are drawn to the truth the more we realize our error. Can we ever be too clean; can we ever claim we know the whole truth?

YHWH's truth comes as an unfolding revelation to our mind and heart. The wondrous adventure of it all is that it does not come complete and packaged for instant use but a little at a time. Our understanding of it grows with our maturity. We must never feel that we have it all or even that what we think we understand is complete and correct. We must be prepared to receive new light, allowing us to expand or change what we already have. **All such additions or changes should be fully substantiated in the bible and not based on extra biblical knowledge, though often, extra biblical knowledge will support that which has been discovered in YHWH's word. Much of what a denomination or for that matter, individual church, fellowship, might teach may be good, even most of it, but whatever portion of it that remains in error will lie forever justified under a mountain of convoluted reasoning and half truths.**

Allowing believers to receive new light could result in biblical unity with others who are trying to come out of division and darkness. Who knows, if we found unity with others, the only thing that would divide us would be the brand names we've adopted. We might then be tempted to drop those also. Can you image what that would mean? It would be the end of denominationalism and the beginning of the simple loving church that Yahushua built. We might then catch a glimpse of home.

Have you ever dared to dream of a church like this, a church that feels like home? One that expects no fancy "go to meeting" Sunday clothes or pews arranged like theatre seats. I'm speaking of a church where you don't go to watch a performance put on by professional singers, musicians, and preachers; where the show is a carefully orchestrated program of religious rituals, but one whose worship is simple, unprofessional and from the heart.

Have you ever dreamed of being a participant instead of an observer? Have you dreamed of simple worship; singing songs that are themselves instruments of worship rather than just unemotionally sung? Have you longed to hear sincere, unsermonised prayer offered from a child-like heart? Have you hungered to see real sacrificial love flowing over and between the members of the assembly instead of idle conversation, gossip and vanity? What about a church where the

service continues in the hearts of its people all week long? Have you desired to be a part of a church body where each member cares more for others than themselves? **You must first find this church in your heart before you'll recognize it in its physical form.** You must first find it in faith if you expect to ever attend it in the flesh.

Are you thinking it's too good to be real? Wrong! It's true, it's possible, it's in YHWH's word right there in His **original plan** and it's being modeled today in the homes of people just like you. These people serve one another; speak the same thing, have no divisions among themselves, but are completely joined together in unity. They have the same way of thinking and hold the same opinions in spiritual matters (*1Corinthians 1:10*). Some play instruments, others sing. Some teach while others share some special message from YHWH. Each comes with their own unique gift for worship. Poems are composed, songs written and all done to glorify our Lord. In assemblies where there are no musicians, music pours out in beautiful accappella harmony. The very gifts YHWH has supplied are cultivated and returned to Him in praise and worship.

1 Corinthians 14:26 (KJV): How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

If you listen, you may hear the sweet sound of an untrained, faltering voice singing off key but with a sincerity that touches both our Lord's heart and your own. Gone are the props, the gowns and the intellectual instruments of worship. Gone are the altars, pews and stained glass. Gone are the bulletins, steeples and pulpits. All of these have been replaced by the only property the church as a body owns; one plate for unleavened bread, one cup for red wine and two candlesticks (candlesticks optional) to symbolize the presence of those who have given their life to the service of our Lord; those born under the old covenant who were born under the law but saved by grace. A candle burning for those who, like their father Abraham, became children of faith. The other candle that burns, keeps alive the memory of those who sleep, waiting for us, for the sound of the chief shepherds voice, calling us together. This flame burns for Apostles, martyrs and all those faithful believers born under the covenant of grace.

Yes, the church of Acts lives on. The church whose cornerstone is Messiah, whose foundation is the apostles and whose structure is comprised of stones, living stones placed side by side to build YHWH's spiritual house. A house not made with hands but of lives; spiritual stones. We are those spiritual stones, we are His habitation.

1 Peter 2:5 (KJV): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:16 (KJV): Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

This church is dedicated to the belief that there is but one flock and one shepherd, one Lord, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one faith, one baptism, one Elohim and Father who is above all, through all and in us all (*Ephesians 4:4-6*).

There is a new wind blowing. It began to pick up momentum, about the beginning of 1993, though its roots had much earlier beginnings. Perhaps you can remember when home schooling was something rarely heard of then, suddenly, it appeared to be everywhere. The new wind spoken of here is not home schooling; what we see coming is something far more important than home schooling with much greater spiritual implications. We are beginning to witness the re-emergence of the early church.

Like the whisper of a soft sweet song or a still small voice it beckons us to follow as it leads us home. Home, where worship is simple and sincere. Home, where there is only one standard; the word of YHWH. Home, where the sweet call of the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit) can be answered by all who have the ears to hear it. Home, where there is love and unity. Home, where YHWH's Spirit can flow freely; where gifts and talents can be shared without the need for educational credentials. Home to the small, warm spiritual family who meet together in a house. Home, where each shares their possessions and goods as everyone has need. Like an unseen spiritual dimension, they're out there; with arms outstretched waiting to welcome all who labor under the heaviness of a man made religious system.

How do you find them? Pray and seek YHWH's guidance, There are thousands of them. **Be careful to check out each before you become involved.** Do not be fooled into becoming part of a denomination that meets in a house. A good definition of a denomination is "two or more assemblies sharing the same earthly church leadership". **Each home church, like the early church should be independent, bound together only by love, unity of purpose, acceptance and most importantly, Yahushua, but not bound together by an ambitious political system.** When one home church gets too big to remain in the home it occupies, it must give birth to another, giving opportunity to other men who have been prepared to lead.

Many believe that all groups who meet as churches in homes are cults. This is false in most cases but there are some. The devil continues to plant weeds among the wheat. Test the Spirit, examine the doctrine, and see if it's faithful to the **original plan** given in the New Testament scriptures. Look carefully at the leadership; do they point you to themselves or to Yahushua? Those who magnify themselves are deceived and will try to deceive you. Be sure the enemy will try to discourage you on your quest. But keep on looking; don't give up until you've found your way home.

Most of the home churches you encounter are earnestly seeking to restore the early church but, of course, some are further along than others. There is one out there that you can help along its way; have the courage to find it, support and grow with it. Be prepared to serve before you lead. **Good leadership is born out of a servant's heart.** Finding or starting a home church could be the greatest adventure you'll ever have as a Believer; do it with diligence. When you started reading the first page of this document, you took the first step toward the early church, the first works and your first love. Reading the rest of this document will help prepare you for the spiritual journey ahead as you search for the early church. It will help you trace its shape and form as together we compare it with YHWH's **original plan**, and find our way home-
To the Father Heart of YHWH.
Where Yahushua can come and dwell within our midst.

Where the Ruach Hakodesh can move freely, filling our empty cups to overflowing rivers of Love, Joy, Peace and understanding.

Please continue this series by reading part 2.

Understanding the Names:

YHWH is the more correct Hebrew Name for God as given to Moses (Exodus 3:14).

Yahushua is the more correct Hebrew name for Jesus.

Ruach Hakodesh (Spirit of set apartness or separation) is the more correct name for Holy Spirit.