



# **I Will Build My House**

**by Matthew A. German**



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## AUTHOR'S NOTES

Scripture quotations are based primarily on the World English Bible, a translation in the public domain.

Unless otherwise indicated, bolded or underlined text in reference materials and quotes was added for emphasis by the author.

Our heavenly Father has a personal, revealed Name – Yahweh. Though occurring 6,823 times in the original Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, it has been replaced in most English versions of the Bible by a generic title – “the Lord”. Similarly, the promised Messiah of Israel has a Hebrew Name – Yahshua – which literally means “Salvation of Yah” or “Yah is Salvation”. In order to be as faithful as possible to the original Scriptures, the proper Hebrew Names and titles of Yahweh and Yahshua have been restored where applicable.

*For an in-depth study on this topic, please request our free booklet entitled “In the Name of the Father”*

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# I WILL BUILD MY HOUSE

***“Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless Yahweh keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.” (Psa. 127:1)***

## **Introduction**

Everything that our heavenly Father does is according to a pattern. We can see that on a grand scale in the wondrous beauty of Creation all around us; we can see it on a more personal level by considering the incredible complexity of the human body, from the operation of the circulatory system and the brain down to the sub-molecular level of individual strands of DNA.

Likewise, everything Yahweh does in Scripture is also according to a pattern. When He told Moses to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, He said, “see that you make it according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain” (Exod. 25:40). This wasn’t some vague outline but a very detailed “blueprint”. Moses built the tabernacle according to Yahweh’s very exacting specifications, and when he had finished it and everything was in place, that’s when “the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40:33-38).

Similarly, after his father David had given him the pattern of “all that he had by the Spirit” (1 Chron. 28:11-12), Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem. Again, it was when he had finished it and everything was in place that the glory of Yahweh filled it.

Today, Yahweh no longer dwells in temples made with hands. Instead, He dwells within His people, the Body of Messiah. Nevertheless, He still has a specific pattern by which His dwelling place must be built. What is that pattern? Are we faithfully following it? Has His glory truly filled it and are we manifesting it to the world around us?

## **“Upon This Rock...”**

Now when Yahshua came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” <sup>14</sup> They said, “Some say John the Baptist, some, Elijah, and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” <sup>15</sup> He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter

answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living Elohim<sup>a</sup>.”

<sup>17</sup> Yahshua answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> I also tell you, that you are Peter (*Petros – a rock or stone*), and upon this rock (*Petra – a large stone, mass of rock, cliff, or ledge*) I will build My assembly, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you will bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you will loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:13-19)

According to His own words, it is Yahshua who is building His assembly. We recognize that He was not saying that He would build it on Peter but rather on the spiritual revelation that Peter had just expressed: that Yahshua is both the Messiah and the Son of the living Elohim. He is building it upon that and that alone; He is not building it on politics, programs, personalities, pet doctrines, a denominational statement of belief, or any other thing. This is a foundational principle.

The apostle Paul expounded on this truth and our role in the work:

For we are Yahweh’s fellow workers; you are Yahweh’s field, you are Yahweh’s building. <sup>10</sup> According to the grace of Yahweh which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another builds on it. But let each man be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any other foundation than that which has been laid, which is Yahshua Messiah. (1 Cor. 3:9-11)

Yahshua is building His assembly through His people, and we are fellow workers or co-laborers with Him. Corporately speaking we are Yahweh’s building, His construction. Yahshua – as both the Son of Yahweh and the *Mashiakh* (Messiah or Anointed One) – is the only foundation upon which we can build. And Paul said that we must be careful how we build upon it. In other words, we cannot just build however we want. It’s imperative that we build according to Yahshua’s pattern and His specifications.

The apostle Peter also touched on this subject:

If indeed you have tasted that Yahweh is gracious: <sup>4</sup> coming to Him, a living Stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by Yahweh, precious. <sup>5</sup> You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual

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<sup>a</sup> Elohim – eh-low-HEEM. Hebrew word usually translated as ‘God’



sacrifices, acceptable to Yahweh through Yahshua Messiah. <sup>6</sup> Because it is contained in Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Cornerstone, elect, precious: He who believes in Him will not be put to shame.” (1 Pet. 2:3-6)

Yahshua is the living Stone that was rejected of men (see also Psalm 118:22, Isa. 28:16-17). We, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. This is not some sterile religious organization of men but a living habitation of His Spirit.

For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of Yahweh, <sup>20</sup> being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yahshua himself being the chief Cornerstone; <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Master; <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are built together for a habitation of Yahweh in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:18-22)

Yahshua Messiah is the “foundation of the apostles and the prophets” and the chief Cornerstone upon which the entire Body is built. Again, it is He who is doing the building, and He is not building a church denomination or a physical edifice. He is building a holy habitation among His people, and we are being “fitted together” in the Spirit.

The Greek word *ekklesia* – usually translated ‘church’ – actually means ‘an assembly of called-out ones’<sup>b</sup>. It is the Body of Messiah, the habitation of Yahweh through the Spirit, with Yahshua himself as the Head (Eph. 4:15, 5:23). Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the general assembly of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:22; Hebrews 12:23). One does not join the “church” – each person who truly believes in Yahshua is baptized into the overall Body of Messiah by the Holy Spirit.

Yahshua said that He would build His assembly, but He obviously does that through His people, “Yahweh’s fellow workers”. How exactly does He do that? What is His established order or pattern? Let’s see what the Bible has to say on the subject. As always, let us “prove all things and hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

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<sup>b</sup> The Hebrew equivalent is *qahal* and was used to refer to the assembly of ancient Israel in the wilderness

## “He Gave Some...”

The apostle Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote the following to the assembly of believers at Ephesus:

But to each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Messiah. <sup>8</sup> Therefore he says, “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to (of) men.” <sup>9</sup> Now this, “He ascended,” what is it but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the same also who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. <sup>11</sup> He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; <sup>12</sup> for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of serving, to the building up of the Body of Messiah; <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of Yahweh, to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah (Eph. 4:7-13)

We can glean several important points from this passage:

First, we see that when Yahshua ascended He himself gave gifts (v8), hence these are sometimes referred to as the “ascension gifts”. The word used here is *dómata* (plural of *doma*), which are distinct from the *charísmata* (‘charismatic’ or ‘spiritual’) gifts.

Second, these were gifts of and to men. These were gifts **to** the Body of Messiah, but they were also gifts given in the form of **of men** (people), not just disembodied anointings or spiritual endowments. In fact, Paul was making direct reference to Psalm 68:

You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive. You have received (*lakákh* – sent for) gifts among men, Yes, among the rebellious also, that Yah Elohim might dwell there. (Psa 68:18)

So the ultimate purpose of these gifts being given among men was so that Yahweh might dwell there. As we will see, they were given specifically to prepare Yahweh’s people to become His dwelling place and to provide a tangible manifestation of His presence among His people!

Third, Ephesians 4:11 makes clear that these gifts consist of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Because five specific gift offices are identified, people have often referred to them collectively as the “five-fold ministry”. Here is a simple breakdown of the Greek terms:

Apostle	<i>apóstolos</i> – a delegate, messenger, envoy, ambassador; one sent forth with orders
Prophet	<i>prophétes</i> – a foreteller; one who speaks under the inspiration of the Spirit; an interpreter of oracles or of other hidden things
Evangelist	<i>euaggelistés</i> – a bringer of good tidings
Pastor	<i>poimáne</i> – a herdsman, especially a shepherd
Teacher	<i>didáskalos</i> – an instructor, doctor, master, teacher

Finally, these gifts were given for a specific purpose (v12):

- For the: (1) perfecting of the saints,
- to the (2) work of serving,
- to the (3) building up of the Body of Messiah,
- until we all (4) attain to the unity of the faith,
- and (5) of the knowledge of the Son of Yahweh,
- (6) to a full grown man,
- (7) to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah”.

This brings up several interesting questions: are all of the saints perfected? Have we achieved the ‘unity of the faith’? Have we reached the ‘measure of the stature of the fullness of the Messiah’?

The obvious answer to these questions is ‘no’. Since the Body hasn’t yet become that ‘perfect Man’ and one of the main purposes for the giving of those gifts was to ensure that that happens, it’s apparent that we still need all of the *doma* gifts functioning within the Body of Messiah. In fact, it’s no exaggeration to say that we cannot achieve true unity of the faith and maturity until all of those gift offices – including the apostle and prophet – are functioning actively, fully, and harmoniously.

This is a bold statement and will undoubtedly rub some the wrong way, particularly those who subscribe to a ‘cessationist’ view:

“Cessationism is the doctrine that spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing ceased with the original twelve apostles. This is generally opposed to continuationism, which teaches that the Holy Spirit may bestow the spiritual gifts on persons other than the original twelve apostles at any time.”<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of cessationism is based mainly on this passage:

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will be done away with. Where there are tongues, they will cease.

Where there is knowledge, it will be done away with. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; <sup>10</sup> but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is partial will be done away with. (1 Cor. 13:8-10)

This does clearly indicate that prophecy will be done away with and tongues will cease. However, there are several problems with using this as justification for cessationism. First, the passage also says that knowledge will be done away with. Has that happened yet? Obviously not! We cannot selectively parse out that verse just to fit a doctrine.

Second, Paul was writing in the present and future tense: “we prophesy” and “tongues will cease”. So those gifts were still very much active when he wrote it, several decades after Yahshua’s ascension.

Thirdly, “that which is perfect” has not yet come, even today. This speaks of the return of Yahshua and the establishment of Yahweh’s Kingdom in all of its fullness on this earth. When that happens and our Messiah is physically dwelling among us, we will have no need of tongues, prophecy, or even ‘knowledge’. In fact, at that time the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9, Habb. 2:14).

Nevertheless, cessationism is an easy doctrine to adopt because it gives us an “out”, a way to rationalize why we don’t see more miracles, signs, and wonders: “God doesn’t do that anymore.” We conveniently overlook the fact that there are literally hundreds of creditable, verifiable reports of such things in third-world countries, including people being raised from the dead!

The doctrine also makes it easier to reject the two gift offices that tend to make people very uncomfortable: the apostle and the prophet. We will address that point a little bit later, but let’s first take a brief look at all of these gift offices in the Old Testament.

## **Old Testament Types and Shadows**

We’ll start with the easiest one of the bunch: prophets. Obviously there were many men in the Old Testament who were explicitly identified as prophets, including Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Zechariah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and many others. In fact, Aaron is even identified as Moses’ prophet (Ex. 7:1). Incidentally, prophets were also called ‘seers’ (e.g., 1 Sam. 9:9, 11, 18-19; 2 Sam. 24:11).

An apostle, as noted above, is an emissary or “sent one”. Although the word ‘apostle’ doesn’t appear in English translations of the Old

Testament, related Greek words are used liberally in the Septuagint, the original Greek translation of the Old Testament.

“The Septuagint uses *apostello* or *exapostello* some seven hundred times to translate the Hebrew *shalakh* (‘stretch out,’ ‘send’). More than the act of sending, this word includes the idea of the authorization of a messenger. The noun *apostolos* is found only in 1 Ki 14:6, where the commissioning and empowering of the prophet are clearly in mind. Thus, the Septuagint uses the *apostello* word-group to denote the authorization of an individual to fulfill a particular function, with emphasis on the one who sends, not on the one who is sent.”<sup>2</sup>

This reference highlights an important point: the authorization of the messenger. It’s not enough just to be ‘sent’. One must be an authorized agent of the sender and sent for a specific purpose.

There were individuals in the Old Testament who clearly functioned in the capacity of an emissary or “sent one”, including Abraham, who was sent by Yahweh into Canaan, and Moses.

In fact, if we think about it, Moses actually functioned in all of the *doma* ministry gift offices identified in Ephesians 4:11. He was:

- an apostle (sent one) both to Pharaoh and his own people
- a prophet, bringing a revelatory message to Israel and providing vision and direction
- an evangelist, bringing the good news of deliverance from captivity to his people Israel
- a pastor, shepherding Israel for 40 years in the wilderness
- a teacher, instructing them in the commandments, statutes, and ordinances of Yahweh

Joshua typified both an apostle and an evangelist: he was sent with the 11 on a mission to spy out the Promised Land, and then he returned, along with Caleb, bringing the “good news”! And after functioning for many years as Moses’ attendant, he eventually took over all of his roles.

The word ‘evangelist’ is not used in the Old Testament. However, we do find several interesting passages dealing with ‘good news’:

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, So is good news from a far country. (Prov. 25:25)

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, Your Elohim reigns! (Isa. 52:7)

These two verses capture the essence of the evangelist's job – to refresh the thirsty soul by publishing or proclaiming salvation (*yeshua*)! Many Old Testament prophets functioned in a missionary role for this purpose (for example, see Isa. 2:2-4; 40:1-5, 9; 42:6; 45:22; 49:6; 56:6-8; Zech. 8:23, Psalm 85). And when Yahweh routed the Syrians who had surrounded Samaria, four lepers acted as de facto 'evangelists' in bringing good news to the king (2 Kings 7:3-11). Noah is called a "preacher of righteousness" in the New Testament (2 Pet. 2:5).

Unlike apostle and evangelist, the English words 'pastor' and/or 'shepherd' are found in many places in various translations of the Old Testament. One significant prophetic passage says:

I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and multiply. <sup>4</sup> I will set up shepherds<sup>c</sup> over them, who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, says Yahweh. (Jeremiah 23:3-4)

Both Moses and David functioned as shepherds or 'pastors'. Interestingly, each was a literal shepherd of sheep before he ever became a true shepherd of men: Moses kept the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, while David kept the flocks of his father Jesse. This work undoubtedly prepared them for the greater task of leading a nation.

There were obviously many teachers in the Old Testament. Aaron was instructed by Moses to teach the people (Lev. 10:11); Ezra is explicitly identified as a teacher (Ezra 7:10, 25); and in fact the entire priesthood was supposed to teach the people the laws, statutes, and ordinances of Yahweh (Deut. 24:8, 2 Ki. 17:27-28, 2 Chron. 15:3, Neh. 8:9).

The purpose of this section was not to provide an in-depth study on each of these gift offices in the Old Testament. Rather, we just want to recognize that all of them were present long before the apostle Paul enumerated them in Ephesians 4. He was not bringing some brand new revelation. Now let's begin to delve into these gifts in the New Testament.

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<sup>c</sup> Hebrew *ro'im*, pl. of *ra'ah* (Strong's #7462) – to tend a flock, pastor (shepherd)

## The Five-Fold Ministry

The term ‘five-fold ministry’ is not found in the Bible. As we’ve seen, however, Paul did identify five distinct ministry offices – apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher – that are meant to function together. So whether we refer to them as the five-fold ministry, the ascension gifts, the “equipping ministries”, or any other term, what is most important is that we understand their purpose and relevance to the Body of Messiah.

Although most professing believers readily accept the existence of pastors, evangelists, and teachers in the Body today, relatively few groups accept that there are modern-day apostles and prophets. This has been changing in recent years, and I believe that this is a part of the end-time restoration spoken of in Acts:

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come times of refreshing from the presence of Yahweh,<sup>20</sup> and that He may send Messiah Yahshua, who was ordained for you before,<sup>21</sup> whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which Yahweh spoke long ago by the mouth of His holy prophets. (Acts 3:19-21)

This passage makes clear that, leading up to Yahshua’s return, there will be an end-time “restoration of all things” – the truths, principles, and values of the Kingdom. Since the start of the Reformation around the 14<sup>th</sup> century, many things have been restored to the Body of Messiah. In these last days that process is accelerating as more and more people are coming to understand the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath and biblical holy days, the individual priesthood of the believer, spiritual gifts in general, and the *doma* gifts in particular.

Let’s begin to flesh out our understanding of the function of these gifts. First, we should note again that all five of these offices were ordained, established, and anointed by Yahweh, not by any man. Second, they were given for a specific purpose: “for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of serving, to the building up of the Body of Messiah...” (Eph. 4:12).

Many people misread this and believe that the works of service are to be performed by the five-fold ordained leadership. But what this passage really indicates is that it is the job of leadership to equip the SAINTS – everyday believers – to do the works of service. How different would the Body of Messiah be today if everyone understood that concept, if each believer knew, understood, and was walking in His full gifting?

Because the gifts of apostle and prophet are not generally understood and/or accepted within much of the Body of Messiah, we will spend more time looking at them in comparison to the gifts of evangelist, pastor, and teacher.

## The Apostle

As mentioned earlier the word ‘apostle’ derives from the Greek *apóstolos* and simply means a delegate, ambassador, or messenger; literally, ‘he that is sent’. The following is an interesting quote on the historical use of the word:

“The word ‘apostle’ was used of men who were naval officers or merchant mariners responsible for an entire fleet of ships. It was also used to refer to an emissary or ambassador; to a fleet of ships or an expedition sent with a specific objective; to the admiral who commanded the fleet or to the colony that was founded by the admiral... Apostles were in charge of overseeing resources, motivating and managing manpower, dealing with changeable circumstances and conditions and handling enemy forces in such a way as to please their superiors... The primary attitude of a true apostle, then, must be faithfulness.”<sup>3</sup>

Walter Bauer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* states that “Judaism had an office known as apostle, and the expression may have been borrowed from Judaism to designate one especially commissioned.”<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew word for apostle is שליח (*shalíakh*).

Yahshua is identified in Scripture as the “Apostle and High Priest” of our faith (Hebr. 3:1). When He announced His ministry, He said, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Yahweh is on me, Because He anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim release to the captives, Recovering of sight to the blind, To deliver those who are crushed” (Luke 4:18). He further said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work” (John 4:34).

Notice that Yahshua based the validity of His entire ministry on the fact that He was first anointed by the Spirit and then He was sent. This is fundamental to apostolic ministry in general; if one isn’t anointed and sent, he better not go! On the other hand, if one *is* anointed and sent, then he MUST go.

Yahshua was sent for a specific purpose: to do the will of Him who sent Him and to accomplish His work, which consisted of preaching good news to the poor, healing the brokenhearted, proclaiming release to



the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and delivering those who were oppressed. One of His very first acts was to call His disciples and from them appoint twelve apostles:

It happened in these days that He went out into the mountain to pray, and He continued all night in prayer to Yahweh. <sup>13</sup> When it was day, He called His disciples, and from them He chose twelve, whom He also named apostles (Luke 6:12-13)

Note that these twelve men did not appoint themselves. Nor did Yahshua select them from among the religious leaders of the day. They weren't men of great reputation, prestige, or importance but rather common men: fishermen, tax collectors, and the like. Neither did Yahshua wait until they were 'perfect' or 'mature' ministry leaders. Though they were His disciples (*talmidim*, 'taught ones'), He actually appointed them very early on in their spiritual journey. This is jarring to our notion of proper order, but to quote a popular saying, "He doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called."

The gospel of Matthew records the event this way:

He called to Himself His twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup> Now the names of the twelve apostles are these... (Matt. 10:1-2b)

Here we see the importance of spiritual authority. When Yahshua appointed them as apostles ('sent ones'), He invested them with authority to act in His Name and do the things that He did, including casting out demons and healing every sickness and disease.

It is significant that one of His first orders of business was to appoint apostles – not prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers. That's not to suggest that these men didn't function in at least some of those capacities; at minimum they did preach the good news of the Kingdom and they did teach. But it's worth highlighting what Yahshua Himself deemed a top priority: appointing 'sent ones'!

Many people contend that there were only ever twelve apostles – those that our Messiah personally called and identified. But let's consider that in the light of Scripture.

First, while the original twelve apostles called by Yahshua held unique Kingdom positions, there were others after them that are clearly identified in the New Testament as apostles. One was Matthias, who was selected to take the place of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:24-26). And then of course there is the most obvious one: the apostle Paul! In addition,

Barnabas and James the brother of Yahshua are both explicitly identified as apostles (Acts 4:3-4, 14; Gal 1:19, Acts 15:13). Others include Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6-9), Timothy (Acts 19:22, 1 Thess. 1:1, 2:6), Titus (2 Cor. 8:23), and Silas or Silvanus (Acts 15:22, 1 Thess. 1:1, 2:6).

So what is an apostle? A good working definition is this: “One who is called and sent by [Messiah] to have spiritual authority, character, gifts and abilities to successfully reach and establish people in Kingdom truth and order, especially through founding and overseeing local [assemblies].”<sup>5</sup>

The apostle Paul obviously had a unique calling that will never be replicated. But we can learn some core principles from his ministry. First, he understood fully that he was only a minister of the Gospel by the grace of Yahweh.

I [Paul] was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of Yahweh which was given me according to the working of His power. (Eph. 3:7)

Second, Paul planted and established local assemblies over a wide geographic area. After he was no longer physically there, the day-to-day “care and feeding” of each individual assembly was undoubtedly left to others – elders raised up for that purpose – but he continued to speak into them and be a significant influence upon them through his letters and apostolic visits. The same can be said for Peter and the other apostles.

And having spent some time there [at Caesarea], he [Paul] departed and went through the region of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order, establishing all the disciples. (Acts 18:23)

I planted. Apollos watered. But Yahweh gave the increase. (1 Cor. 3:6)

Apostles are builders and carry a fathering anointing. They preach and teach the Word, plant, establish, and confirm congregations, and make disciples. They govern, equip, and empower believers to come into sonship so that they can manifest the Kingdom in their lives.

One author identifies seven key responsibilities of the apostle: planting local assemblies and laying the proper foundation; overseeing and strengthening local assemblies; developing leaders; ordaining ministries; supervising and coordinating ministries; managing crisis and continually set things in order; and networking with other ministries.<sup>6</sup>

They are visionaries: they think strategically and take a long view, serving as linchpins between multiple assemblies and across geographic

regions. They are bridge-builders, working to bring unity among different groups within the Body. Apostles work hand-in-hand with prophets. Prophets need to work with apostles and be a support to them:

Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged the brothers with many words, and strengthened them.<sup>33</sup> After they had spent some time there, they were sent back with greetings from the brothers to the apostles.<sup>34 35</sup> But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of Yahweh, with many others also.<sup>36</sup> After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's return now and visit our brothers in every city in which we proclaimed the word of Yahweh, to see how they are doing"....<sup>41</sup> And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the assemblies. (Acts 15:32-36, 41)

The concept of modern-day apostles scares and/or confuses a lot of believers. This need not be the case. As we've seen, an apostle is simply one anointed and sent with authority by Yahweh.

Like any other ministry gift, no man takes the office of apostleship to himself; he is called by Yahweh to the office. The proof of his ministry will be demonstrated by tangible fruit, and other seasoned ministry leaders will recognize one who is operating as a 'sent one' (apostle).

Also like any other gift office, an apostle is given a certain sphere of authority and responsibility. Paul recognized that he was an apostle to some and not to others.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Yahshua Messiah, our Master? Aren't you my work in the Master? <sup>2</sup> If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in Yahweh. (1 Cor. 9:1-2)

Notice that the people that Paul had impacted were the seal or proof of his apostleship.

Just because someone is 'sent', that doesn't automatically make him an 'apostle'. Not every diplomat sent overseas is an 'ambassador' authorized to speak on behalf of the government that sent him. A true apostle is sent with a very specific mandate.

## **The Prophet**

Both the Hebrew and Greek verbs 'to prophesy' – *nabá* and *propheteúo* respectively – literally mean 'to speak forth by divine

inspiration’. A prophet (*nabíy* or *prophetes*) is simply a person called and anointed by Yahweh to speak forth His divine will. Prophetic means ‘of or pertaining to a prophet or prophecy’.

“To call someone an apostle or prophet is not to claim that his or her speech is divinely ordained to be infallible... Because so many Christians today have been influenced, especially by dispensational thinking, the [Ekklesia] has a desperate need for Scriptural teaching that restores the prophets and apostles back to the original position, power and purpose that God ordained for them in His [Ekklesia].”<sup>7</sup>

There were prophetic people in the New Testament before Yahshua’s ministry, including:

- Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist (see Luke 1:67-80)
- Simeon at the dedication of Yahshua (Luke 2:25-35)
- Anna (Luke 2:36-38)

There were also many individuals who were specifically identified as prophets after Yahshua’s ascension:

- Prophets, including Agabus, came down from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 11:27-30). The disciples acted on his word.
- There were prophets in the congregation at Antioch, including Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul (Acts 13:1-2)
- Judah and Silas were prophets who exhorted and confirmed the brethren (Acts 15:32)
- Philip’s four daughters prophesied in Caesarea; Agabus, the prophet, came from Judea and brought a prophetic word for Paul (Acts 21:8-14)

Of course this is all a fulfillment of the prophecy given by the prophet Joel and quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says Yahweh, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Yes, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days, I will pour out My Spirit, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:17)

Prophets operate through dreams, visions, words of knowledge, words of wisdom, and the discerning of spirits. Like the other ministry gifts, prophets are called of Yahweh and chosen by Yahshua. No one

takes the office of prophet to himself.

No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from Yahweh, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

Prophecy, stated simply, is speaking the will or purpose of Yahweh as moved by the Holy Spirit.

“Prophesying is expressing God’s heart, thoughts, desires, intents and specific words at the proper time in the right place to the person or people God has ordained to receive His message.” <sup>8</sup>

Prophecy can be foretelling – accurately predicting the future<sup>d</sup>. But it can also be forth-telling, providing direction and revealing to us Yahweh’s present priorities in our lives (Acts 16:6-7, 21:11). As well, it can shed light on the mysteries of our lives and make sense of our circumstances.

One interesting example of personal, directional prophecy in the Old Testament can be seen in an encounter between David and Nathan:

It happened, when David lived in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of Yahweh dwells under curtains. <sup>2</sup> Nathan said to David, Do all that is in your heart; for Elohim is with you. <sup>3</sup> It happened the same night, that the word of Elohim came to Nathan, saying, <sup>4</sup> Go and tell David my servant, Thus says Yahweh, You shall not build Me a house to dwell in... (1 Chron. 17:1-4)

This passage is interesting for several reasons: first it shows that, while David was a man after Yahweh’s own heart and was the king, Yahweh used the office of prophet to speak to him. Second, it demonstrates that Nathan wasn’t perfect or infallible in his role as a prophet. He initially told David that Yahweh was with him to do whatever was in his heart (i.e., build a temple for Yahweh). Later that same night he received correction and was humble (and brave) enough to go to the king and rectify his error. We know in part and prophesy in part (1 Cor. 13:9). Third, we know that David received this correction and didn’t try to “make something happen” outside of Yahweh’s will and timing. He passed along the pattern of the temple – which he received by the Spirit – to his son Solomon, who ultimately did build the temple.

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<sup>d</sup> Predict means “to declare or tell in advance”, literally “to say before”

What about prophets and prophesying within the local congregation? In this context the general purpose is individual and corporate edification, exhortation, and consolation (1 Cor. 14:3-4). We should note that the apostle Paul PRESUMED that the believers in Corinth understood that prophets were still alive and well and actively functioning within the New Testament assembly:

Let the prophets speak, two or three, and let the others discern.  
<sup>30</sup> But if a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first keep silent. <sup>31</sup> For you all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be exhorted. <sup>32</sup> The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, <sup>33</sup> for Yahweh is not an Elohim of confusion, but of peace, As in all the assemblies of the saints. (1 Cor. 14:29-33)

To a certain extent, each of us is called to be prophetic. In fact, according to this passage, we can ALL prophesy – within the constraints of proper congregation protocol (v31). But just because someone prophesies, this does not make him/her a prophet. Like all of the other ascension gifts, a person must be called to the office of prophet. And like any other gift, they will be known by their fruit.

Scholars believe that this epistle was written around 56-57 CE. So men recognized as prophets were still operating in the local assembly more than 25 years after Yahshua's death, resurrection, and ascension!

Some have tried to spiritualize this away and say that this passage just refers to anointed or inspired teachers, but that would require us to ignore the dozens of other places in the New Testament where that exact same Greek word, *prophétes*, specifically refers to men functioning in the traditional role of a prophet – including many references to prophets from the Old Testament!

Paul went on to give this admonishment:

If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him recognize the things which I write to you, that they are the commandment of the Master. <sup>38</sup> But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. <sup>39</sup> Therefore, brothers, desire earnestly to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking with other tongues. (1 Cor. 14:37-39)

How many modern assemblies function according to this pattern? How many allow the free operation of *all* of the spiritual gifts?

The reality is that prophets do have a vital role to play within the Body of Messiah today:

Surely Adonai Yahweh will do nothing<sup>e</sup>, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7)

Yahweh still has much to do in the earth. If we believe this Scripture then we must accept that He will reveal His “secrets” through His servants, the prophets. Not only will prophets help us to unlock and understand Bible prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled, but they will also provide vision and direction, individually and corporately.

The Scriptures provide strong warnings against false prophets and those who prophesy out of their own hearts (Deut. 13:1-5, Ezekiel 13:1-9, 2 Peter 2:1-3, etc.). The apostle John gave this admonition:

Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of Yahweh, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

Why would we have to be watchful for the counterfeit if there weren't the genuine?! It is satan's modus operandi to try to corrupt or counterfeit anything that Yahweh does. If there are false teachers, false shepherds, and false evangelists, then there will also be false apostles and false prophets. But the counterfeit in no way invalidates the genuine. A counterfeit \$100 bill is only effective because there are real \$100 bills. No one counterfeits a \$79 or even a \$99 bill! We must test the spirits, whether they are of Yahweh, rejecting those that are false. But we must also receive the true prophets, those that Yahweh sends.

“...believe in Yahweh your Elohim, so shall you be established; believe His prophets, so shall you prosper<sup>f</sup>.” (2 Chron. 20:20)

This is part of the reason why the modern *ekklesia* is not being established or prospering the way that it should: many don't truly believe in Yahweh's ways, rejecting the very existence of modern-day apostles and prophets! Apostles are meant to help to establish to Yahweh a people; by believing His prophets we are meant to prosper – to break out of old mindsets and push forward into new frontiers! Paul gave this exhortation:

Don't quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Don't despise prophecies. <sup>21</sup> Test all things, and hold firmly that which is good. (1 Thess. 5:19-21)

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<sup>e</sup> Literally “do or make no word”

<sup>f</sup> Hebrew tsa-LAKH – to push forward, break out, go over, prosper

Hand in hand with the apostle, the prophet is a foundational ministry to the Body, with Yahshua Himself being the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-20). The prophet is the visionary, the seer, to the local body, and provides unique, accurate, and timely insight into the will and purpose of Yahweh. The work of a prophet may be summarized as follows:

- To guide (1 Sam. 9:6, 19, 20; Acts 13:1-4)
- To reprove sin and wrongdoing (1 Sam. 24:11-15, Matt. 14:1-10)
- To instruct in the things of Yahweh (2 Ki. 22:3-17)
- To give warning (Jer. 26:1-15, Acts 21:10-14)
- To edify, exhort, comfort (1 Cor. 14:3)

You shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh: If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law, which I have set before you, <sup>5</sup> to listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I send to you, even rising up early and sending them, but you have not listened; <sup>6</sup> then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. (Jer. 26:4-6)

Where are the true prophets of today?

## The Evangelist

An evangelist (*euaggelistés*), simply stated, is one who announces good news. Another Greek word used in the New Testament that conveys a similar meaning is *kérux* (KAY-roox), ‘preacher’, a herald or proclaimer of the Word. Evangelists/preachers are vitally important to the continued propagation of the faith:

“Whoever will call on the name of Yahweh will be saved.” <sup>14</sup> How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? How will they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> And how will they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:13-15)

Evangelists are sent by Yahweh, but they fulfill a different role than apostles. Their primary function is to call sinners to be reconciled to Yahweh through the preaching of the gospel; they don’t typically plant local assemblies, establish doctrine, or even make disciples of new converts.

Interestingly, we only find two specific references in the New



Testament to men operating in this office: “Philip the evangelist” (Acts 21:8) and possibly Timothy, whom the apostle Paul exhorted to “do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5). Nevertheless, the original apostles all also functioned as evangelists – they all were anointed to preach the Gospel! We will address this concept of functioning in multiple gift offices in greater detail later.

People cannot hear the message of the Kingdom without evangelists who preach that good news, and therefore they cannot believe in order to be saved. Real evangelists are necessary in every generation. It is troubling that there seem to be so few true evangelists functioning within the Body of Messiah in the Western world today. That must change!

## The Pastor

The word ‘pastor’ carries a very specific connotation to most people, depending on their religious upbringing and past experiences. That connotation may or may not accurately reflect the true biblical office. Pastor is actually just an archaic word for shepherd, deriving from the Old French *pastur*, which has its roots in the Latin *pascere*, “to lead to pasture, set to grazing, cause to eat.”

The word *poimén*<sup>g</sup> (pastor/shepherd) occurs a total of 17 times in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. In all but one case it is either a direct reference or an allusion to Yahshua Himself. It is used exactly one time (Eph. 4:11) to refer to the ministry office within the assembly! By comparison, *apóstolos* (apostle) occurs 80 times in the New Testament and only refers specifically to Yahshua once (Hebr. 3:1).

The modern ‘church’ is undeniably pastor-centric. Interestingly, we never see a ‘pastor’ in the New Testament as the chief overseer of a local assembly. This statement is in no way intended to diminish the importance of pastors. But it is meant to highlight the great disparity between the biblical model and the reality that we see in the Body of Messiah today.

The main function of pastors is to “tend the sheep.” They are generally and primarily concerned with the health, care, and well-being of a single flock and with the day-to-day details of the lives of individual sheep. This harkens back to the agrarian roots of the term:

“The tasks of a Near Eastern shepherd were: to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep; to defend the sheep from attackers; to heal

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<sup>g</sup> Strong’s #4166, pronounced *poy-MANE*

the wounded and sick sheep; to find and save lost or trapped sheep; to love them, sharing their lives and so earning their trust.”<sup>9</sup>

Yahshua referred to ‘shepherds’ on several occasions and He did tell Peter three times to “tend My sheep” (John 21:15-17). But Peter was an apostle, not a pastor in the contemporary sense.

A part of the end-time restoration is the re-establishment of the biblical role of pastors:

“Return, O backsliding children,” says Yahweh; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds (*ro-ím*) according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jer. 3:14-15)

Here we see that shepherds (pastors) are closely associated with imparting knowledge and understanding – i.e., teaching. In fact, some tend to see the *doma* gifts of pastor and teacher as a single gift: pastor-teacher. While this can be the case, it is not necessarily the norm. Many biblical teachers are simply not gifted as pastors. Similarly, although pastors can teach the basics of the faith, they might not have the unction to delve into the deeper things of Scripture and clearly and effectively communicate those things to others.

## The Teacher

Many people can teach, but not everyone is a ‘teacher’ in the biblical sense. Like the other *doma* gifts, a teacher is someone whom Yahweh has specifically called and anointed for that office. Jacob (‘James’) said “Let not many of you be teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive heavier judgment.” (Jam.3:1). This is not something to be taken lightly!

True biblical teachers are committed to teaching sound doctrine. They are focused on the details but don’t teach just for the sake of sharing knowledge; they teach so that believers understand the practical application of the Word to their daily lives.

Paul wrote this exhortation to Timothy:

Preach the word; be urgent in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not listen to the sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap up for themselves teachers

after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside to fables. (2 Tim. 4:2-4)

Similarly the apostle Peter issued this stern warning about false teachers:

But there also arose false prophets among the people, as among you also there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master who bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> Many will follow their destructive ways, and as a result, the way of the Truth will be maligned. <sup>3</sup> In covetousness will they exploit you with deceptive words: whose sentence now from of old doesn't linger, and their destruction will not slumber. (2 Pet. 2:1-3)

There are certainly many false teachers in the world today. That makes it even more abundantly clear how much we need true teachers within the Body of Messiah!

The New Testament pattern for assembly oversight, under the headship of Yahshua Messiah, is this “five-fold” ministry, consisting of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. This is not a strict top-down hierarchy or authoritarian structure, but rather a cooperative coalition. They are positions of service and those called to these offices are chosen by Yahweh’s sovereign will and meet certain necessary qualifications. They have the responsibility of preaching, teaching, training, equipping, encouraging, exhorting, directing, and providing oversight and correction to the Body of Messiah.

The five-fold ministry has been likened to a hand, with each of the fingers representing one of the *doma* gift offices. It is the “hand of blessing” to the Body of Messiah. How well can a hand function if one or more of the fingers are missing? How easy would it be to do even simple, mundane tasks like buttoning a shirt or picking something up if you couldn’t use your thumb or index finger? The point is that Yahweh designed our physical bodies, including our hands, in a very specific way. He has done the same with His spiritual Body, the *ekklesia*.

### Summary of the Five-Fold Ministry Gift Offices

Gift	Role	Description
Apostle	governs	fathering, equipping, correcting, and giving oversight to the life and work of the assembly
Prophet	guides	providing vision and direction to the Body; encouraging and exhorting Yahweh’s people to do the work of the Kingdom

Evangelist	gathers	preaching the gospel and calling sinners to be reconciled to Yahweh
Pastor	guards	nurturing, feeding, guiding, and protecting Yahweh's people
Teacher	grounds	expounding the Word and teaching Yahweh's people how to live in the Kingdom

Again, let's be very clear: none of this takes away our individual responsibility to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good! No man can save us:

Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. (Psalm 146:3)

Our salvation is in Yahshua alone. The five-fold ministry is meant to point the way to Him and help us to grow into spiritually-mature people; in short, to become like Him!

### **Elders, Overseers, and Attendants**

Any good organization functions best when leadership is decentralized to the lowest possible level. Micro-management stifles initiative, creativity, and a willingness to try new approaches and test new ideas.

This modern concept is actually exemplified in the Old Testament: Moses ordained Aaron and his sons (see Exodus 28–29), as well as seventy elders (Num. 11:16). We also see 'captains' of thousands, hundreds, and tens (Num. 31:14, 48-54; Deut. 1:15; 2 Sam. 18:1, etc.).

Yahweh is an Elohim of order and does not change (Mal. 3:6). And the basic precepts of the Kingdom don't change. As we've already seen, one of Yahshua's first acts at the start of His earthly ministry was to appoint twelve apostles. After His ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, as the fledgling Body experienced rapid growth it was necessary for a leadership structure to be established.

When (Paul and Barnabas) had preached the gospel to that city [Derbe], and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of Yahweh. <sup>23</sup> When they had appointed elders for them in every assembly, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to Yahweh, on whom

they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23)

Notice also Paul's instructions to Titus, whom he saw as a ministry son and who is considered the first overseer ('bishop') of the congregation at Crete:

To Titus, my true child according to a common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from Yahweh the Father and the Master Yahshua Messiah our Savior. I left you in Crete for this reason, that you would set in order the things that were lacking, and appoint **elders** in every city, as I directed you (Titus 1:4-5)

The apostle Paul obviously felt that the appointing of elders in the local assembly was extremely important, and he went on to identify specific qualifications based not on biological age but on spiritual maturity and demonstrated character (see verses 6-9, as well as 1 Tim. 3:1-7). He issued this admonition to the elders of the assembly at Ephesus:

Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the assembly of the Master which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

There are basic qualifications for any position of authority in the secular world. To serve as an officer in the military, for instance, one must exhibit certain key character traits, as well as meet age and educational requirements. The same principle applies within the Body of Messiah. Ministry positions are "offices of trust" – Yahweh is entrusting authority in people. The question we must ask is this: do we trust in those whom He has entrusted? This is not trusting in a man for salvation; it is trusting in him as a vessel chosen by Yahweh to teach, train, and equip us to fulfill our calling.

The word 'elder' in the New Testament is a general term for those in the five-fold ministry. In fact, "apostles and elders" are mentioned together several times (see Acts 15:2-6). Elders and overseers ('bishops') provide general congregation administration and oversight, ensuring that things are done properly.

They are assisted by deacons ('attendants'), who also meet certain minimum qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Deacons serve – they are not key decision makers in the local assembly. In fact, nowhere in Scripture do we see a "deacon board" or its equivalent given the power to hire and fire a pastor or elder. Elders choose deacons, not the other way around!

In Acts 6:1-6 the apostles appointed seven men for special administrative duties within the local assembly. The underlying Greek word for ‘serve’ here is *diakonéo* (v6), from *diákonos*, from which we get the English word ‘deacon’. By way of comparison, recall that in the Old Testament David appointed the Levites to specific roles in the temple service (1 Chr. 23:1-6), and he and Samuel ordained ‘porters’ (2 Chr. 9:22, 28, 32-33).

Leadership is important. As noted Paul, Peter, and the other apostles appointed elders in every city and recognized their importance in the life of the local assembly. They wouldn’t have put such an emphasis on this if they were irrelevant or optional.

Yet many people today seem to reject the very concept of spiritual authority invested in any man. They perceive the local assembly as a democracy where the majority rules, or they just want a free-form Bible study and the freedom to come and go as they please. That is not the model that we see in Scripture.

Bible study is great and consensus in the local body is wonderful, but Yahweh’s Kingdom never has been and never will be a democracy! And if we reject His ordained order, we are in effect rejecting Him. Aaron and Miriam got themselves into a lot of trouble when they starting questioning the anointing and decision-making of Moses<sup>h</sup> (Num. 12:1-11).

And when the going got tough and the ancient Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron, Yahweh equated it with murmuring against Him (Num. 14:2-4, 26). The people actually wanted to replace Moses with another leader and return to Egypt (v4)! Later the prophet Samuel highlighted the principle that “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and *teraphim*” (1 Sam. 15:23). This is not something to be taken lightly!

This does not mean that we blindly follow any man. But neither should we reject the very concept of congregation government. We must discern by the Spirit who Yahweh has ordained to lead and then come into alignment with His divine order.

## **A Few Words about Ministry Titles**

A lot of people get hung up on ministry titles. Yahshua said this regarding the scribes and Pharisees of His day:

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<sup>h</sup> Biologically speaking, Moses was their “little brother”!

All their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad, enlarge the fringes of their garments, <sup>6</sup> and love the chief place at feasts, the chief seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi, Rabbi’ by men. <sup>8</sup> But don’t you be called ‘Rabbi,’ for one is your teacher, the Messiah, and all of you are brothers. <sup>9</sup> Call no man on the earth your father, for one is your Father, He who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Neither be called masters, for one is your Master, the Messiah. <sup>11</sup> But he who is greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup> Whoever will exalt himself will be humbled, and whoever will humble himself will be exalted. (Matt. 23:5-12)

As with the rest of Scripture, context is key. If we examine the context of this passage, we discover that Yahshua was dealing with the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees and their desire to be exalted in the eyes of the people (see verses 1-5). They wanted to be seen and praised by men. They loved being recognized in public and called ‘Rabbi’ in front of other people. So the focus of this instruction dealt with their heart-attitude. If we were to take it literally, we would have to dispense not only with the titles of ‘Rabbi’ and ‘Master’ but also ‘father’; we wouldn’t even be able to refer to our earthly dad as ‘father’. Yet we know that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are all referred to as ‘father’ in Scripture. Elisha called Elijah “my father” (2 Ki. 2:12), and the king of Israel did the same to Elisha (2 Ki. 6:21). Paul claimed to be Timothy’s spiritual father (1 Cor. 4:15). The key issue, then, is not about using or not using titles, but the hearts of those involved.

Paul specifically identified himself as an apostle at the beginning of 9 of his 13 epistles. Lest we presume that he was thinking more highly of himself than he ought, we should note that Peter did the same in both of his epistles. In his letter to the Galatian assembly, Paul began this way:

Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Yahshua Messiah, and Yahweh the Father, who raised Him from the dead) (Gal. 1:1)

Paul was bold to make known that His calling was not based upon a man or group of men but the will of Yahweh through Yahshua. He was not being arrogant or prideful. In fact, he also said this about himself:

For I am the least of the apostles, who is not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the assembly of Yahweh. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of Yahweh I am what I am. (1 Cor. 15:9-10a)

He was acutely aware that he wasn't worthy to be called an apostle. Yet he had come to grips with the fact that, by Yahweh's grace, he was what he was. He wasn't going to deny or shy away from his calling just because it might make others uncomfortable.

So what of this issue of ministry titles? Part of it comes down to respect and honor.

I saw an interview not long ago with singer-actor Pat Boone. He was speaking about his friendship with Ronald Reagan that went back to long before Mr. Reagan became Governor of California, much less President of the United States. Mr. Boone said that after he was elected to that office, though they remained very good personal friends, he always addressed him as "Mr. President". He did this because he was showing respect both for the office and for the man who had been selected to lead the nation.

This is a sound principle. When we interact with a physician or policeman, we refer to him/her as "Doctor" or "Officer". If we address a judge, we refer to him as "Judge" or "Your Honor". And in the military we address people by their rank. Yet for some reason many believers, subconsciously or deliberately, don't want to carry that same respect over into the local assembly. Nevertheless, we are instructed in Scripture to render honor to whom honor is due:

Render therefore to all their due: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Rom. 13:7)

The use of a ministry title is one simple means of rendering honor, of showing respect and acknowledging the anointing under which a person operates, of recognizing his years of dedication and service. It is not putting someone up on a pedestal.

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and in teaching. (1 Tim. 5:17)

Well-ruling elders, especially those who labor in the Word and in teaching, are to be accorded double honor. This deals with more than just using ministry titles, but it would certainly include that.

We also have this interesting statement from Yahshua:

He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him that sent Me. <sup>41</sup> He who receives (*dékh-o-mai*) a



prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward: and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. (Matt. 10:40-41)

What does it mean to receive someone? The Greek word *dékhomai* (Strong's #1209) means "to take with the hand; to take up, receive; to receive or grant access to a visitor." It is more than simply receiving a man; it is receiving the anointing under which he operates. Yahshua is saying that if we don't properly receive a prophet or righteous man we cannot receive the reward or blessing that he carries. In fact, the way we receive a man of Yahweh speaks to how much we value what he carries. This is a simple concept but its implications are profound! For instance, if we perceive a particular ministry leader as a mere "event coordinator" or the "facility custodian" of a place of worship, we cannot possibly receive the full benefit of the anointing he carries.

This applies not only to us as individuals but also to entire ministries and assemblies: if we don't properly receive apostles and prophets, then our assemblies and ministries cannot receive the 'reward' (blessing) that they carry – which is ultimately meant to produce a mature Body! In short, we are stunting our own spiritual growth!

When we ask Yahweh to do something in our lives or our ministries, very often He sends a man. But too often we promptly reject the man because we don't recognize that Yahweh sent him!

Remember your leaders, men who spoke to you the word of Yahweh, and considering the results of their conduct, imitate their faith... <sup>17</sup> Obey those who have the rule over you, and submit to them, for they watch on behalf of your souls, as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy, and not with groaning, for that would be unprofitable for you. (Hebr. 13:7, 17)

We are to remember and obey those who have spiritual authority over us in the assembly, imitating their faith according to the results of their conduct and submitting to them.

## **A Diversity of Spiritual Gifts**

Spiritual gifts are vitally important to the Body of Messiah, yet relatively few modern 'churches' actually foster the pursuit and embrace the usage of all of the spiritual gifts. Unfortunately, a lot of believers haven't been taught much, if anything, about them, what theirs are, or how they function. Ironically, the well-known passage on spiritual gifts

found in 1 Corinthians 12 begins this way:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant... <sup>4</sup> Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are diversities of administrations, and the same Master. <sup>6</sup> There are diversities of workings, but the same Elohim, who works all things in all. <sup>7</sup> But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profit of all. (1 Cor. 12:1, 4-7)

Yahweh doesn't want His people to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. We are to know what the gifts are, how they are supposed to be used, and what specific gifts we have been given, in order to profit or benefit all.

This passage makes clear that there are different gifts, different manifestations (administrations), and different workings of those gifts (v4-6). What does this mean?

'Different gifts' is fairly straightforward: healing is obviously a different gift than prophesying or the discerning of spirits (see verses 8-10). Different 'administrations', on the other hand, suggests a particular gift being used in different ways by different people. For example, two men who are anointed to teach might teach in very different ways. This does not in any way invalidate either man's gifting; it is simply a unique expression of what Yahweh Himself has placed within that individual.

'Different workings' indicates that spiritual gifts also can function in different ways in different circumstances. For instance, throughout His earthly ministry Yahshua healed people in many different ways – sometimes He laid hands on someone, sometimes He just spoke a word, and on at least one occasion he put mud in someone's eye! All of these were valid expressions or 'workings' of His singular gift of healing.

It is vital that we understand this concept, especially when it comes to receiving others who might operate in their gifting in ways that are different from ours. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, so we must judge by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13-14), not according to what makes sense to our carnal minds or that with which we're comfortable.

Paul further emphasized that all of the spiritual gifts are distributed by Yahweh at His sovereign discretion through the Holy Spirit (see v7, 11, 18-24). He concludes with this:

Now you are the Body of Messiah, and members individually. <sup>28</sup> Yahweh has set some in the assembly, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracle workers, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, and various kinds of languages. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all miracle workers? <sup>30</sup> Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak

with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But desire earnestly the best gifts. Moreover, I show a most excellent way to you. (1 Cor. 12:27-31)

This makes clear that, while we're all members of one Body, we don't all have the same gifts, offices, or functions within the Body. Yahweh has set some in the assembly, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, etc. There is a divine order.

Paul then asks the rhetorical question "are all...?" The clear answer is no, of course not. Not everyone is an apostle, a prophet, a teacher, etc. Not everyone is called and gifted to lead. He expands upon this concept in his epistle to the Roman assembly:

For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members don't have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Messiah, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, if prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; <sup>7</sup> or service, let us give ourselves to service; or he who teaches, to his teaching; <sup>8</sup> or he who exhorts, to his exhorting: he who gives, let him do it with liberality; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom. 12:4-8)

Again, there are many members in the Body, but they don't all have the same function; we're one body in Messiah yet individual members of it. This is a simple concept but seems hard for many people to grasp. We tend to try to fit everyone into a certain box. When someone doesn't fit neatly into a particular box, we don't know what to do with them.

Most also have not been taught that every believer has a different 'mix' of gifts. For instance, as we saw earlier, Moses, Joshua, and others in the Old Testament functioned in multiple gift offices. Yahshua fulfilled all of the five-fold ministry offices. John the Baptist, His forerunner, functioned as a prophet, evangelist, and teacher<sup>i</sup>. Paul was an apostle, a preacher (evangelist), and a teacher of the Gentiles (1 Tim. 2:7, 2 Tim. 2:11).

How do we understand this concept of a 'gift mix'? If we think about a pie cut into multiple slices of various sizes, those slices represent our individual gifts, but the entire pie represents our overall 'gift mix'. So, even two people with an identical set of gifts will usually have a

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<sup>i</sup> John had disciples or 'taught ones', which indicates that he was teaching them and they were following him

different mix or blend of those gifts, ones that are stronger in one person than another.

In the context of the local assembly, it's important to understand that a properly functioning "five-fold" ministry does not necessarily mean five individuals – it could be fewer (or more) with a diverse mix of *doma* gifts among them. For example, there could be one person who functions under the mantle of apostle-teacher, while another operates as a prophet-evangelist. We need to bear this in mind in receiving from their anointing: if we receive a man as a pastor or teacher but don't recognize that he also happens to be an apostle, we limit the spiritual influence and strengthening that he could bring to our life!

## A Hard Question

We've seen the biblical pattern of ministry leadership. Now we come to the hard question: is that the current pattern that we see in the modern "church"? The answer clearly is 'No'. As mentioned earlier the vast majority of churches, of whatever denominational stripes, are pastor-centric. In fact, most don't even accept the validity of the apostolic or prophetic offices.

This wasn't a hard question because it was difficult to come up with an answer but rather because of what that answer implies – that change is required in order for us to come into alignment with the Scriptures!

The reality is that the pastor cannot do it alone – and was never meant to do so. As we've seen the biblical role of pastor has a very specific focus. Today the vast majority of pastors are stretched too thin, taking on more than the Father ever intended, and/or are operating beyond their anointing – they're doing things that are not really in the biblical job description simply because "someone has to do it". A man equipped as a pastor cannot do the work of an apostle, any more than a surgeon could work effectively as a rocket scientist or a lawyer as an accountant.

Because of these things, pastors in the Body today are reaping the inevitable personal, physical, and emotional consequences, which recent statistics<sup>10</sup> bear out:

- 1700-1800 pastors leave the ministry per month, due largely to ministry burnout, contention in their congregations, or moral failure
- 80% of those who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years

- 80% of pastors and 84% of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their roles as pastors
- 50% of pastors feel unable to meet the needs of the job, experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry

These numbers are striking and they indicate a serious underlying problem. It's not something that can be remedied with a band-aid fix, like the occasional weekend retreat, or even through a dedicated pastoral care group that is dedicated to "ministering to the ministers". And while the appointing of 'associate pastors' and deacons to shoulder some of the burden can help, it still doesn't address the underlying chronic condition: we are not building and operating according to the biblical pattern!

The only solution is nothing short of a total reformation in the way we approach ministry and the building of His house. This may be the greatest "reformation" of all!

## **Paradigm Shift**

A paradigm is an established way of thinking. In the case of 'church' leadership and structure, we are dealing with an entrenched mindset and hundreds of years of men's traditions. In order to get back to the biblical pattern of leadership within the Body of Messiah, this will require a complete paradigm shift.

Ministry leaders, of whatever type, will need to be willing to give up their 'fiefdoms', relinquishing some control and forsaking some personal agendas, and engage with and embrace men who represent other ministry gifts. In particular, they will need to fully receive true apostles and prophets.

Speaking of the individual parts of the Body of Messiah, the apostle Paul said, "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). Every part of the Body is needful, and that includes all of the *doma* gifts. The pastors, evangelists, and teachers cannot say to the apostles and prophets, "We have no need of you." Nor vice versa.

In fact, every local assembly requires regular, consistent impartation from ALL of these ministry gifts in order for it to be healthy, vibrant, and balanced. One key reason that so many congregations continue to produce "baby believers" who never mature is because they receive impartation exclusively from the pastoral, evangelistic and (sometimes) teaching gifts. If we take Ephesians 4:11-13 at face value, it is apparent

that a mature Body of Messiah can NEVER be produced without the apostolic and prophetic ministries.

This does not mean that we should just accept any Tom, Dick, or Harry who claims to be an apostle or a prophet. We will know them by their fruit and they will uphold a high standard of righteousness, holiness, and truth. But we also must realize that they won't be perfect.

We hold evangelists, pastors, and teachers to a higher standard, but do we expect them never to make a mistake or err in judgment? Neither Peter, Paul, nor any of the other 1<sup>st</sup> century apostles were perfect men, even years after walking with Messiah! By the impossible standards of some in the modern Body, they all would have been branded as false apostles! We would do well to bear this Scripture in mind:

Yahweh chose the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame those who are wise. Yahweh chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and Yahweh chose the lowly things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the things that are not, that He might bring to nothing the things that are (1 Cor. 1:27-28)

The vast majority of pastors today are dedicated men whose greatest desire is to serve the people who have been entrusted to their care. They strive to feed, protect, and lead them, and they rightly feel very protective of them.

While many local assemblies have been planted by men who people call 'pastors', scripturally speaking it is the role of apostles to plant, establish, and strengthen local assemblies. In some cases this might simply be a matter of semantics – men operating under an apostle's mantle and authority but who, due to tradition, religious convention, or convenience, are referred to as "Pastor". We shouldn't get too hung up on titles or nomenclature, but it is important for us to recognize that these are different gift offices with unique – and complementary – functions.

As previously stated, pastors are primarily concerned with the health, care, and well-being of a single local assembly, with meeting the daily needs of people. Apostles are more concerned with the health, care, and well-being of the entire Body of Messiah in a given region; in addition, they are committed to training and equipping people to live as overcomers and world-changers. This is an important distinction, because we can nurture people and meet their needs without ever truly changing their lives.

Will we continue to cling to the old way of doing things, the way with which everyone is comfortable and familiar, or will we forsake the

‘sacred cow’ of denominational thinking and come into alignment with the Word and the Spirit?

By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established. (Prov. 24:3)

## Consider Your Ways

The Great Commission is to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). If we are to be Yahshua’s hands and feet in the earth as He builds His house, we must use His plans and blueprints, the materials He provides, and His method of construction. After all, He is the Owner, Chief Architect, General Contractor, and Foreman. It is time for us to consider our ways.

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, the Word of Yahweh came by Haggai, the prophet, to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, <sup>2</sup> “This is what Yahweh of Hosts says: These people say, ‘The time hasn’t yet come, the time for Yahweh’s house to be built.’”

<sup>3</sup> Then the Word of Yahweh came by Haggai, the prophet, saying, <sup>4</sup> “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies waste? (Haggai 1:1-4)

This paints a profound prophetic picture of the current state of the Body of Messiah. Most professing believers seem comfortable with the status quo and have a *laissez-faire* attitude toward the work of the Kingdom, with relatively few who are truly and actively committed to seeing Yahweh’s house built.

At the same time, however, there is a growing discontent among many who are not satisfied with business-as-usual Christianity. In fact, in recent years there has been a mass exodus<sup>11</sup> from the majority of mainstream denominations as people seek something more, something deeper. These are people who hunger and thirst for truth and/or who have become fed up with church politics, programs, and personalities.

Now therefore this is what Yahweh of Hosts says: Consider your ways. <sup>6</sup> You have sown much, and bring in little. You eat, but you don’t have enough. You drink, but you aren’t filled with drink. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm, and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes in it.” <sup>7</sup> This is what Yahweh of Hosts says: “Consider your ways.” (v5-7)

As a corporate entity the Western ‘church’ is having little measurable impact on people’s lives. We’ve sowed much and reaped relatively little. Why?

To answer that we’ve got to take to heart the prophet’s exhortation: “consider your ways.” In other words, evaluate your methods. After all, it’s been said that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. If what we’ve been doing hasn’t worked and isn’t working, then something obviously needs to change.

Every ministry leader must have the maturity to step back and, with cool detachment, evaluate the fruits of his labors and ask himself: “Is what I’ve been doing actually working? Is it what the Father actually told me to do?”

But this is also true corporately speaking. We must evaluate the reasons for our current state. There are several contributing factors that we might consider, including: a limited ability to actually hear and walk by the Spirit, as well as the quenching of the Spirit with respect to spiritual gifts.

The single biggest reason for our current state, however, is that we’re not building according to Yahweh’s pattern! If we don’t follow His blueprints, we shouldn’t be surprised by the results.

What is the remedy? In simplest terms it is, as always, to return to His ways. When all else fails, read the instructions!

Go up to the mountain, bring wood, and build the house. I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified,” says Yahweh. <sup>9</sup> “You looked for much, and, behold, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says Yahweh of Hosts, “Because of My house that lies waste, while each of you runs to his own house.” <sup>10</sup> Therefore for your sake the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. <sup>11</sup> I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on that which the ground brings forth, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of the hands.” (Haggai 1:8-11)

This passage states that the heavens withheld their dew, there was a drought upon the land, and no significant fruit came forth specifically because Yahweh’s house lay desolate. And it makes clear that it was Yahweh – not the devil – who called for the drought! (v11). That is why He says “consider your ways”! How can He possibly bless what we’re doing when it runs contrary to His Word and His way?

We’ve got to go, to bring, and to build (v8). That means making sure we’re in the right place, that we’re taking the proper raw materials



for the structure, and that we're going with readiness of mind that we will find our place and be a living (active) part of the building project.

This passage also speaks of every man running to his own house while neglecting Yahweh's house (v9). There are two aspects to this: the first and more obvious is people who are not really engaged in the work of the local Body. They are too busy with everyday life to invest the time and effort required to do the work of the Kingdom – and they are generally unwilling to invest financially into that work through their tithes and offerings.

The second aspect is individual ministries that think they ARE the Body, rather than just a PART of the Body. They are building their ministry, their denomination, or their 'church' rather than the overall Body of Messiah. They refuse or neglect to seek out and pursue meaningful relationships beyond their own four walls.

Yes, we need to be loyal to our local assembly. That is simply recognizing by the Spirit where we're supposed to be and being totally committed to it. But everyone – especially those in leadership – needs to be seeking spiritual connections with other ministries in order to “bridge the gap” and help to bring different parts of the Body together. This does NOT mean compromising on core beliefs, but it does mean finding common ground in Him and building diligently upon it.

How did the people respond to this Word of Yahweh through His prophet Haggai?

Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Yahweh, their Elohim, and the words of Haggai, the prophet, as Yahweh, their Elohim, had sent him; and the people feared Yahweh. <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, Yahweh's messenger, spoke in Yahweh's message to the people, saying, “I am with you,” says Yahweh. <sup>14</sup> Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of Yahweh of Hosts, their Elohim. (Haggai 1:12-14)

Notice that everyone – from Zerubbabel, the son of the governor, and Joshua, the son of the high priest, down to all the remnant of the people – obeyed the voice of Yahweh. And they obeyed the words of the prophet Haggai, as Yahweh had sent him (v12). This is another example of the apostolic-prophet mantle in action!

Everyone feared (reverenced) Yahweh<sup>j</sup> and recognized that He was with them, and because of that they did what He said to do. It was after they had purposed to obey Him that He stirred up their spirits for the work of His house, not for a particular name-brand ministry or denominational work.

What was the end result to this ‘revival’?

In the seventh month, in the twenty-first day of the month, the Word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying, <sup>3</sup> ‘Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Isn’t it in your eyes as nothing? <sup>4</sup> Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ says Yahweh. ‘Be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ says Yahweh, ‘and work, for I am with you,’ says Yahweh of Hosts. (Haggai 2:1-4)

In the eyes of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people, the memory of the glory of the former house (temple) had faded, to the point that they couldn’t even conceive of what its restoration would mean. In many ways we are like them: we read accounts of the first century apostles as little more than distant memories of our spiritual heritage. We see the current state of the Body and are dismayed, not really believing that we ought to be matching – much less exceeding – what they did.

Yet Yahweh exhorted them all – Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all of the people of the land – to be strong and work because He was with them. He is exhorting us likewise. To quote the apostle Paul: “What then will we say about these things? If Yahweh is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). If we will be strong and faithful to work as He leads, guides, and directs us, we will see a radical transformation take place before our very eyes!

This is the word that I covenanted with you when you came out

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<sup>j</sup> For a detailed study on this vital topic, please request our free booklet entitled “Rediscovering the Fear of Yahweh”

of Egypt, and my Spirit lived among you. Don't be afraid.' <sup>6</sup> For this is what Yahweh of Hosts says: 'Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land; <sup>7</sup> and I will shake all nations. The precious things of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, says Yahweh of Hosts. <sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,' says Yahweh of Hosts. <sup>9</sup> 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says Yahweh of Hosts; 'and in this place will I give peace,' says Yahweh of Hosts." (Haggai 2:5-9)

The glory of the latter house will be greater than the former. This is a profound statement. In fact, if we think in terms of the spiritual house of Yahweh – the Body of Messiah – this is mind-blowing. The first century Body was accused of turning the world upside down. What will be said of us?

But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for Yahweh's own possession, that you may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: <sup>10</sup> who in time past were no people, but now are the people of Elohim, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9-10)

Do we truly understand that we are a “royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for Yahweh's own possession”? That we are to show forth the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness?

The Body of Messiah – and the local assembly in specific – is meant to be the visible representation of His Kingdom in a particular region! This sounds wonderful, but how to do get there from here? First we must deal with the things that inhibit that from becoming reality, things like separation and disunity.

## **Subdivisions**

Our world is full of subdivisions. We have subdivisions in our neighborhoods and subdivisions (cubicles) in our places of work. The politics of the modern world seem built upon dividing and subdividing us further and further – by race and ethnicity, by gender, by class and financial standing, and by any other discriminator they can come up with. People that are disunited are easier to control.

The Body of Messiah is supposed to be different and yet we see the same thing there – splinters, factions, and sects. Although it's a sad state, we shouldn't really be surprised. The apostle Paul admonished the

1<sup>st</sup> century body regarding the same thing:

Now I beg you, brothers, through the name of our Master, Yahshua Messiah, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers, by those who are from Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. <sup>12</sup> Now I mean this, that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos," "I follow Cephas," and, "I follow Messiah." <sup>13</sup> Is Messiah divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup> I thank Yahweh that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one should say that I had baptized you into my own name. <sup>16</sup> (I also baptized the household of Stephanas; besides them, I don't know whether I baptized any other.) <sup>17</sup> For Messiah sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel -- not in wisdom of words, so that the impaling post of Messiah wouldn't be made void. (1 Cor. 1:10-17)

Paul's epistles contain great insights into how the local assembly is (and is not) supposed to function. Later in this first letter to the Corinthians, he observed "when you come together as an assembly (*ekklesia*), I hear there are divisions (*schismata* – schisms) among you" and went on to ask "do you despise (disdain, think little of) the assembly of Yahweh?" (1 Cor. 11:18, 22).

When we allow schisms or divisions within the local assembly, we're actually showing disdain for that which Yahshua Himself loved and for which He gave Himself (see Eph.5:25-29). Sadly, these types of problems often occur because some people come to see the local assembly as a spiritual orphanage or "halfway house", rather than the glorious manifestation of His presence that He intended it to be!

Paul was clearly very concerned with the issue of subdivisions – strife and divisions within the Body of Messiah. Let's return to a passage that we looked at earlier (1 Cor. 3), where Paul talked about laying a foundation as a wise master builder. The beginning of that chapter says:

Brothers, I couldn't speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, as to babes in Messiah. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not with meat; for you weren't yet ready. Indeed, not even now are you ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still fleshly. For insofar as there is jealousy, strife, and factions among you, aren't you fleshly, and don't you walk in the ways of men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3)

According to this Scripture jealousy, strife, and factions are indications of spiritual immaturity, of fleshly (carnal) thinking and walking in “the ways of men”. This is contrary to walking in the ways of Yahweh, His Kingdom, and by His Spirit.

Have things really changed that much since Paul penned those words nearly 2000 years ago? No. The Body of Messiah today is rife with strife. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia<sup>12</sup>, there are over 33,000 distinct Christian denominations in 238 countries around the world! There are hundreds of different Christian denominations in the United States alone! With each passing year there are more and more splits and splinters within denominations and within local assemblies of believers. The Body of Messiah is more fragmented today than it has ever been.

Yes, we must zealously cling to the truth. But we must give our brothers and sisters in Messiah the time, space, and freedom to grow – all the while recognizing that we don’t have all of the truth, either! Above all we must fight to keep “the unity of the faith” (Eph. 4:13).

How do we do that while simultaneously resisting the End-time false ecumenical movement that is surely coming? This is not an easy question to answer, but ultimately we must be led by the Spirit, know the Word, and be willing to humble ourselves and become vulnerable. We must “be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16). And we must recognize that we are all merely Yahweh’s servants and it is He who causes our efforts to yield a harvest:

For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” aren’t you fleshly? <sup>5</sup> Who then is Apollos, and who is Paul, but servants through whom you believed; and each as Yahweh gave to him? <sup>6</sup> I planted. Apollos watered. But Yahweh gave the increase. <sup>7</sup> So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but Yahweh who gives the increase. <sup>8</sup> Now he who plants and he who waters are the same, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are Yahweh’s fellow workers. You are the field of Yahweh, the building of Yahweh. (1 Cor. 3:4-9)

Paul, that mighty apostle, was fully aware that he, Apollos, and other ministers were merely instruments in the hands of Yahweh. Here he speaks forcefully against what in modern vernacular might be called sectarianism, which is defined as “excessive devotion to a particular sect, especially in religion.” People tend to emphasize “my church” and “our denomination.” It’s interesting to note that the word ‘denomination’

comes from the Latin *denominationem*, which literally means “a calling by anything other than the proper name”!

According to the grace of Yahweh which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another builds on it. But let each man be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay **any other foundation** than that which has been laid, which is Yahshua Messiah. (1 Cor. 3:10-11)

We must never forget that Yahshua Messiah is the only true foundation on which we can build. If we ever stray from that fundamental truth, regardless of how spiritually gifted we are or how hard and diligently we work, whatever we build will ultimately fail.

Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless Yahweh keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.” (Psa. 127:1)

Are we truly Yahweh’s “fellow workers”? Is it He who is doing the building through us, or are we building our own creation and then asking Him to bless it?

The apostle Paul also dealt with strife and divisions in his epistle to the Galatian assembly.

Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> envyings, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these; of which I forewarn you, even as I also forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of Yahweh. (Gal. 5:19-21)

Again we see that jealousy, strife, and divisions are works of the flesh. While we might consider these as minor infractions in the grand scheme of things, Paul lumped them together with such sins as adultery, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, heresy, and murder! He even warned that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of Yahweh!

Yet how often have we heard a sermon preached about that, that walking in jealousy, strife, and divisions will prohibit us from inheriting the Kingdom? In fact, might that be one key reason why so few individuals and groups are walking in true resurrection life and Kingdom power today? If we are given to jealousy, strife, and divisions, just how much spiritual power do we think Yahweh will entrust to us?

We cannot ignore the present reality of condition of the Body. Nor can we claim ignorance as to its causes. But what can we do about it?

## Repairers of the Breach

The book of Haggai exhorted us to consider our ways. In doing so we've seen that one of the main issues in the Body is subdivisions. But how do we deal with those subdivisions and overcome them? First, we need to recognize that we are CALLED to do something about them.

Those who shall be of you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called The repairer of the breach (Hebr. *peréts*), The restorer of paths to dwell in. (Isa. 58:12)

This is a part of our calling – to help build the old waste places, raise up the foundations of many generations, repair the breaches and restore His paths. What are the practical steps that we can take? Let's take a look at some events from the book of Nehemiah and see what we can glean from them.

The background of this account is that a remnant of Jews who had not gone into captivity remained in the Promised Land. They were attempting to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem but faced intense opposition from the likes of Sanballat the Horonite and others. Chapter 3 describes how the workers – the priests – were positioned and aligned for the work. Then in chapter 4 we read:

But it happened that when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. <sup>2</sup> He spoke before his brothers and the army of Samaria, and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burned? <sup>3</sup> Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they are building, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall. (Nehemiah 4:1-3)

This was obviously not a pleasant situation for the Jews who were performing the work. Sanballat ridiculed them. Tobiah, meanwhile, basically said that even if they succeeded in their efforts it would come to nothing – a fox would be able to break it down!

The Jews were not dissuaded. They simply prayed and set their hearts to do the work.

Hear, our Elohim; for we are despised: and turn back their reproach on their own head, and give them up for a spoil in a land of captivity; <sup>5</sup> and don't cover their iniquity, and don't let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked [You] to anger before the builders. <sup>6</sup> So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together to half [the height] of it: for the people had a mind to work. (v4-6)

Notice that the people had a mind to work, despite the adversity and the critics! We could learn much from their example. But we must also be prepared for what often comes next:

But it happened that when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, [and] that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very angry; <sup>8</sup> and they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. (v7-8)

These are classic tactics of the adversary – a conspiracy, active resistance to the Father's purposes, and a concerted effort to sow confusion. When Sanballat, Tobiah, and the others saw that their mockery hadn't dissuaded the Jews, they upped the ante.

The word translated as 'breaches' derives from the Hebrew root word *paráts*, which means 'to break through or down or over, burst, breach'. A 'breach' is defined <sup>13</sup> as:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. the act or a result of breaking; break or rupture.</li><li>2. an infraction or violation, as of a law, trust, faith, or promise.</li><li>3. a gap made in a wall, <u>fortification, line of soldiers</u>, etc.; rift; fissure.</li><li>4. a severance of friendly relations.</li></ol> |
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It doesn't require tremendous spiritual insight to realize that all of these definitions apply at some level to the Body of Messiah today. In fact, at core they are exactly the kinds of things that Paul was addressing in his epistles to the assemblies at Corinth and Galatia.

Let's continue with this account from Nehemiah 4:

But we made our prayer to our Elohim, and set a watch against



them day and night, because of them. <sup>10</sup> Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. (v9-10)

Notice that they prayed again, trusting in Yahweh. But then they also took the wise and practical step of setting a watch against their enemies day and night. In other words they were vigilant.

We can learn much from this, as well. We know that the adversary loves to cause confusion, so we shouldn't be surprised or caught unawares when he tries. Paul reminded us that we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). But are we willing to "set a watch" against him day and night? Where are those who have been specifically called to be watchmen for the local assembly? Do we even think in those terms, or are we content merely to be reactionary?

Verse 10 says that "the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall." The application for us is this: because there are so few true burden-bearers in the Body of Messiah today, they have become weary. In addition, there is a lot of rubbish – debris – that inhibits the work of the Kingdom.

When there are breaches and breaks in a physical wall, there's usually a lot of debris left behind that must be cleared before any new construction can occur. Sometimes parts of the wall that have been damaged aren't repairable and must be completely demolished and then rebuilt. Often there is also a lot of overgrowth and "dead wood" that must be removed, and sometimes snakes, foxes, or rats have taken up residence. There are obvious spiritual parallels to all of this. Here are a few of the stumbling blocks that can "clog up the breaches" spiritually:

- traditions of men that run contrary to the Word
- past negative life experiences
- "broken-down" philosophies that exalt themselves against the knowledge of Elohim (2 Cor. 10:5)
- attitudes of fear, doubt, unbelief, ingratitude, unforgiveness
- lack of understanding of covenant relationship
- lack of accountability, integrity, honor

Another big stumbling block is a religious mindset. This can manifest in several ways: focusing only on the *Logos* (what has been written) or only on the *Rhema* (what the Spirit is speaking today). We've seen some who have become so obsessed with the latest 'prophetic word' that they ignore the clear instruction of Scripture. We've also seen those who reject the very notion that 'God' still speaks to His people today. Yahshua said "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that

PROCEEDS from the mouth of Yahweh” (Matt. 4:4). We need both the written Word and the proceeding Word.

Whether in the natural or the spiritual realm, there is one sure way to clear the breaches – FIRE! Are we willing to pray for the fire of His presence to burn away anything and everything that will stand in the way of the construction of His house? Are we willing to ask for Him to purify US with fire and consume even our personal spiritual ambitions?

As we continue reading the account in Nehemiah 4, notice the call to arms and the resolve of the people to complete the work despite continued opposition by their enemies:

Our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, until we come into the midst of them, and kill them, and cause the work to cease. <sup>12</sup> It happened that when the Jews who lived by them came, they said to us ten times from all places, You must return to us. <sup>13</sup> Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set [there] the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

<sup>14</sup> I looked, and rose up, and said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Don't be you afraid of them: remember Adonai<sup>k</sup>, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

<sup>15</sup> It happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and Elohim had brought their counsel to nothing, that we returned all of us to the wall, everyone to his work. <sup>16</sup> It happened from that time forth, that half of my servants worked in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. (v11-16)

This is the ‘prophetic’ in action! Yahweh made the enemies’ plans known and “brought their counsel to nothing”. Then Nehemiah went on to state, very matter-of-factly, “we returned all of us to the wall, everyone to his work”. In other words, they again took practical measures against their adversaries but their entire focus remained upon completing the task at hand.

They all built the wall and those who bore burdens loaded themselves; everyone with one of his hands worked in the work, and with the other held his weapon; <sup>18</sup> and the builders, everyone had his sword girded by his side, and so built. He who sounded

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<sup>k</sup> ah-do-NAI. Hebrew for ‘my Master’ or ‘my Strength’. Usually translated ‘LORD’

the trumpet was by me. (v17-18)

This is a tremendous picture of teamwork but also of readiness for battle. The burden-bearers had one hand in the work and with the other held their weapons. Likewise each of the builders had his sword girded by his side as he built. Every believer has a job to do but must also be equipped with and know how to use the sword of the Spirit!

Note that the people weren't running around looking for the adversary under every rock. They were building the wall and had their weapons handy, so they'd be ready when needed. We don't need to go hunting for demons; when we are doing the work of the Kingdom, they are well aware of where we are.

I said to the nobles, and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated on the wall, one far from another: <sup>20</sup> in whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet<sup>1</sup>, resort you there to us; our Elohim will fight for us. <sup>21</sup> So we worked in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning until the stars appeared. (v19-21)

The end-time work of the Kingdom truly is great and large, and we are separated on the wall, often far from one another. In order to successfully repair the breaches and accomplish what He has called us to do, we must be in the place to which we have been specifically assigned by the Spirit, doing our assigned job. Of course this presupposes that we understand the concept of having a divine assignment, and it further requires spiritual discernment to recognize our specific assignment. This is the opposite of living as spiritual gypsies, flitting from place to place 'chasing the glory' or just going wherever we're comfortable.

While we are about our Father's business, doing the work that He has called us to do, we must keep our ears tuned to the sound of the trumpet. Verse 20 above tells us "in whatever place you hear the trumpet, resort you (gather) there." Notice that hearing the trumpet is the only criteria; it doesn't say "as long as they share the exact same statement of beliefs" or even "only if you get along with everyone there".

This is responding to the clarion call of the Spirit. In order to do that, however, we've got to be able to HEAR IT! That is one of the major deficiencies in the lives of most believers – we are "hearing-impaired" as far as our ability to rightly discern the voice of the Spirit. That must change!

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<sup>1</sup> shofar = typically a ram's horn, used to sound an alarm or call to battle

Finally, we see their reliance on and faith in Yahweh – “Our Elohim will fight for us”. They knew that as long as they were united and doing what they were supposed to do, Yahweh would intercede on their behalf. The question is, are we willing to stand in the gap on His behalf?

“I sought for a man among them, who should build up the wall, and stand in the gap (*peréts*) before Me, for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.” (Eze. 22:30)

Yahweh is looking for those who will build up the wall and stand in the gap or breach. Standing in the gap is dangerous work, for it means purposely placing yourself where the enemy will most surely attack first. This is not a job for the faint of heart but it is nevertheless very needful.

## Answering the Call

We have examined the biblical pattern for ministry leadership, comparing the modern ‘church’ system against it and finding it grossly deficient. We’ve recognized the necessity of restoration and returning to the Father’s ways. But what practical steps can we take today to become “repairers of the breach” and “restorers of paths to dwell in”?

The very first thing we must do is embrace the Truth ourselves!

Yahshua therefore said to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you remain in My word, then you are truly My disciples. <sup>32</sup> You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Do we truly believe Yahshua? Then we must remain (abide) in His Word. It is in this ‘abiding’ that we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. This isn’t just acknowledging it as truth on an intellectual level but rather embracing it and making it a part of our thinking and our way of life.

Are we willing to answer Yahweh’s call, returning to His ways and truly building according to His pattern? To do so we must renew our minds and be transformed by that renewal (Rom. 12:2). Too often people try to take fresh spiritual revelation and overlay it on top of or try to fit it into their existing religious framework. This rarely works. New spiritual revelation usually requires the discarding of old ways of thinking. Truth is truth and doesn’t change, so it will stand up to even the most intense scrutiny.

The next step is to begin to seek out and pursue meaningful

relationship with those who are going in the same direction spiritually. This is easier said than done. You can only walk in unity with someone to the degree that you are in agreement.

Can two walk together, Unless they are agreed? (Amos 3:3)

This does not mean that we must be in complete, one hundred percent doctrinal agreement. But it does mean that we must be able to agree on the basics. If a person's core values are diametrically opposed to our own, it will be impossible for us to walk in unity.

### **The Only Foundation**

It all comes back to Peter's original declaration: that Yahshua is the Messiah and the Son of the living Elohim. As we've seen this revelation is the foundation upon which Yahshua Himself said He would build His assembly (Matt. 16:16, 18). If we can't agree on that, it will be impossible to move forward in unity.

I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. <sup>22</sup> Who is the liar but he who denies that Yahshua is the Messiah? This is the Anti-messiah, he who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup> Whoever denies the Son, the same doesn't have the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, as for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning. If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son, and in the Father. (1 John 2:21-24)

This foundational belief, however, goes beyond simple mental assent to the fact that Yahshua is the Messiah and Son of Yahweh; it informs our understanding of what He said, how He really lived, and our entire approach to Scripture. In short, it will cause us to model our lives after His:

This is how we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> One who says, "I know Him," and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in him. (1 John 2:3-4)

The apostle Paul spoke of "endeavoring to keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). He prefaced this by beseeching us "to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all

lowliness and humility, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (v1-2).

In order to maintain the unity of the faith, it will require a great deal of humility, patience, and love. We must be mature and discerning enough to judge what is important and what is not. We must recognize that each person is at a different place in his or her spiritual journey. So while we must zealously proclaim and defend the “faith once delivered”, we shouldn’t major on the minors. We can disagree without being disagreeable. What are our core spiritual convictions that we are unwilling to compromise?

### **Ordained of the Spirit**

A key element that not enough believers truly understand is the importance of recognizing and embracing only those relationships ordained by Yahweh’s Spirit. David and Jonathan’s was one such relationship, as was Elijah and Elisha’s. Paul and Timothy’s was a third.

If a relationship isn’t ordained of the Spirit, then trying to force it to be something that Yahweh never intended is only going to end in mutual frustration... and possibly worse. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14), so it will require both parties to recognize the relationship for what it is (or is not) meant to be and act accordingly.

### **Relating at Different Levels**

This next point may not be intuitively obvious: we must accept and embrace the reality that we will always relate to different people at different levels. This was certainly true in Yahshua’s ministry: He had the great multitudes to whom He ministered, then those from among them who followed Him, then the seventy (Luke 10:1), then the twelve, and finally the three (Peter, James, and John)<sup>m</sup>. He loved everyone and certainly didn’t show favoritism, but even He only had twenty-four hours in a day and related to people based on the degree of their pursuit of Him. He didn’t try to force a relationship to be more than it was.

Similarly, each of us has a limited amount of time and we must deliberately invest it in life-producing relationships that are mutually beneficial. It can be exhausting and frustrating to chase a relationship with someone who doesn’t value it as much as you do. And we must also realize that some relationships in the Body are only ordained for a season. This might be hard for us to accept, but if Yahweh is no longer

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<sup>m</sup> See Matt. 17:1; Mark 5:37, 14:33; Luke 8:51

breathing on it, there is nothing that we can do to resurrect it. This is another reason why spiritual discernment is vitally important.

### **Mutual Respect**

Relationships that flourish are those where mutual respect abounds. This is respect for one another not only as children of Yahweh but also as individuals. In particular, as it pertains to ministry, it is respect for each other's gifting. If one person doesn't value and respect the other's gifting, it will make fellowship difficult (see 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

In addition, even if two people share core beliefs and respect one another's gifting, if one is overbearing, argumentative, or just generally unpleasant to be around, the other is not going to want to spend time with him or her. We all have different personalities and ways of expressing ourselves, so we must strive not to be a stumbling block for our brother.

### **Breaking Through**

It is crucial to find and pursue relationship with like-minded believers as led by the Spirit. There is no substitute for this. But what about the many sincere believers out there who have been misled, underfed, and malnourished by the current religious system? How do we reach them? And how do we break through the myriad of barriers in the lives of so many who claim to be moving forward yet seem to be "always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"? (2 Tim. 3:7). How do we bring unity of purpose to the 'mixed multitude'?

These are important and daunting questions, but perhaps the answers lie in the answer to another question: how did the first-century Body of believers do it? After all, did they not face many of these same issues? How did they overcome the traditions of men and the religious institutions of their day? How did they break through the barriers of spiritual complacency, lethargy, and self-satisfaction?

First and foremost, they were all filled with the Spirit. Consider that prior to the outpouring of the Spirit on Shavuot (Pentecost) they were a rag-tag, disjointed collection of individuals. When the Spirit fell that all changed. As Yahshua Himself had promised (Acts 1:8), they received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, but it also brought an incredible sense of unity, community, and boldness. All of our human reasoning and ingenuity can never produce what Yahweh's Spirit can! We don't need more organizations, ministry conferences, or forums as much as we need more of His Spirit!

Secondly, they became completely sold out to the Kingdom,

possessing an inherent holiness and sense of reverence. In fact, this was a direct result of being Spirit-filled. It wasn't something they had to conjure up on their own.

What brought about this powerful transformation in that tiny group of believers after Yahshua's ascension? There were three key elements:

- It was ordained of Yahweh and prophesied by Yahshua himself. In other words, it was an appointed Kingdom time.
- The disciples were obedient to Yahshua's instruction to go and wait in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). They were in the appointed place at the appointed time.
- They weren't idle but prepared themselves corporately. "These all with **one accord** continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14).

## A Praying People

The first-century Body of believers were a praying people – not just in the days leading up to Pentecost but afterwards. That was one secret to their explosive growth and power. In fact, Yahshua actually said that prayer would be the key distinguishing trait of His Father's house:

Yahshua entered into the temple of Elohim, and drove out all of those who sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the money-changers' tables and the seats of those who sold the doves. <sup>13</sup> He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a House of prayer (ref. Isa. 56:7),' but you have made it a den of robbers!" (Matt. 21:12-13)

If it is to be called a "House of prayer," then this means that prayer is not just done in the privacy of our personal "prayer closet", nor is it something tacked on haphazardly to the beginning or end of a worship service. It isn't even one among many characteristics – according to Yahshua it is THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC of Yahweh's house!

We've all probably heard the saying "the family that prays together stays together." The same is true of the spiritual family, the local assembly! One of the main reasons for so many splits, splinters, and divisions is that congregations don't really pray together anymore. Not really. Not deep, intensive, immersive, heaven-shaking, earth-quaking prayer. And generally not prayer lasting more than a few minutes. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much in its working" (Jam. 5:16). Imagine what the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous MULTITUDE can do!



Many believers can pontificate endlessly on their favorite pet doctrine and have no problem giving their opinion on any given Scripture, yet they're suddenly struck mute as a church mouse when it comes time for corporate prayer. Why is that? If we are to enter into the fullness of all that Yahweh has in store for us, then we must break out of this bondage and begin to pray boldly in our corporate gatherings.

## **Spirit-Led**

As individual believers in Yahshua Messiah we must be led by the Spirit. The apostle Paul wrote "as many as are led by the Spirit, these are the sons of Elohim" (Rom. 8:14). But the Body of Messiah should be Spirit-led, as well. One of the biggest problems with most congregations is that they are locked into a set order of service from which they rarely deviate. While this provides familiarity and an undeniable comfort level to its members, it inhibits the free flowing of the Spirit.

This means that the modern assembly must be flexible and adaptable, not to modern culture and changing morals but to the times and seasons of the Spirit. If everyone comes together expecting a certain format or flow and the Spirit moves in a different direction, each person must be willing to adjust to it and go with that flow. For example, if we come together expecting line-upon-line teaching and preaching but the Spirit inspires spontaneous praise and worship or deep corporate intercessory prayer, we must be willing – in fact eager – to embrace that new direction. What this ultimately requires is that each person have a heightened sensitivity to the Spirit, or at least a willingness to follow the lead of proven, ordained and anointed leaders.

## **Discipleship**

Another missing ingredient in the modern Body is discipleship. We have a lot of preaching and teaching of the Word but very little true discipleship. Prior to His ascension to the Father, Yahshua gave this instruction to own His disciples:

"Go you therefore, and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things whatever I commanded you..." (Matt. 28:19-20).

If the Body of Messiah is to fulfill its calling, discipleship isn't optional, it is required. It is a core principle, not an afterthought. Notice that Yahshua said to make disciples or 'taught ones', not merely

converts. Someone can be a ‘believer’ for years without ever truly becoming a disciple. While the message of salvation has been preached throughout much of the earth, the process of actually making disciples has been haphazard at best. That must change – but it won’t change without a serious commitment to it.

Discipleship doesn’t just happen; it is a deliberate, purposeful process. As Yahshua said “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). Consider that He continuously trained His disciples over a three and a half year period. Can we take a *laissez-faire* attitude toward discipleship in the Body and really expect to accomplish much?

### **Partakers of a Heavenly Calling**

Like the first century Body we are living in an appointed time – the time of the “restoration of all things”. Will we be obedient to the voice of the Spirit, finding and embracing our appointed place? Will we be faithful to continue steadfastly in prayer and supplication with one accord? Will we go where He sends us and proclaim His Word?

Now the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, <sup>5</sup> Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. <sup>6</sup> Then said I, Ah, Sovereign Yahweh! Behold, I don’t know how to speak; for I am a child. <sup>7</sup> But Yahweh said to me, Don’t say, I am a child; for to whoever I shall **send you, you shall go**, and **whatever I shall command you, you shall speak**. <sup>8</sup> Don’t be afraid because of them; for I am with you to deliver you, says Yahweh. (Jer. 1:4-8)

This passage speaks to an apostolic-prophetic mantle and calling. It is apostolic because it involves the sending of Jeremiah with a divine commission and authority; it is also obviously prophetic because Yahweh told him that He had appointed him as a prophet to the nation and that he was to speak whatever He gave him to speak.

Then Yahweh put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Yahweh said to me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth: <sup>10</sup> Behold, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. (v9-10)

This builds upon the apostolic-prophetic nature of his calling. Yahweh touched His mouth and placed His words in it, but He also set him in a position of Kingdom authority. This authority involved plucking up and breaking down, destroying and overthrowing, and building and planting. These are key apostolic functions. Before apostles can build and plant local assemblies, they often must pluck up and break down man-made traditions and doctrines, as well as destroy and overthrow false religion and the philosophies of men.

We have a high and holy calling that we must never take for granted. We are called to Sonship and faithful stewardship in Yahweh's house.

Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Yahshua; <sup>2</sup> who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as also was Moses in all his house. <sup>3</sup> For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone; but He who built all things is Yahweh. <sup>5</sup> Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken, <sup>6</sup> but Messiah is faithful as a Son over His house; whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the glorying of our hope firm to the end. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear His voice, <sup>8</sup> Don't harden your hearts, as in the provocation, Like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> Where your fathers tested Me by proving Me, And saw My works for forty years. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I was displeased with that generation, And said, 'They always err in their heart, But they didn't know My ways,'" (Heb. 3:1-10)

This chapter begins by reminding us that we are partakers of a heavenly calling. Everything that follows is tied to and needs to be considered in light of that key revelation. We are to look to Yahshua as our Apostle and High Priest, recognizing that He was faithful to Yahweh who appointed Him (v2). He who built the house is worthy of more honor than the house (v3), and Yahshua is a faithful Son over the house that He was appointed to build (v6). We are (a part of) His house, if we hold fast our confidence and the glorying of our hope (expectation) firm to the end. Therefore – because of that – we are exhorted to hear His voice and not harden our hearts as did the ancient Israelites in the wilderness (v7-8). Their critical mistake was that they erred in their hearts and didn't know His ways. It wasn't that His ways were unknowable – it was that they actually rejected His ways. When we obey from the heart, His ways become knowable.

May we be found faithful Sons and Daughters in the house which Yahshua was appointed to build, coming into alignment with His ways.

## **Conclusion**

Yahshua is building His house and He is doing so according to a very specific pattern. He has chosen to partner with us, but we must build according to His pattern. When we do – when we build His house according to the pattern of the five-fold ministry – then and only then will His glory truly be manifested in all of its fullness. Only then will we become Yahweh’s glory on the earth, having prepared and readied ourselves to rule and reign with Him.

This means that change is coming to the Body of Messiah. This change won’t come through the pastoral anointing but through the apostolic and prophetic anointings. In other words, it is going to take apostles and prophets in order to bring about this change. It’s going to require the Body of Messiah to receive and embrace the offices of apostle and prophet – and those called to minister in them.

Contrary to popular unbelief, the offices of apostle and prophet did not pass away with the 1st century disciples. They are enduring offices because of an enduring need. The Body is not yet perfect, nor has it attained the “unity of the faith” nor grown “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah.” All of the five-fold ministry gifts are still needed in the Body.

These different gift offices have specific purposes and roles in ministering to the Body of Messiah. Collectively they have the purpose of establishing, building up, and perfecting the saints, as well as ensuring proper administration and orderly service within the local assembly.

None of this takes away our individual responsibility to build a relationship with Yahweh and Yahshua, nor to “prove all things, holding fast to that which is good.” (1 Thess. 5:21). There is only one Head of the body, Yahshua. And there is certainly no hierarchy or pecking order in order to get to Him. Every believer has personal access at any time.

The glory of the latter house will exceed that of the former (Haggai 2:9). Will we be a part of it? For the Body to become all that it is meant to be, each of us must take his or her place in the local assembly. Come and join us in this incredible end-time work!

## **Additional Publications**

In the Name of the Father

A Day to Remember (The Sabbath)

The Biblical Holy Days: An Overview

Baptism: The Doorway to a New Life

Rediscovering the Fear of Yahweh

Foundations of Faith

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# I WILL BUILD MY HOUSE



***"Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless Yahweh keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain." (Psalm 127:1)***

Everything that our heavenly Father does is according to a pattern. When Yahshua said that He would build His assembly, He had a specific pattern in mind. But the modern 'church' has lost that pattern.

In these last days Yahweh is restoring all things to the Body, including the specific pattern by which His Body must be built. If we truly desire to see the glory of the latter house exceed that of the former (Hosea 2:9), we must rediscover and then faithfully follow His pattern.

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