

Ch. 3. The Master Plan: From the Cross to the Eternal Purpose, continued.

II. CALLED

Part 3. Understanding “Appointment” (Ministry)

In the previous Part 2 of this study, **calling** unto *perfection*, focused upon the individual’s personal spiritual maturity as in godly *character*. However, this **calling** also continues for the Church to function in wholeness. Christ’s Church is to be altogether different from all religions. It is to function spiritually as a single living organism. This may be analogous to man’s natural body. Though the Church may have an outward appearance in terms of assemblies, church related offices, ministries, and buildings, the true nature of this Church is spiritual (invisible and intangible). This Body is made up of all those born again of the seed of Christ, with Christ who is its Head.



Paul prayed for such an understanding for the church of Ephesus, that they may know the power of God for those who believe, that same power...

*“...which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as **head** over all things to the **church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.** (Eph. 1:20-23)*

This Church has its origin in heaven. It is a spiritual church to function in a manner different from all religions, governments and organizations of the world. Actually, it is to be a Church untainted by the world. His Church is to be something living, a vital expression of Himself, to bring to fulfilment the eternal purposes of God. The building of this Church must come with great care and forethought. It is brought about by divine design, from its Head, who is Christ. Each part is carefully shaped and prepared to be joined together.

THE CALLING—Appointment

When Christ said, *“I will build my church...”* (Mt. 16:18), the emphasis is on *“I.”* When it comes to matters of the building of His Church, its government and function, it does not come down to man’s choice, aspirations and preferences, but by **appointment**, decree, and placement by Christ, who is the Head. Take Paul as an example,

*“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, that He considered me faithful and **appointed** me to service.”* (1 Tim. 1:12)

In this verse, **appointed** means to *put, set in place, or assign*. Paul’s service was not of his own choosing. He did not train and volunteer for service as in his previous religious service as a Pharisee. In the past, Paul chose to be a Pharisee and, after his encounter with Christ, he chose not to be a Pharisee. But his service in Christ was not of his choosing. The opening verse in several of Paul’s letters begins as, *“Paul, **called** to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the **will of God, ...**”*

Perhaps the most profound difference between a “ministry of vocation” and one of “divine appointment” is that the former touches the natural man in the realm of his emotions, knowledge, talents, and desires. The latter touches the inward spirit of man. Oftentimes it is difficult for one to distinguish between one’s own desires, aspirations and emotions and this calling and appointment. However, the Holy Spirit does bring an inner sense of being apprehended of the Lord. As one responds to this call, His plan is progressively worked into one’s life. We just seem to “know that we know” that there is something greater at work in us. We sense our inadequacies and know that patience must somehow balance the zeal within to serve. We begin a walk, a growth, a maturity in service that is never ending. Within we groan as with the apostle Paul, “...that I may lay hold of that for which Christ has also laid hold of me.” (Phil. 3:12) Somehow I prefer the old KJV use of the term, **apprehend** in place of “lay hold of.” O’ the sense of being **apprehended** that never leaves. O’ for patience and faithfulness for its unfolding.

Oftentimes, in following this “*leading of the Spirit,*” one must venture out from the familiar, the often thought of “safe” environment to which we are accustomed. We must venture beyond the realm of religion and into the functioning Body of Christ. Care must be taken because of many false sects and ministries that surround us. Nevertheless, the true Church awaits.

The True Church and the Shadow Church

Watchman Nee wrote the only “True Church” is that which comes out of Christ, as Eve came out of the side of Adam, so too the Church comes out of Christ. Christ, by nature, is spiritual and therefore His Church must also be spiritual. What has not issued directly out of Christ is not the Church. It is responsible to say that all of the church may not be “out of Christ” and a part of His true Church. There is “another” aspect of a church in the earth, after the similitude of the True Church but consists of, and overly influenced by, the abilities, strengths, and resources of man. It is a “**shadow church.**” What is meant by this term, “shadow church? Note, in the following Hebrews passage, the writer makes a clear distinction between the **true** and the **shadow** of “religion,” as the giving of the Law under the First Covenant:



*“Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the **true** tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the **Law**; who serve a **copy** and **shadow** of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “SEE,” He says, “**THAT YOU MAKE** all things **ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.**” But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.” (Heb. 8:1-6)*

Thus, this earthly church of rituals, sacrifices, feasts days, rites, laws and programs, is but a **shadow** of heaven’s **reality**. This church looks like the real thing, is patterned after the real Church, uses much of the same doctrine and terminology of the True Church, but whose head is actually man in all his sophistication, and not Christ. Here man chooses his ministry, is educated by institutions certified by man, has all the titles of bishop, reverend, priest, elder, deacon, etc. associated with church government, and is well accepted by society. This church retains much of the scriptural basis of the Gospel. Thus it has a façade of legitimacy. **However, with man as the head, the Spirit of God may well be**

lifted from the church, His life and glory departed, yet the church continues to function in His absence, as it has done in many places for many years. It becomes a religiously functioning organization quite capable of continuing independently of the Spirit and is cunningly deceptive.

I beg your tolerance if this seems exceeding harsh and judgmental, but like so many of my associates in Christ, I too had been a part of this shadow church for many years and know quite well its ineffectiveness in producing anything truly life-giving of the Spirit and of the kingdom of God. It is as a façade, a pretty outward covering, temporarily pacifying the conscience of man. Yes, the Gospel may yet be preached here, and awareness made of the divinity of Christ, but something is amiss. That something is spiritual reality and the **life** that issues out from it. It is life changing.

Let us focus now not on what might be amiss, but on His master plan for the Church. The name *church* might mean “called out ones,” that describes a people called out of the worldly environment into His Kingdom, but the name *Body of Christ* means a living spiritual organism functioning in a unique way under its Head, who is Christ.

The Master Builder

Truly, it is written, “*Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.*” (Ps. 127:1) Our reliance cannot be on the strength, intelligence, and cunningness of man, but in submission and obedience to our Head, Jesus Christ. Our faith must be something **living** and spiritually dynamic, and not religiously mandated. Jesus declared to His disciples that this day would come. When with them He did not set forth a pattern for an organizational Church. Rather, He promised something living:

*“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things He shall hear, He will speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for **He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.**”* (Jn. 16:13,14)

Some may say that this active role of the Holy Spirit in the Church is no longer needed since we now have the Bible, which is the Word of God. These are the same ones who build their churches upon doctrines, dogma, pre-ordered services, degrees, and regulated lifestyles. Church life in that arena becomes programmed and ritualistic. It is true, the Holy Spirit is not necessary if one wishes to live by a *static* guided set of principles and not by the *dynamic* present and indwelling Spirit. **Static will bring with it routine and complacency whereas the very nature of dynamic is change and growth, which is life.**

Saved and Called Once again we return to Christ’s statement, “*I will build My church...*” For salvation we cannot dispel in any measure the grace of God. The gospel is very clear: “*For God so loved the world that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” (Jn. 3:16) It does not take a theologian to know that the word, *whoever*, means “all” or “each and every one.” This salvation is not based upon works of man nor by divine selection. It is by grace to each and every soul that cries out to Christ. However, our Master Builder does not rely upon volunteers or good intentions to build His Church. No, He carefully **selects** from those who belong to Him, who will work under Him in the building of His Church. He **chooses** who will do what, when, where, and how they will do it. All things in God’s master plan are coordinated by the Head. It is not of those who serve to determine their own purpose and function, and then offer who they are and what they do to the Lord. For the Church to come *out of Christ*, as Eve came out of Adam, it must first be *of Christ*, and Him alone.

God Has Set

The True Church, all its various ministries and services, is **called** and **appointed** by Christ. This involves the dynamics of the Spirit and sensitivity and patient obedience to His leading. The following scripture are given to lay 100% credence to this Godly ordained principle:

- “*But now **God has set** the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*” (1 Cor. 12:18)
- “*And **God has appointed** (set) these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that workers of miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations (governments), variety of tongues.*” (1Cor. 12:28)
- “*And He Himself (Christ) **gave** (to the church) some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...*” (Eph. 4:11)
- And a charge made to the elders at Ephesus, “*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which **the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**, to shepherd the church which He purchased with His own blood.*” (Acts 20:28)
- Finally, an encouragement by Paul to Timothy, “*Therefore I remind you to stir up the **gift** (of evangelist, see 2 Tim. 4:5) that is in you through the laying on of my hands.*” (2 Tim. 1:6)

Can there be any doubt of the direct involvement of work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ building His Church? To have real unity, all things must be coordinated under the single Headship of Christ. One cannot say I serve God in such and such capacity because I have such talents, or I have prepared myself to do so. A ministry is born of the Spirit, regardless of natural aptitudes, skills, gifting, or training. One may be moved by a gifted musician in testimony of song, but another is joined as one in fellowship with Christ through the ministry of an anointed musician set in place by Christ. One may become knowledgeable in the truth of the Gospel and of Biblical doctrine through a well-schooled teacher, but a spiritual impartation is made by a teacher set in place by Christ. Teachings become a matter of the heart. These principles hold true with pastors trained in sermons, church administration and counseling as opposed to those who spiritually share the heart of Christ, as the Chief Shepherd, in a passion for the well-being of His people.

Every Joint Supplies

One can only stand in awe of the complex workings of the human body. Think of every organ, every cell (of which there are quite a variety), of the different fluids, bones, joints, muscles and tendons. They all have life and are responsive to our brains. Nothing is supposed to work independently or for itself. Each part gives of itself for the whole of the body. Such is the complex workings of the Body of Christ. In all of these writings we return again and again to Ephesians 4:11-16, for each time it lays again and again the foundation for the functioning of the Body of Christ. This passage of scripture cannot be over emphasized. The focus here is on Eph. 4:16:

*“...from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which **every joint supplies**, according to the working in due measure of each several part, makes the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.”*

Some of our body parts appear dominant, such as our heart, lungs, eyes, and so on. However, the bottom line is that we might not be able to live if the tiniest blood vessel breaks in our brain, or if a renegade single cell begins to rapidly replicate on its own, can eventually bring death. No part or function is insignificant. There are ministries in the Body of Christ that are prominent such as apostles, pastors, prophets, teachers, and evangelists. However, 1 Corinthians 12:13-30 clearly states forth as absolutely essential every part of the Body, no matter how seemingly small or insignificant. Succinctly: “*by one Spirit we were baptized into one body;*” “*now indeed there are many members but one body;*” “*those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;*” “*you are the body of Christ and members individually;*” and “*God has set (appointed) these into the church...*” Can you see the hand of the Master Builder at work calling, placing, sending, directing, and forming?

The Purpose of the Church, the Functioning Body of Christ

The **purpose** of the Church is unwavering—“*To perfect* (bring to completion), *establish, strengthen, and settle,*” every man according to the workings of the Holy Spirit. (See 1 Pet. 5:10) This is quite a spiritual mandate. The Church functions as a corporate whole to bring every man unto spiritual stability and maturity and into His service. For one day the Church will no longer be the church but will become the **Bride of Christ** to be eternally joined with Him in a different way in His eternal Kingdom. (See Rev. 19:7-10 for the Marriage of the Lamb) The members of His present Body will be equally a part of this Bride. As is the burden and vision of Paul:

“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.” (2 Cor. 11:2)

And,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:25-27)

Maturity In natural life, as one grows and matures, **change** is constant in one’s physical, mental and emotional makeup. One does not remain a child but should mature in thought and character and responsibility. So too, the Bible describes the spiritual growth of the believer, “*to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*” *Stature* here means fullness of age, of the quality or status gained by spiritual growth, development and achievement. Returning again to our core passage for confirmation:

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,” (Eph. 4:14,15)

Such maturity brings into the believer’s life godly character, stability, confidence, and very importantly, “vision.” It is very important to clearly know one’s destiny, high calling, and eternal purpose in God’s eternal plan.

Oneness or Dichotomy It is obvious that such a ministry to the Body of Christ is impossible in a shadow church operating under the misconception of the Church consisting of two parts: **priests** and **laity** (aka **pastors** and **congregation**.) In this line of thought, one is either a part of the **clergy** that ministers, or a member of the **congregation** that receives ministry. Such a dichotomy in function and purpose in the Body of Christ is not only non-scriptural, but is most limiting to the building up and sustaining of the Body itself, and to the maturing of its saints. The ministry of every pastor or priest is in-

complete in itself. Personally, I have encountered many local church situations in which the pastor is an excellent shepherd but lacks greatly as a teacher; and conversely, I have seen churches where its “pastor” is a very good teacher, but lacks greatly in the ministry of a shepherd; and also where the “pastor” is an excellent worship leader but fundamentally lacks the qualities of a true shepherd or teacher. In all these situations, and more like them, the Body has suffered.

Manifold Ministries Yes, the Body needs pastors, but to function in its calling it needs much more than just the ministry of the pastor. The pastor must be thought of as but one, however important, of the ministries. The traditional African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” has a ring of truth to it. In the spiritual, it is not a village, but a multi-faceted functioning Body to raise the Church, and the child of God to wholeness, that is, “*unto full stature.*”

Paul, and the entourage that accompanied him, were not pastors, but an apostle, teachers, evangelists, prophets, helpers, administrators, prayer warriors, etc. Yet their calling was the same:

*“**We** proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that **we** may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”* (Col. 1: 28,29)

Some of the elders that were set in place to oversee each church were shepherds (pastors), but others were teachers, evangelists, various helps, administrations, etc.

The Local and the Corporate Church

When Paul would write a letter to a particular church, such as, “*To the church of God in Corinth,*” he was writing to a local church. The corporate Church, otherwise known as the universal or mystical Church, is composed of the believers in all the local churches in the world. This corporate Church knows no limitations as to a location or jurisdiction. It is universal in nature. The Lord has made provision for this Church (this is our final return to our core passage):

*“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”* (Eph. 4:11-16)

Five-Fold Ministries The five ministries listed above are, of course, not exhaustive of ministries in the Body of Christ. Many, many more function in diverse ways within the Church. However, these five ministries are the most central to its life and growth. They would be the equivalent of the major organs of our bodies without which we would die in very short measure. It is evident that not all local churches have the function of all five ministries. In order to function properly, each local church **at a minimum** should have a pastor and teacher and perhaps an evangelist. The primary responsibility of the **pastor** is that of a “shepherd” that tends to the well-being of the flock. The **teacher** must clearly lay out foundational doctrinal understanding and bring clarity to the mystery (as things once hidden from view) of Christ, the Church, the Kingdom, and the high calling and eternal purposes of God. The **evan-**

gelist is one that is sent out from the local church, whether at home or abroad, to cast forth the seed of the Kingdom, the Gospel of Christ.

If these ministries are not present, the elders that oversee the local church should earnestly pray the Lord to raise up and set such ministries in place. These elders must be patient, discerning, and thorough in this endeavor. Paul cautioned Timothy, “*Lay hands on no man suddenly.*” (1 Tim. 5:22)

Benson’s commentary adds a sobering thought to 1 Tim. 5:22, “That is, appoint no man to church offices without full trial and examination: otherwise thou wilt be accessory to, and accountable for, his mis-behavior in office.”

The local church does not suddenly leap into maturity of character and function, but grows, sometimes almost imperceptibly. It is not in the resolve, strength and ingenuity of man, but reliance is on God who “*gives the increase.*” (See 1 Cor. 3:6 and Col. 2:19)

As a personal note, I have a very small church, Immanuel Fellowship. It has been together a very long time. Being connected to the Body of Christ, it has grown (in stature, not in size!) slowly, but continually over the years. Today, it is a very stable fellowship, with each member freely functioning as God has called. In this little flock we can clearly acknowledge the functioning of two teachers and two pastors—with absolutely no sense of competition or vying for position. Ministries, even similar ones, tend to complement one another. Two eyes, for example, allow one to view an object from two different directions adding a third dimension to vision. These ministries now extend beyond the local church to the larger Body of Christ. We remain closely connected with an evangelist as well.

Apostles and Prophets Citing various justifications, some would deny the existence today of apostles and prophets. Many misconceptions surround these ministries. It is in my experience that the **prophetic** voice has ministered in two ways. Some have been words of encouragement; others have been confirmations of His calling upon my life. In all, however, care must be taken in personal prophecies whether they truly are of the Lord. There is much abuse in this area. Today, some are shamefully taught how to prophecy using various techniques and imaginations. They are self-raised up ministries and are not of the Lord. I have found, however, that the greatest and most edifying prophetic voice to the Church has not been the spontaneous, “Thus saith the Lord...” type proclamations voiced forth at meetings. Rather, it has been the prophetic messages that **unveils** the mysteries hidden in Christ and **reveals** the mind of the Lord specifically to His Church for today—much like the prophets of old rebuked, forewarned, and encouraged Israel.

I can say the **apostolic** type of ministry is yet operative in the Church today, but operating in somewhat different mode than the apostles of the early church. Today, there seems to exist “**fatherly**” figures in the Church. These are Godly men with godly insight, being able to impart spiritual understanding into personal lives, but especially into the function and vision of local churches. These are the “go to” ministries in times of questions, confusion, and need for direction. Paul made special note of these ministries,

“*For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*” (1 Cor. 4:15)

These ministries are most valuable and needful. When Jesus said, “*And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and He is in heaven,*” (Mt. 23:9) He was warning men against so recognizing the fatherhood of men as to forget the Fatherhood of God. Today, there is an inherent danger in inordinately elevating a man to this position. In a sense, all faith is “blind” in that it is, “*the evidence of things not seen.*” But blind faith in any ministry must come with caution. Even the teacher, pastor, chief shepherd, and apostle, who may be a father to others, need to remember that they are as a “little child” in the relation to God. The “fathers” in my life have imparted most valuable, substantial, spiritual deposits in my life and ministry. They have laid the **foundation** upon which I stand securely, and revealed the **vision** which is ever before me. They have brought stability and growth.

The “Other” Ministries

The **Psalmist** (worship leader) requires more than talent or skill or quality of instrument or voice. Here too, an anointing and setting into place by the Lord is needful. Quality of music become less important as leading worshippers before the throne of God in adoration and thanksgiving becomes the highest goal.

The **Epaphras ministry**, otherwise known as the “prayer warrior” is oftentimes the most unseen but most critical part of the Body. Paul writes of him,

“Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.” (Col. 4:12)

The success of ministries, of church growth, function, and stability, of individual maturity, and of missions often hinge on such prayers.

1 Corinthians 12:28 also lists **helps** and **administrations** as set ministries. **Helps** are those who always seem to avail themselves in times of need or distress. They are godsend. They are committed to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ in whatever way necessary. And, there are those who assist another in ministry, doing whatever is necessary. Quite often, these are also learning and being trained in that ministry. These I term the **Silas ministry** after Silas who assisted Paul and later came into his own ministry. This is the real school of the Spirit in ministry.

Administrations (or Governments) refer to those who manage the affairs of the Body with sound judgment—both the spiritual as well as the natural. They are as pilots, helping to steer the ship through calm as well as rough waters, being cautious of unseen shoals and rocks that may lie beneath the surface. They, along with the other church elders who may be functioning as pastors, teachers, and so on, are set in place as the overseers of the Church. Their purpose:

“Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.”
(Acts 20:28)

This is a most sobering charge made by Paul to the elders at Ephesus.

And to the **Rest**, varied and unique in calling, I will close with the following: My father-in-law had his ring finger cut off in a freak accident. It was not life threatening. One can hardly notice it missing. This finger is not as important in use as the other fingers. The thumb is probably the most useful with its strength and range of movement or the well-developed index finger for fine movements. However, the greatest service of this fourth finger, the ring finger, is that it supports the action of the other fingers. One will still miss having it around. Thus every part of the body, large or small, seen or unseen, strong or weak, has function and purpose.

Chapter 3 of this series: THE MASTER PLAN & Trilogies of the Kingdom: Saved and Called, may end here, but has actually laid the foundation for all the remaining chapters to follow. For now we will turn our attention to that final piece of the puzzle, the **eternal purpose** of God. We will understand that His **purpose**, in all creation for all time, is what lies closest to His heart, *relationship*:

of the Father to His family born of the seed of Christ,

of the Son to His Church and Bride to be, and

of the Holy Spirit to His eternal habitation(s) in life and power.

This relationship transcends all time. We will begin next with the Fatherhood of God.