

The Coming of Christ
And His Kingdom

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***“Enter by the narrow gate;
for wide is the gate and broad is the way
that leads to destruction,
and there are many who go in by it.
Because narrow is the gate
and difficult is the way which leads to life,
and there are few who find it.”
Matthew 7:13-14***

In these verses the Lord Jesus instructs us to enter by the narrow gate. In our Christian life we will often face two gates, one narrow and one wide.

He tells us that the wide gate and the broad way leads to destruction and many people take this path. If we know it leads to destruction, then why do we still take it? The answer is, it's easy, comfortable, more convenient, less hassle; there's less personal cost involved. The way that leads to life is narrow and difficult. Less convenient, more hassle, more personal cost. Our family and friends may reject us, we may have to turn away “better” career choices, our reputation in the world may suffer, we may not be able to do things we want to do or enjoy, we may even be hurt and attacked.

Which way do we want to take? The difficult way leading to life or the broad way leading to destruction? As the Lord says, most people will take the broad way. Are you going to follow the majority?

Don't think as a Christian we won't go into destruction. We don't lose our salvation, we won't be condemned to an eternity in the Lake of Fire, but there is a judgment for Christians who take the broad way.

We'll consider this for a moment with the Bible to show you that I'm not making this up! These verses are not directed at non-Christians but to Christians!

In our Christian life if we want to take the way that leads to life and we want to receive the reward then there is a price to pay. We must obey the Lord even if it contradicts our own feelings and preferences.

As you're listening here tonight, you might be thinking you've never heard something like this before. The reason is that many Christians take the broad way by preferring to speak about and listening to comforting words about grace and love. It's like eating sweet treats. Most people don't want to talk about judgment and the cost involved in the Christian life. The Word of God has been watered down. But we are living in a special age, we are very close to the return of Christ and He's trying to warn us that we need to make changes, take our Christian life seriously, and wake up to know the truth. It won't be easy but if we take this narrow way we will earn the reward. If we take the broad easy way with the majority of Christians we will fall into destruction and judgment. Don't say "everybody's doing this so it must be right" and "nobody is saying what you're saying so you must be wrong". If you haven't noticed, in many examples in the Bible, the majority is usually not right

so if you find yourself going along with the majority then you should stop and think about whether you're on the right path (Num 14:30; Jud 7:7; Jn 6:60; Matt 22:14).

Now, let's get into our topic for tonight which is the coming of Christ and His kingdom. The Lord Jesus is definitely coming back to this earth as He promised. For those of you who don't know the Lord Jesus, let's talk about who He is.

Who is Jesus Christ

The Son of God

Matt 16:16 – “*Simon Peter answered and said, “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”*”; Romans 1:4 – “[*Jesus Christ was*] **declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**” He is called the Son of God because He is a man and also God. He's second in the Godhead and subject to God the Father. The Bible also says He's born of God (John 3:16), but also has no beginning or end (Heb 7:3). He's truly beyond the understanding of our limited mind!

The Last Adam

1 Cor 15:45 – “*And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*”

In the book of Genesis, the first man that was created was Adam but he sinned by disobeying God. Sin then entered the human race and everyone who descended from Adam, which includes all of us, are born with sin. When Jesus came the first time, He was called the “last Adam“ because He’s the beginning of a new perfect human race that is fully in God’s image, filled with the fullness of God, and without sin. We are meant to follow in His line, to also be sons of God, or “descended” from Him, leaving the old line of Adam behind. This is why we need baptism, which is to be born again with the new perfect life of Christ, and to bury the old Adam in the grave.

His Coming Was Foretold

Jesus Christ’s coming was foretold hundreds and even thousands of years before His birth. The Bible details the location of His birth (Micah 5:2), who His forefathers would be (2 Sam 7:12-16; Is 11:1,10; Ps 132:17), His virgin birth (Is 7:14), how He would live (Is 52:13-53:12; Is 61:1-2), how He would die (Ps 22:1-31; Zechariah 12:10), and His resurrection (Ps 16:8-11). There isn’t anyone in the world who has such an exact description made about him BEFORE His birth. Do you know anyone like this?

Did anyone predict that you would be born and raised here in Toronto? This shows us that Jesus is no ordinary person. We’re not the anointed ones of God like Jesus is or the saviour of the world.

Although God, He Lowered Himself to be a Servant

Jesus was an actual man who walked on this earth about 2,000 years ago. Although He was God, He lowered Himself to become a servant (Phil 2:5-11).

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Jesus is God in the Flesh

Some people say we Christians worship three gods. That's absolutely not true and shows they don't understand how God can be three persons and also one. It's beyond our comprehension. But Philippians 2:5-11 speaks about how Christ lowered Himself from His position as equal to God to become a slave to serve mankind. Verse 6 says He was in the form of God and did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, so He was, in fact, equal with God. Verse 7 says He made Himself of no reputation and He lowered Himself tak-

ing the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of man which means He came and lived as a regular human being bound by time and space and all the limitations that come with being a human. This is why when He lived on the earth He never called Himself the Son of God. He always referred to Himself as the Son of Man because He was just a regular person and it's amazing that He would come down from His glory to serve the people and eventually sacrifice His life for us.

A Perfect Man Who Sacrificed Himself for Us

Christ lived a sinless life, and nobody was able to find fault in Him. This is what qualified Him to pay our debt of sin. If Christ had sin then He would not have been able to pay our debt because He would have to pay His own debt. Romans 6:23 tells us the wages, or penalty, of sin is death. Therefore, because He had no sin, He could be our substitute and pay our penalty by sacrificing His own life so that we would not have to die for our own sins.

Crucified on a Cross

His death was no ordinary death. He didn't die by an accident or by a disease. He was crucified by nailing on a cross. What kind of person was crucified in those times? This was a method of executing convicted criminals in the Roman times. He was falsely accused by the Jews and religious leaders who were envious of Him. They wanted to eliminate Him and He was cru-

cified as a criminal alongside criminals. Long nails were nailed through His hands and feet and He slowly bled to death. People who were crucified were hung by their hands or arms and had to support their weight with their feet otherwise they would suffocate. This is a torturous way to die. He did not deserve it but endured it because of His love for us. He not only suffered physically but the Bible tells us that He carried the weight of all the sins of this world on His shoulders. That includes all of humanity's past present and future sins. By Him bearing all of this sin and dying on the cross, all of the sin of the world was crucified. Paul says "*the handwriting of requirements that was against us*" was "*wiped out*" and "*He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross*" (Col 2:14).

Although His death on the cross was shameful in the eyes of the world and even to Jews, it was a glory and victory for God because it put Satan to shame (Col 2:15)!

Resurrected from the Dead

On the third day after His death, He resurrected because the power of death was not strong enough to defeat Him. After His resurrection, He ascended to the throne of God. Through His sacrifice for sin, He reconciled humanity to God because the sin in us separated us from God. Jesus Christ paid the penalty of sin so that our relationship with God could be restored.

King of Kings, Lord of Lords

Today, seated on the throne, He's the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! He is no longer a poor servant as He was 2,000 years ago but He's the King! He's the King we must obey and honor in our life every day. Sadly, many people still only know Him as a servant and treat Him like one, asking Him for things; we must see Him in His glory!

There's so much that can be said about Him that the apostle John said in John 21:25 that all the books in the world cannot contain everything to know about Him! I had to fit only a small amount about Him on this PowerPoint slide. There's so much more for us to know and experience about Jesus Christ and this comes through walking with Him and living in Him every day.

Why is Jesus Christ coming again?

The Bible tells us when He ascended to heaven, the angels told the disciples, "in the same way that you saw Him go into heaven, will also come back". Jesus also said Himself He will come back. Why is He returning?

He is coming back to judge

1. *The world*

Let's read 2 Peter 3:7 *"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."* When you turn on the news what do you usually see? A lot of bad news. All around us and in the world abroad we see injustice, unrighteousness, and lawlessness. It's increasing everywhere. Evil people get away with unrighteous, sinful, even criminal acts while people who live honestly and properly are persecuted or suffer. In this world, generally if you want to be successful you have to cheat and lie. You'll make more money and be more successful in your career and in school. In some countries, you're expected to pay bribes to the police and government. There are under the table dealings everywhere. People who commit crimes don't go to jail and people who are innocent are convicted. This world is a corrupted place. Evil and unrighteousness are everywhere. Most people in our society even reject God and some will persecute those who follow Jesus Christ.

Some people refuse to believe in Jesus Christ because they ask why God doesn't do anything to fix the world's problems. "Where is He", they ask. They read about a calamity in the news and ask "Why didn't God prevent that" or "Where is God"? They fail to understand that God is patient and gives us an opportunity to hear the gospel, the word of truth, and repent. He gives us all

a chance to turn and change our ways. He's holding back His judgment until time runs out. At some point in the not so distant future, He needs to get on with His eternal plan. God has a great plan and He's put it on "pause" until we get our act together, but there will be a time when He says "Time's up! I have to clean up the mess."

2. *The Christians*

He's going to judge all His people and reward those who deserve His reward, who lived in a proper way, who kept their faith in Him, lived by His Spirit, were obedient, and worked and served Him faithfully. Those who rejected Him, disobeyed Him, put Him aside, and committed evil works will be punished. Remember what we read in 2 Peter that the whole world is reserved for judgment. Don't think we Christians won't be judged. Romans 14:10 says there is a reward and there is punishment for us Christians.

"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Also 2 Corinthians 5:10,11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences."

Paul, writing to the Christians in Corinth, says “we must all”. This “we” means all of us, including Paul. “We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ”. The Lord also mentions that every word we speak will be judged, even every idle word (Matt 12:36). I don’t know if you’ve ever appeared in court before a judge where the judge has to decide if you’re guilty or innocent but one day we will have to stand before the Judge of the universe. We will have to give an account of everything we’ve said and our thoughts. The books will be opened and we’ll have to explain ourselves.

3. Babylon the Harlot

There will be a judgment for Christians and non-Christians. Many Christians don’t understand that our initial salvation is from the lake of fire, from going to hell. This is a free gift of God that we receive if we believe in Jesus Christ and receive His salvation by faith. This is what Mark 16:16 says. There’s still a reward, which is not a certainty for everyone. We may be saved from the lake of fire but we’ll still be evaluated to see if we will receive the reward. It’s something that needs to be earned. People think that since they’re Christians, they’re safe and not going to hell. That’s great and it’s very important but if we miss out on the reward and end up with punishment, and a very severe one, then we’ve wasted our time away and also this grace period which we have right now. This is why Christ will come to judge the Christians. He’s going to judge the confused and defiled system of the Christian religion which is referred to as “Babylon” in Revelation. Tradi-

tional Christianity has caused many people to follow false teachings because they're fooled into thinking they're following the truth. Satan has hidden the truth and caused many Christians to become blinded. People "serve God" and end up perpetuating these false teachings and create ministries and works that put the wellbeing of people ahead of God's purpose without realizing it. The Church is continually being divided into thousands of groups and denominations in Christ's name and this type of "ministry" is even given a nice name called "church planting". Many people are doing things in the name of Jesus Christ that will not be accepted by Him and will have to go through judgment. In Matthew 7:21-23, the Lord calls this lawlessness because we were never permitted to do these works for Him and yet we did. 1 Corinthians 3:15 says every work will be tested by fire.

When the Church was first established in Acts it was very simple. The Holy Spirit was very active, the believers were just following the truth, spreading the gospel, they assembled together, prayed, fed one another spiritually, took care of each other's practical needs, and the Church was one. Over the following two thousand years, many human traditions, practices, and doctrines have integrated themselves into the Church and corrupted it to the extent where people were worshipping idols, worshipping Mary, worshipping so-called "saints", twisting the truth, becoming wealthy off the gospel, persecuting true believers, glorifying man, building their own empires and so on. This system, or "religion", which is done in God's name and

called “Christian” has deceived so many people and it will be judged and condemned by God. It was created by man and made to look spiritual. Jesus’ name is attached to it but it’s designed by Satan to rob Christians of their true purpose and reward as well as frustrate God’s plans.

Revelation 18:8 speaks of God’s judgment on this “Babylon”: *“Therefore her plagues will come in one day – death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”* Also, Revelation 19:2 *“For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.”* It is so evil that Babylon earns a double portion of God’s judgment (Rev 18:6).

4. Satan

In Revelation 20:10 we finally see the devil, Satan the father of lies, is cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever, never to deceive the world again.

He is coming back to establish His Kingdom on the earth

Today, this world is Satan’s kingdom. Christ does not rule the world. He reigns with us and He should be reigning over the Church but the world belongs to Satan. When Christ returns, He’s going to eliminate all of

the world's governments, all authorities, all economies, the entertainment world; everything will be destroyed because they all originated from and are run by Satan. This includes the world's religions. These are all used by Satan to control and deceive people into being enslaved by Satan and keep us away from God. Only when Christ is ruling on the earth will there be true justice, righteousness, and freedom throughout the world. The people of the world put their trust and hope in politicians, movie stars, sports stars, and successful people. They hope these people will bring peace, justice, and happiness to the world but the problem is this always ends in failure because they're all just sinful human beings and mostly hypocrites. Revelation 11:15 *"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'"*

He is coming back to destroy the old cursed creation and bring in the new creation

The entire creation that we see today will be wiped out and replaced because it was defiled with sin when sin entered through Adam and Eve (2 Pet 3:10-13).

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what

manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

These verses tell us that the day of the Lord, the day of judgment, will come as a thief in the night. It will surprise many people. There is no way to know when the thief is coming. Have you ever had your house robbed? When I was a small child, I remember coming home with my parents to find that our house was robbed. It was a complete surprise. We came home to see drawers opened, things were turned and flipped around, several items were missing. The verses continue to say: *"the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up"* (2 Pet 3:10).

If we invest a lot of our time, energy, our heart and soul into building up works in this world, then what's going to happen? They'll all get burned up. Everything we've invested in this world will be in vain. It's not just a possibility but it's a certainty and since it's certain, then what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conduct and godliness? If we believe what the Word says then how should we live our life today having this knowledge, knowing that all these things in the world will be dissolved? How should we invest our time? We must invest our resources in the Kingdom that is eter-

nal. Verse 12 says “looking for and hastening”. Yes, you can even hasten, or speed up, make Christ come sooner! “Looking for” means we’re waiting anxiously with anticipation! I hope we’re all waiting and looking for it. As Christians we should all be waiting and looking for Christ’s coming because we love Him and we want to see Him! We want His Kingdom to come and rid this world of evil and darkness! Verse 13 says it’s a promise, and we know when God promises, you can be sure that He keeps His promises!

Today, we are waiting for this new heaven and new earth where righteousness dwells because Christ is the King in this Kingdom. This should awaken us to realize everything in this world is temporary. Everything we can see and touch is temporary (2 Corinthians 4:18). This includes our bodies, our jobs (if you’ve lost your job, you know what I mean), money, worldly success, our reputation. Satan fools us into investing so much time, energy, and mental resources into temporary things! We might work hard to buy a car but what happens after four years? It’s worth less than half of what we paid for it! You work hard to buy a house and what happens? It gets old, deteriorates, and needs repairs! Even non-Christians know you can’t take anything with you when you die but Satan has deceived everyone into loving the world. It’s a big lie! It exists to take us away from serving God and fulfilling His purpose on the earth! We have to see Satan’s goal is to attack the Kingdom of God and prevent God from achieving His plan! By giving ourselves to serve Satan’s world we are unable to serve the true living God.

We put ourselves under Satan's rule rather than God's. People think if they believe in Jesus, or after they believe, if they submit entirely to Christ that they will lose control over their lives but by not believing and not submitting to Christ you actually hand over control to Satan. Satan fools people into thinking they're free when they're actually his slaves. They're rejecting the true freedom that comes with being a follower of Jesus Christ!

He is coming back to claim His bride, the Church

I want to focus on this point a little bit because we have some visitors here who are Christians. This is good for those of us who have been meeting together for a while too. Let's read Revelation 19:7-8. Note that this is near the end of the Bible.

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

The Lamb here is Jesus Christ, of course, He's called the Lamb of God in John 1:29. There's also a wedding that's going to take place. Did you realize that Jesus is getting married? It says here His wife has made herself ready. If you've been married, especially if you're the bride, you know you can't just go to the ceremony in your

pyjamas, unwashed face, teeth unbrushed, standing next to your groom and you say “I do” with bad breath! You wouldn’t do that! Most people will spend months ahead of the wedding to plan their makeup, hair, and the bridal gown. They want the wedding day to be perfect and many people spend a lot of money on it! These days, it’s common for people to spend tens of thousands of dollars on a wedding. They do this because they want to be well prepared because it’s a very important occasion, one that’s hopefully once in a lifetime!

And who is the “wife” described in verse 7? Christ’s wife is the Church, which is composed of us Christians. It says “the bride has made herself ready”, so whose responsibility is it to prepare? If you’re getting married, who’s going to choose your bridal gown? Is it your parents’ responsibility? Do you just sit at home and expect others to make all your wedding plans for you? No. You will be involved and take responsibility for your own wedding and make sure everything is done properly! It’s the same here for this wedding in Revelation 19. Christ expects that the bride, the Church, makes herself ready and the wedding gown is this linen, clean and bright. You see that you cannot participate in this wedding with dirty clothes or the wrong clothes. The bride’s garments must be clean, pure, and holy. Christ will not just marry anyone. If you were to marry someone you wouldn’t just pick a random person. You will try to choose someone who is a good match, a perfect counterpart. In the same way, Christ needs to have a perfect counterpart, someone who is a match to Him-

self. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), perfect, holy, completely one with the Father, so wouldn't it make sense that His bride is also perfect, holy, and like Him? What kind of marriage would it be if His bride is unholy, unrighteous, divided, not one with God, disobedient? This is why the Church must be a reflection of Christ, to be holy, and perfect. The time for the Church to be prepared is now.

The Church today is divided and mixed together with the world and sin. Everyone is doing their own thing, everyone has their own interpretation of the Bible. The Bible has one author, the Holy Spirit, so how can there be so many different interpretations? There is a common message that runs through the whole Bible. It's a message that God wants to tell us but man has interpreted the Word of God on his own with Satan's help to confuse and hide the message. Today, people divide and fight over their interpretations. God is a God of order and unity, not confusion and when confusion and division exist in the Church, it is not from God. So to prepare the Bride of Christ, we must understand what God's design and plan for the Church looks like.

What the Church is

*The house of the Living God (1 Tim 3:15) –
where God dwells among His people*

The Bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27)

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Again, the Church is the counterpart, the Bride, of Christ as we mentioned earlier.

The Kingdom of God

Just as there is only one Bride for the Groom, there is only one Church. You may say, “There are thousands of churches in the world! They all love the Lord, they’re all serving God!”. You may say this, but I’m telling you in the Bible there is only one Church. Today’s situation of having thousands of groups and denominations is not normal. It came about because of Satan’s attack on the oneness of the Church and by dividing it. He does this because the Church is the expression of the Kingdom of God, it’s a manifestation of the unseen Kingdom of Heaven. When Christ returns and establishes His Kingdom on the earth the whole world will see the Kingdom, but today, before that happens, the Kingdom is not physically visible. The Church is to-

day's manifestation of the invisible Kingdom to give the world a taste and to give them a way to be saved and come to Christ. If the Church is divided, confused, disagreeing about the truth, fighting and quarreling then the truth, the Kingdom will be obscured from the world and even drive people away from God.

Heavenly

The next point is that the Church is something heavenly; it's not from the earth. Hebrews 9:11 says: "*But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.*" The tabernacle that Christ serves is not made with human hands, therefore the Church is not a human work. It's from God, separated from the world, holy, does not belong to the world, and it is not a worldly organization. Man's ideas, strength, capabilities, methods are earthly and do not belong in something heavenly like the Church. The Church must be edified by works performed through the Spirit and with Christ's authority.

Characterized by Oneness

The Church must be undivided and one. That means all of God's people must be one with Christ in His thinking, His vision, His goals, His purpose. We must all be one in following Christ as our head. Today people follow a spiritual leader, they belong to a denomination, or a they go to a "Chinese church" or a "Filipino church" or "Black church". We see in Ephesians 2:14-17

how Christ has broken down the middle wall of separation on the cross. He created ONE NEW MAN and reconciled the different sides into ONE body through the cross. This means in Christ there are no longer differences between us that should divide us because those differences originate in the flesh but now we're in the Spirit. You could be from Korea, I could be born here, we may have different backgrounds, speak different languages, and have different cultures but in Christ we are brothers and sisters and those differences should not prevent us from being built and knit together, being in fellowship together, serving God together.

If I create a "Chinese church" or a "Filipino church" or a "Korean church" then I am going contrary to what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross because on the cross He reconciled us all to one body and broke down the separating wall between people. We put the wall back up by forming different types of "churches" to suit our interests, our own comforts, or for the benefit of people. I'm more comfortable with Mandarin so I form a Mandarin speaking church. This now becomes MY choice because it's something I prefer. This is contrary to what the Lord accomplished on the cross, as we've said. We ignore that the Church is God's house, and not ours to change or choose. Other verses in 1 Corinthians and Galatians talk about how there is no more Jew or Greek. Some may say, yes it's true spiritually but then why is the spiritual not also our true and actual practice? Whatever is true in the spiritual realm must also be true in the physical realm, in our practice. Are

we not spiritual people who live and walk according to the Spirit?

If we truly believe that there are no differences like class differences or cultural differences then we have to live it out, otherwise you cannot say that we believe the Church is the pillar and base of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). We say the Church supports the truth but we don't really believe or practice it. Every "church" thinks they follow the truth but ignore the basic truth about the Church and division. We may even not know what we're doing and are confused about it. This is why Satan attacks the Church by confusing and twisting the Word of God so that there are so many different interpretations. People interpret the Word in whichever way they like.

Christ as the head, and not man

The Bible tells us that Christ is the Head of the Church, not a man. If you ask any Christian group, they'll all say "Yeah, yeah Christ is the Head. Of course!" but in actual practice, they revere a man and set up a human leader. They'll give him a title, call him "Pastor". If you ask them who's in charge, they'll refer you to the pastor. Is Christ the head? Yes, they'll say! In practice, everyone follows the pastor, or the "elder", or the "pope", the "priest", or whichever man. So is Christ truly the head? You can say whatever you like but people can see from your practice whether what you say is the truth or not. We lift up man, give them honor and respect, we don't question what they say. In the true Church, Christ is

the head and all of us we have the same status. We have different responsibilities, different roles to play, but we are the same “level”. Nobody is superior to another person. Even Peter did not receive honor from Cornelius and proclaimed “Stand up; I myself am also a man” (Acts 10:25).

The Church is not/does not

A physical building

Some people say, “I drove by that church”, “Look at that church over there”. We also should not say “I go to church”. We ARE the church. The Church is not a physical place or location. This building we’re meeting in now is not a church. It’s just a building. You’ll never see in the Bible that a physical building is referred to as a “church”.

A social club ...

... for you to make friends, to find a girlfriend or a boyfriend. The Church is not for helping you to find business contacts or to advance your career. That’s what some people do: they come to the meetings of the Church with a personal motive. This is not what the Church is for. It’s selfish and shows we are not truly seeking the Lord. What happens if you don’t find a girlfriend or a boyfriend, or nobody is interested in whatever you’re selling? Do you cut off fellowship and go find another “church”?

A charitable organization

The Church has a responsibility to do good works to help people but that is not the primary purpose of the Church. The Lord instructed the Christians to make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe what He commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). The purpose of the Church is also to make all see the manifold wisdom of God, including the principalities and powers in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 3:10), and to contain the fullness of God (Ephesians 1:23). It must never put man's interests ahead of God's interests. This is what Satan does as the Lord said when He rebuked the devil: *"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men'"* (Matt 16:23).

A business

It is not for making money. If you want to make a donation, and the Lord put it in your heart to do so, then go ahead. Some Christian groups pass a platter around and expect you to donate. If you make a donation, you may even be recognized for it. Where does the money go? In some cases it goes to make someone wealthy, or to pay the pastor's salary (which is not permitted, by the way). If the Church is involved in money-making then corruption, disputes, and greed will come in.

For “spiritual entertainment”

For some people the church goes together with music and singing. If you're not making your own music and singing for pleasure, then you're listening to someone else sing or making music for pleasure. They call this “worship”. The word “worship” in Hebrew (שָׁחָה, *shachah*) means to prostrate oneself or bow down, either figuratively or literally in reverence. Another use of the word in Hebrew is to serve God as a priest like Aaron and his sons (עָבַד, *abad*). It all involves total submission, service, reverence to God. There is no personal emotional pleasure, stirring up of emotions and appealing to personal tastes. People may come to the meetings because they like the music or the band but the Church is not for entertaining people. In some congregations, they have a choir or put on a play that people watch. Sunday services are like a religious program. You just sit, watch and enjoy (or not). You listen to the sermon and someone reads the Bible for you. It's just a “spiritual show” in God's name. Is that how the Church is in the Bible? The Bible shows us that it is every Christian's responsibility to participate in the edification and functioning of the Church (Eph 4:16). There's work to do for everybody, such as providing spiritual food, attending to practical needs, preaching the gospel, shepherding new believers, prayers for the Church, taking care of one's personal growth and walk, etc ...; we're not here to observe and be entertained. As Paul said to Timothy, in the last days, many people will *“not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they*

will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim 4:3-4).

For religion

Being a Christian to many people involves rituals and traditions. This has a “religious” appearance but actually has no spiritual value. It does not cause growth nor does it advance God’s Kingdom. In fact, it causes spiritual death. We were saved not only from sin but also from aimless conduct received by tradition (1 Pet 1:18) and from dead works (Heb 9:14), which religious rituals and customs are.

Belong to any person or is it associated with any person

It is not Paul’s Church or Moses’ Church, it’s not anybody’s except Christ’s. It doesn’t belong to a famous preacher either. If anyone says “this is my church, I started it, I built it”, then you’d better run away because that isn’t the church, that is someone’s own ministry!

Have a name

A name, when it’s attached to a group or organization, is something that divides because you’re saying “this is us, this is our group”. The Church is the body of Christ composed of all true believers with no division or denomination. This is why you won’t find a single church in the New Testament that has a name. What

type of church was Paul ministering to? Was it Baptist or Anglican? It was simply just the Church, Christians assembling together in the Spirit with Christ as their Head, expressing the glory of God and His Kingdom.

Have a hierarchy or positions

Some groups will appoint a Chief Pastor, a Junior Pastor, Deacons, and so on and the congregation follows the Chief Pastor. He says you must do something and everyone obeys. Some groups have a headquarters and we have to follow the direction set by the headquarters. You have to realize, these are all man's creations. There is no such thing in the Bible! We all answer to Christ, we're all humans who are in need of spiritual supply and correction. We are all imperfect and must all submit to Christ as our true Head.

For personal employment or career

In the Bible, no one was paid a salary. Paul received gifts of support but it was not a salary (1 Cor 9:9-11, 18). He was not an employee of the church. He was a bondservant of Christ! (Rom 1:1) If someone receives a salary as an employee, then they are subject to their employer. If the employer wants this person to do something, then he has no choice. According to the Bible, we must always follow the leading of the Spirit in works of the Church but once I'm employed by the Church, I become subject to a man, my employer, and I will have to please a man rather than the Spirit as my main concern. In Revelation 2:14, the doctrine of

Balaam is mentioned as something the Lord hates. Balaam was a prophet for profit. He prophesied for money and he was hired by Balak to curse the Israelites as they journeyed through the wilderness, but the curse could not come out of his mouth. He was only able to bless them. He tried three times and couldn't curse them but since he was already paid, he had to find another way to bring calamity on the Israelites so he caused them to commit sexual immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols. This resulted in God judging the Israelites and many of them dying. Prophesying (speaking words received from the Lord) for profit is forbidden in the Church.

How do we know Christ is coming?

The Lord mentioned in the time before His return, the condition of the world will resemble the days of Noah and Lot (Luke 17:28). People will be mainly concerned about their own lives: marrying, drinking, eating. Society will be corrupt. The LGBT (homosexual/transgender) movement is a good example of this corruption. These days, morality has been flipped upside down. Anti-Christian sentiment is increasing.

In the Middle-East, political events are taking place to set up the Lord's coming such as the development of a peace plan between Israel and her Arab neighbors, and the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel by the United States (December 2017). We can see the end of democracy in Daniel chapter 2, illustrated by

the clay feet. We spoke about this in our last gospel meeting, that before the Lord comes back, democracy will decline and you can see this happening in today's political climate. Elections, even in Western countries, are corrupt and dishonest, the news is unreliable and biased with fake news being commonplace, immoral things are being permitted by law (eg., gay marriage, abortion at birth), and the breakdown of the rule of law. There will be an increase in wars, false teachers, natural disasters. These were all predicted by the Lord but the day or the hour that He returns remains unknown (Matt 24:36).

There are signs that tell us His coming is getting closer and if you are not a believer yet, then you need to confess that you're a sinner, repent and believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized by full body immersion through faith. As Christians, we need to grow and mature in our Christian life, we need to increase in the knowledge of God and be perfected into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). In these last days, before He comes, we must learn and practice true worship, build up the proper Church according to the New Testament pattern, leave our Christian traditions and wrong teachings behind, edify and build up the saints (fellow Christian brothers and sisters). We must also preach the gospel and make true disciples of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19-20), not merely "Sunday-goers". If our hearts are occupied with the world and trying to be successful in the world, we will be distracted from our true purpose in life and there is no way we can fulfill our responsibilities as priests and citizens of the heavenly kingdom. *M.W.*