

**Biblical
New
Testament
Church**

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Table of Contents

Preface	3
Two Aspects of the New Testament Church	4
Entrance Requirements for the Invisible or Universal Church	6
Entrance Requirements for the Visible or Local Church	8
Activities of the Local New Testament Churches	10
Warnings Against the Local New Testament Churches	18
Call to Return to the Practice of Local New Testament Churches	23

**And Jesus answered and said unto him,
Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:
for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,
but my Father which is in heaven.
And I say also unto thee,
That thou art Peter,
and upon this rock I will build my church;
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
(Mathew 16:17&18)**

This is a study on the New Testament Church. What really is a New Testament Church? This no doubt is often the question for serious Bible students to verify for themselves whether they are members of a Biblical New Testament Church. This concerns the practice of Christianity. This is a serious question that warrants serious consideration to find out whether we are indeed found to be members of this New Testament Church where the Lord promised the gates of hell will never be able to prevail against. Otherwise, we could be found to be members of false churches and practising a false form of Christianity embracing false doctrines. The consequences for being wrong are unthinkable!

Therefore in this study, the views of Christians with regards to New Testament Churches will be discussed. The character and nature of the New Testament Church will be considered as revealed from the New Testament. The activities of Christians in the pioneering days of the New Testament Churches will be examined. The Lord Jesus Christ's expectation from the New Testament Churches will also be reviewed. A self-examination will be conducted to evaluate and to verify where we stand with regards to New Testament revelation about the New Testament Church. May the Lord bless the study of His pure and holy words and help us to endeavour to be practitioners as true Christians in the true New Testament Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord told Peter that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. The saved and the lost have all kinds of ideas concerning the Church. Some think that a church is a church building. Some think it is an organization. Some think that it is some membership club kind of association that is connected with a religion. But what really is a New Testament Church? What are the character and nature of a New Testament Church? Without studying the New Testament, it is impossible to come to a conclusive understanding of what constitutes a New Testament Church. Indeed only the New Testament reveals about this Church. To rely on what we see in practising Christendom and traditions, it is very easy to arrive at some seemingly plausible model of a Church and yet this Church has got nothing in common with Scriptural revelation.

The saints in the past called the Church with two terms – the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. The Church Militant refers to those Christians who are still on earth and those who have made it to glory land belong to the Church Triumphant. Our modern day equivalent is the Visible Church and the Invisible Church. Some groups, especially the Baptist, call the two forms of church the Universal Church and the Local Church. Notwithstanding, the two different aspects of the Church are taught in the Scriptures.

There are false teachers who will go to one of the two different extremes. The liberal who believes so much in the Invisible Church or the Universal Church will consider anyone who goes to church a Christian. It may seem an untenable position to those who know and read the Holy Bible but this is the reality in professing Christianity. This is the forefront and spirit of ecumenism. They make no distinction between the doctrines of different groups and the objective is simply to bring everyone together in Christian unity overriding all differences among themselves. Charismatic, Catholics and everyone else who go to church are Christians. This is to show a united front for political gain in dealing with the world of religions at large.

The other self-righteous group believes so much in the Visible Church or the Local Church that they will go into great pains to deny the Invisible Church. They will avoid the term Universal Church like a plague. You can recognize them in their writings by their over zealousness in promoting the Local Church. They will avoid the term Invisible or Universal Church and they use only the term Local Church. Some people who hold such

persuasion will view those who disagree with them as siding with the liberals and even accuse them of involvement with ecumenism.

What are the errors of this group? They go into pastoral authority. The pastor is the dictator of the local assembly called the Local Church. Members must do what the pastor says or else they will be in trouble. They can get into cultic tendency and members become oppressed by the church leaders. Members dare not leave their church fearing they might no longer be members of the New Testament Church, which is the Bride of Christ. Their status become questionable once they leave this New Testament Church. Such fear imposed upon them by false teachers leads them into bondage and they do not have the courage to confront false teachings in the church.

They also get into the error of the Baptist Bride heresy. They believe only the Baptist, specially the Independent Baptist and those Baptist they approve of are the New Testament churches that make up the Bride of Christ. The rest maybe have to wait on table to serve them in the Kingdom Age. You cannot possibly imagine how audacious and self-righteous they can become. That is why they must hold to this extreme position of Local Church only. This position gives them power and prestige and it serves them well to garner support to keep them in the chair of authority. Once this position is established, they can decree anyone who disagrees with them on almost any issues concerning faith and practice to have lost the status of a New Testament Church.

They will also not allow outsiders to partake of the Lord's Supper. They categorized the Lord's Supper into three different positions. There is the open communion, which is an abomination to them. They also have the closed and close communion. One will allow those of like precious faith from other churches to partake the Lord's Supper with them and the other only allows their own members from the church to partake the Lord's Supper. The rationale is to keep the church pure. Nothing could be more ridiculous than this. It is only God and His words that can keep a Christian pure and not the administration of the Lord's Supper or the local church policy. Both the liberal and the self-righteous groups are wrong as far as the Bible is concerned.

Years ago when I was in the States, I asked a pastor from Ohio what 1 Corinthians 12:13 means. **For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)** After reading the verse, he told me to give him one day to study the verse. The following day, he politely told me he did not understand what the verse meant. He is a good man who loves the Lord. But I think he was trying not to cause trouble. I think he avoided giving me the obvious answer. The church that invited him to minister believes only in the Local Church. So he could not or dared not give me a biblical answer. The verse states plainly that Christians are baptized into one body and not in water by the Spirit. This body cannot be a local body of believers. It is not the pastor who does the baptizing in water. It is the Holy Spirit who performs the baptism by putting the believer into a body. This body obviously is the body of Christ also called the Church. The definition of this Body called the Church cannot be mistaken if one would read the Scriptures with an honest heart.

Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Ephesians 1:23) That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: (Ephesians 3:6) There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (Ephesians 4:4) For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (Ephesians 5:30) And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18) Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: (Colossians 1:24) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

Christians do not become members of this Body called the Church by any other means other than through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit puts the born again child of God into this Body and he becomes a member of this Body called the Church also known as the Bride of Christ. Membership is conditioned upon a sinner receiving Christ as his Saviour. Membership into this body is not administered by man but by the Holy Ghost. Unsaved people cannot become member of Christ's Body – the Church. But unsaved members can become a member of a Local Church. Entrance fee is free and a sinner must accept the invitation given to him to believe in the gospel of

Entrance Requirements for the Invisible or Universal Church / 7

the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is the Invisible Church as taught in the Holy Bible.

However, Christians do not assemble invisibly on earth because we do not exist invisibly in this body of flesh and blood. Common sense will tell us that we have to assemble in time and space on earth. Membership to a local church is a different matter. The New Testament does not teach any particular form of membership for a Christian to assemble locally. They just assemble naturally and carry out the function of preaching the gospel and fellowshiping with one another. The visible churches have all kinds of entrance barriers for Christian to join them. Some have to attend Bible classes. Some have to be baptized in water.

Recognition of the water baptism can also be an issue for church membership as well. Some churches will not recognize their water baptism claiming that they are alien baptism. To join them, you have to be baptized by them or those that they approved of. Some churches have a voting system. To join them, the church must vote to allow a candidate to join the church. Usually, the candidate must make a profession of faith before they are allowed to be voted into their church. Then they can enjoy all the privileges confer upon them by the church; meaning, church weddings and funerals. This may sound nice but instead of privileges, they are getting into all kinds of liabilities and obligations. All these man-made systems, rules and regulations are based on human logic. The Bible does not teach all these systems of checks and balances for local church membership. The believers in Christ just simply assemble locally and naturally serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

So there are many different kinds of local or visible churches. Some come together for social gathering and enjoy their church entertainments which give them an emotional high but they must pay at least ten percent of their income to enjoy this privilege. Some churches are made up of closely knitted families and relatives and the gates of hell can never prevail against them not till hell freezes over. Some churches like to focus on the deeper knowledge of Christ like those groups belonging to Watchman Nee. They like to talk about Christ and Christ crucified and nothing more and they went into error. His disciple Witness Lee wrote a book on the Tree of Life that bothers on blasphemy. These members are very happy and joyful because whenever they come together, they are given opportunity to express themselves in worship by eating Jesus Christ. They talk about feasting on Christ and eating Him up and everyone has a chance to do it. It was so sickening that I had to write a book on the Tree of Life quite sometime back to help this brother out who apparently did not appreciate it. We will now

Entrance Requirements for the Visible or Local Church / 9

consider the history and activities of local churches as found in the New Testament.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

In the beginning, believers in Christ were very closely knitted together. The Lord Jesus Christ had just resurrected and ascended back into heaven. Many of them were firsthand eyewitnesses. They were eagerly anticipating for the return of Christ to establish the kingdom in Israel. So they shared their possessions and helped one another out literally. They did not need earthly wealth anymore when the Kingdom would soon become a reality. That was what they felt during those days. So they assembled everyday in the temple and they ate and fellowshiped together from house to house. They did not come together to talk about earthly affairs. They continued in the apostles' doctrines and they had their Bible studies from the Old Testament. They were rejoicing waiting for the appearing of Christ from heaven.

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:32-37)

The Communists took their doctrine from here and imposed a dictatorship on their citizens which was well described in Orwell's Animal Farm. The disciples were witnessing fervently for the Lord and the Lord granted the increase to their visible church. There was no lack because there

was no selfishness among the believers in Christ. They had a system of taking care of everyone's earthly needs literally. They voluntarily gave up their wealth as taught by the Lord to help one another out. Among the noblest example was Barnabas. They never had an issue concerning giving. Giving just came naturally even as they gathered to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. (Acts 5:1-6)

Some people tried to pretend to be spiritual and charitable lied to the Holy Ghost and ended up dead. If Peter, James and John were conducting worship services here this morning, I think we must be very careful before we want to step into this room. Pretension and hypocrisy attract the death penalty. Unfortunately, this is another chapter where the former King James Bible defender perverted to line up with his false doctrine. His hatred for Catholicism and his allergy to giving caused him to accuse Peter as the first Pope for ordering the death of Ananias and his wife because they did not give Peter all their monies. So the church members present promptly carried out Peter's order and put them to death.

You cannot imagine a man who used to defend the King James Bible can stoop so low to pervert the Scriptures to support his paranoia of Catholicism and giving. He must be really a stingy man who hates giving and uses any opportunity to support his paranoia. When Christians come together as a church, they help relieve the poor and needy among them. This is evidence for their faith in the world to come. Indeed faith without work is dead.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the

Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (Acts 6:1-3)

They had a ministry of ministering to the poor as required of them from the Old Testament. They were painfully aware of the Lord's attitude towards the rich. The rich man went to hell. The Lord also pronounced woe unto the rich. Those who are saved are not interested in their wealth and will use them to glorify God. This ministering to the poorer brethren is the established norms for all churches during that time.

This is where servants are raised and they are the equivalent of deacons in the church. While the spiritual qualifications for deacons do not include being apt to teach like the elders, deacons are by no means only serving tables. Stephen who was chosen was such a great preacher that he became the first martyr of the Christian faith in Acts 7. Philip who was also a chosen servant here was called to preach to the Samaritans and many got saved in Acts 8. He was also the preacher who preached to the Ethiopian eunuch who was saved and was baptized by him in Acts 8. So deacons have a noble calling. Hence servants were raised even as the local church grew during those days.

When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. (Acts 11:18-24)

Believers were scattered everywhere and they preached Christ and Christ crucified to lost sinners and the churches flourished. Those who believed would go to a local assembly to learn more about this blessed Saviour that they had received to be their Saviour. They received instructions on how to live their lives as Christians and not to live their lives according to their own whims and fancies. No one talked about “you do not tell me what to do” and “mind your own business” citing liberty as an excuse. They were serious with their faith. They stayed close together and drew near to Christ. The church in Jerusalem sent representative on a fact-finding mission to exhort and encourage these saints. They rejoiced and they glorified God among them.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 13:1-4)

Believers in Christ were first called Christians here in Antioch. In the church, they have prophets and teachers. The Lord raised up servants in the church. Paul was not the pastor there. He was subject to the church leadership there. Paul and Barnabas were missionaries sent by the church in Antioch to preach the gospel to the lost in Asia Minor and all the way to Europe. The church practised fasting and they were concerned for lost souls. So they sent missionaries and supported them and blessed them on their journey. When their mission trip was over, they reported back to their home church so that everyone would rejoice with them and thank God for the work accomplished. This is one of the most important aspects of a New Testament Church. Mission is the lifeline of the church.

Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. (Acts 15:35&36)

When Paul and Barnabas returned from the mission field, they were teaching and preaching in the church in Antioch. A healthy church will have enough teachers to teach and preachers to preach. This however did not cause division among them. But they did not forget those churches they had established. They were eager to meet them again and to know of their welfare. For they truly loved the brethren even as Christ loved the Church. So they went to visit these churches again and to be a blessing to them.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

The New Testament Church also practised giving not tithing. It is plain common sense that money is required when Christians come together for their church activities. But they were not simply using money on themselves alone for their own church activities. They collected money to relieve the saints in other churches. They also supported missionaries who preached the gospel to other parts of the world. These were activities of the churches during those days.

As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time. (1 Corinthians 16:12)

The churches also received preachers from outside of their own people. There were visiting preachers who preached and ministered to them and be a blessing to them. They believed in spiritual growth of the believers in Christ through the preaching from preachers from outside their own locality. Paul often sent Timothy and Titus to churches to minister to them.

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your

messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. (Philippians 1:1&2; 2:25) Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. (Romans 16:16) The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. (1 Corinthians 16:19) The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. (1 Peter 5:13)

The churches communicated with one another as church to church. The churches were not isolationist thinking that this was a paragon of virtue. They communicated with one another often and were concerned for one another's welfare. They would not hesitate to help when the need arose. They demonstrated their love one for another to love the brotherhood. They backed up their love with giving to minister to their needs. Those early Christians loved in truth and in words as well as in deeds.

Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. (Colossians 4:15&16)

There was much communications between churches during those days. They even shared letters received by them. That was how our New Testament came into existence today. It is preserved through the priesthood of believers under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. No one kept things to themselves. It was meant to be shared including letters received from the apostles. No doubt they came together to worship but that was not all. They came together for a purpose; that was to glorify God. They also came together to edify one another. They kept one another on their toes by provoking one another unto love and good work. No one lived a recluse life pretending to be spiritual. No one thought becoming a monk would help them overcome the world and the lust thereof. That was why they gathered together regularly to do the Lord's work and not just to worship as we liked to claim.

Worshipping God in Spirit and in truth is no longer confined to a temple or in a mountain. It is not confined to a church building or even in this hotel room. If you only have worship on Sunday morning once a week for an hour, you are of all Christians most pathetic indeed. Worshipping God in Spirit and in truth is an attitude and a way of life for those who are born

again. The Lord removed that notion of worshipping God in a given locality with no uncertain terms. Worshipping God in Spirit and in truth is not to provide an avenue for Christians to come together on Sunday to sooth their conscience. It is certainly not a platform for Christians to come together on Sunday to pretend to be spiritual for an hour a week. It is also not for Christians to feel that they have performed their Christian duty to appear with Christians once a week. Worshipping God in Spirit and in truth is no longer an activity.

Going to a temple is an activity. Coming to church is an activity. Wednesday prayer meeting is an activity. Sunday school is also a church activity whether you like to admit it or not. What makes us think our church is superior and more spiritual than other churches that are having lots of church activities? What are the criteria of measuring spirituality? While there are those who have mistaken church activities as spirituality, there are also those who think that less activity is spirituality. If spirituality is inversely proportional to church activities, those who do not attend churches are super spiritual saints. Perhaps there are those who really think that they are so spiritual that they do not need to come together as a congregation for the purpose of glorifying Jesus. What makes them think that way? Who gives them such ideas? Who stumbles such people? Are they really so spiritual who adopt such a position and attitude? **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)** The day of gathering together may one day become dangerous even as the coming of our Lord draws nigh. If these super pious saints refuse to come together during time of peace, what will happen to them during time of turmoil?

When are church activities unscriptural? When members are compelled to participate against their will in whatever ways whether it is through peer pressure or withholding of privileges or any forms of threats or bullying. It is not activities alone that can produce spirituality. It is also not activities that cause bondage to believers in Christ either. It is the purpose and motives behind those activities organized by churches. It is also the motivation and motives of those participating in such activities. The New Testament churches were full of life and activities. They did not just come together once a week for some superficial gathering. They did not come together to hear the preacher tell them how good they were and make them happy. They did not come together to learn how to influence people and

master some strategies to make money. They came together for some specific purpose. They were lively and full of life. They were actively reaching out to the lost. They were collecting money to relieve the saints and support missionary activities. They were not selfish coming together to get as much out of it as possible but to give. They gave their time, their talent and their resources to further the cause of Christ. A giving church is a growing church.

Do you know the Lord brought His disciples for a holiday, for a retreat, long before modern men talk about team building for their organization? Do you know the Lord had a barbeque picnic on the beach with His disciples to renew Peter's love and commitment to Him? **And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. (Mark 6:31)** What did they talk about during their retreat or some like to call it a holiday? Were they talking about the stock market? Were they talking about wine and women? What is your idea of a holiday? Is it going away from the church, away from the prying eyes of the brethren so that you may run into riot, which is in excess? Is a holiday getting drunk and visit karaoke joints and be served by their hostesses? Or is it a trip to the casino to try your luck? No wonder we need to pray to God to deliver us from a judgmental spirit. Why then condemn some churches that organized church camps or retreats so that Christians can gather together to study the Bible? This is contrary to having a non-judgmental spirit, isn't it? Why you have no trouble attending company retreats with worldly activities and be brainwashed with feeling good about each other through team building and many other Freudian-inspired activities? Why are you allergic to church organized activities and you have no qualms in attending worldly activities organised by friends, families and the company you work in? You justify attending to all other activities calling it a social duty! What a masterstroke of ingenuity from a fallen mind! What about your Christian duty?

While it is true that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, this is not true for the Visible Church. The Lord personally promised to destroy the visible local church if that church ceases to function as a proper New Testament Church.

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (Revelation 2:1-5)

So the Lord had an issue with this local church in Ephesus. The Lord came looking for works. If there are no works, we are in trouble. But the church here had works. The trouble was that they had left their first love. Works alone such as church activities are not good enough. Gathering together just on Sunday like this is certainly not good enough. The threat from the Lord was to remove them except they repent. Think about some of those famous churches once giants of the faith preached in. What happened to Metropolitan Tabernacle where Charles Spurgeon once preached? Are we also guilty of leaving our first love? It is a terrible thing for a husband or a wife to say to each other. They may end up in divorce if the repair to their relationship is not done. For some of you pioneers of this church, do you envisage the church you laboured so much to plant will end up as it is today?

Do not take the threat from the Lord lightly. It is time to repent and do not wait for repentance to come to you. Repentance will not come from heaven but judgment certainly will. The Lord commanded Christians in that church to repent and yet foolish Christians expect God to grant them true repentance! These are diametrically opposing stances. The Lord expects His people to repent and there are Christians who think God owes them true repentance and ask God for it! When a church that claims to have God's pure, inspired and perfect words of God and believes in not having to repent but wait and pray to God to grant them repentance is sad indeed. It is no longer funny. Something is fundamentally wrong. The Lord promised to

come quickly to remove this church in Ephesus that had lost her first love. The threat of the Lord was not just coming to remove the church that has lost her first love for the threat was ever imminent as the Lord promised He would come quickly. The sense of urgency is there. The Lord will not tolerate a church that has lost her first love for very long. Church activities alone will not do. Church activities must be carried out for the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:12-16)

The Lord came looking for works again. The Lord here had a few things against this church in Pergamos. The doctrine of Balaam was mentioned that caused Israel to stumble. Are there stumbling blocks among us? They taught it was alright to commit fornication where marriage between believers and non-believers were acceptable. So if you think being unequally yoked in marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian is to get some consolation in the future, then think again. Do not look at the Scriptures through the lens of this world so accustomed to relying on the fallen mind. They also had those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; the clergy against the laity.

Here the threat from the Lord is even worse. The Lord promised He will not only come but will come quickly as well. The Lord is usually known to be long suffering towards sinners in this world. Here Christ promised to come quickly to fight against them with the sword of His mouth. Can you imagine the Lord would want to come quickly to carry out a killing and destroy this church? Do you feel His sense of urgency? Alas, who will abide the day of the coming of an angry God! There goes the liberals' sweet Jesus who is ever so loving that Christ does not mind what they do in this life. So

judgment must begin at the house of God. **For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)**

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:18-23)

Here the Lord made clear in no uncertain terms what He would do to this sinning church that allowed Jezebel to teach in the church. It does not mean Jezebel has to be teaching directly from the pulpit. She could be teaching from behind the scene controlling her good-for-nothing husband. She taught Christ's servants to commit fornication and idolatry just like Jezebel controlled her husband king Ahab to cause Israel to sin. The Lord promised to kill the children of this sinning church. How unthinkable! The Lord was not threatening to kill the children of the wicked people in the world but the children in the church! The Lord wants to kill the children of the church with death! Can you imagine what the parents of these children in the church must have done? They must have made the Lord exceedingly mad with their sickening sinful ways of life. Having been delivered from hell fire but live a life that is not befitting that of the citizens of the kingdom of light, how shall they escape damnation to come upon them!

Christians better live their life right. Living an immoral life is detrimental to the health of your own children. Christians could be found murderers of their own children by the way they live this life. The Holy Bible is not that difficult to understand. It is rather difficult to believe. When the Lord destroys this church, He makes sure everyone from all the churches

knows He is the one who will destroy such a church. He will make an object lesson out of this sinning church so that other churches would fear. Time and space for repentance are given and when the time of grace is over, the church is wiped off from the earth.

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Revelation 3:1-3)

The Lord looked at the works of this church and rebuked this dead church in Sardis. They had a name and seemed to be living but was dead. Dead formalism and form had taken over the church. The Lord warned that He would come during a time when they were not watchful. Are we like this church that has a name but are dead? Are we like them who have a stand on the King James Bible but our church activities are not patterned after those in the New Testament? There will be a lot of soul-searching.

This church was told to be watchful and to strengthen the things which remained because this church was ready to die. Is our church ready to die? Are we a dead church? The Lord did not find the work of this church perfect. So folks, be watchful. Being watchful is not a one man's job. Do not pray to God to deliver us from dead forms and formality. You have to get out of this spiritual doldrums and start coming together to do something for the Lord Jesus Christ as a church. Repentance from the church is required. The church is to remember what this church has received and heard and hold fast the form of sound words. Otherwise, they will be overtaken when the Lord comes as a thief in the night.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and

blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (Revelation 3:14-19)

This is a church that majored in wealth accumulation. The members were rich but spiritually they were naked and poor. This church had the notorious fame of the Lord threatening to spew this church out of His mouth. This church was so disgusting and nauseating that the Lord could not even stand this church. This church is famous in investing in real estates. Hugh magnificent buildings and high salaried paying church staff are part of this church. But they are nothing to shout about. The members are rich but they have no spiritual fruits to show. Are we like them rich and so lukewarm? Maybe the church account is not rich because all the riches have been channeled to build their little mansion in this life on earth. We are living in this church age and it is inevitable that some of its influence will infiltrate into all the churches. Are we just building our little kingdom on earth that is not rich towards God? Repentance was called for and the church in Laodicea was told to be zealous. Repentance must be accompanied by zeal. If you were the pastor or elder, would you not fear and be concerned that all these threats from the Lord may be aimed at us as a church?

You may have the wrong idea of the Lord Jesus Christ all these years. The erroneous kind of emotions and feelings about the Lord better be changed. The Lord did not hesitate to destroy the beautiful Temple build by Solomon and the other one built after the children of Israel's exile when they ceased to function according to their purpose. What makes you think the Lord will not destroy this local assembly? While the gates of hell will not prevail against the true New Testament Church, it is not the case for the local visible churches. Not all the members of the local churches are saved born again believers in Christ. You have false brethren in these local churches to spy out the liberty of Christians and to create trouble in the church.

This church has never been big and perhaps it never will! Do you think this church has all the activities that the churches in the New Testament practised? Are we communicating with other churches? If not, why not? Is it because there are no more godly churches to communicate with? Do you know the carnal church in Corinth also communicated with the church in Jerusalem by sending them relief? Are we worse than the church in Corinth? Are we so obnoxious and no one would want to communicate with us? Are we helping the poorer brethren as a church? If there are no poorer brethren here, are we looking beyond our shores? If we are poor and needy where our houses are subject to hurricanes and typhoons, would it not be good to know that there are brethren who will help us out in times of trouble? Our trouble may soon come and no one outside of our church will help us if that day comes.

Are we helping those who preach the gospel? Are we fellow helpers of the truth? Are we supporting missionaries who are labouring in the vineyard? I know of churches that are barely two years old that are supporting missionaries. Not very much but they are taught to reach the lost in whatever way they could. What is our purpose as Christians? To tell others about Christ, right? What kind of work are we doing? If it is not possible to do it here, there are opportunities out in other land where the gospel door is still not closed. Do we have enough teachers from among us like a healthy church is supposed to have? Are we sending out our own missionary? Would it not be good to invite Brother Mallari to preach to us again? You will never be able to empathize with the brethren just listening to me.

Is this the kind of church that you want? After 20 years, if this is what we have got, then we are very slow learners indeed. What will happen to us in 5 to 10 years' time? Will this church still be in existence? Are we really a healthy functioning church patterned after the New Testament? If not there will be no need for us to exist and the Lord will sooner or later remove this church as He threatened other churches in the past.

It is true that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, the Body of Christ, which is His Bride. It is true that all may be well with your soul. But all may not be well with the local church here. All may not be well with your family and your children. Do not for a moment think we have a stand on the King James Bible and we have liberty mean we are well. This is a false sense of security. The Old Testament saints thought they had the temple standing and they had worship and sacrifices and so all was well. But the Lord destroyed them. If we have no works that resemble those in the New Testament churches, our King James Bible stand is simply an excuse for us to justify our own selfishness and indifference and even worse, our pride. Our liberty is a license for us to commit sin where no one can judge us. But God will judge us whether we want to believe it or not.

Are you still living under the shadow and threat from a cult leader? Why did you let one wicked man turn you to the other extreme where a church means Sunday worship and nothing else? Who has actually stumbled you? It might not even be that wicked man. Are you sure he is the real cause of a church without works to please the Lord? Or is it someone or something else stumbling and hindering you? False teachings will always run to one of the two extremes. It is either full of activities or no activities at all. If you contend that church activities give people a sense of false spirituality, church worship also gives people a false sense of salvation too. Should we stop church worship altogether?

It is March now and soon December will be here. So when we look back, we wonder what we have done. We may have moved to a better house or apartment. We may have changed cars. We may have dined in some exquisite restaurants and gone to some exotic destinations for a holiday. But what have we done for the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you care? I hope you do. Do you still love the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lover of our soul? Then what are you going to do for Him? All of us better ask the Lord what we should do for Him so that this local visible church might still have use for Christ on this earth. May the Lord raise up others to teach and to preach as well! May

the Lord teach all of us from His words and show us what the churches in the past did. May we all live our lives like the saints in the past and take our faith seriously, especially for our children's sake. May we all be zealous and repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance! May we as a church come together to do something for Christ! May the Lord spare us for our children's sake! May the Lord revive us again and restore unto us all our wasted years! May this church be fruitful again!

If you have been blessed with the reading of this book and you wish to contact the author, you may write to him at charles@kiv-asia.com.