

*"Then they will **rebuild** the ancient ruins, They will raise up the former devastations, And they will repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations."*
(Isaiah 61:4)

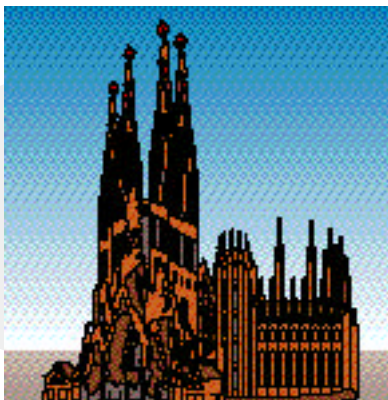
The Church's Purpose

What did Christ have in mind when He came to establish the Church? Certainly, He did not conceive of a building where people would get together once a week, sing songs, hear a sermon, receive sacraments and then forget the experience until the next Sunday, where the cycle would repeat itself again.

The word *Church* comes from the Greek word for "assembly," the ruling body of citizens and senators gathered together to secure and extend the reign of government in ancient Greece. In a not so dissimilar way, the Christian Assembly is to be about extending God's Kingdom as Spirit-elected Representatives.

The earth belongs to God, not to the devil. God established the Church to bring in the reign of God – that is, to extend His love and healing presence throughout the earth.

"I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it," Jesus said (Matthew 16:19). In essence, He was saying, "My Church will push satan and his demons on their back-sides, and will establish My Kingdom in their place. Satan's kingdom will cave in under the faith of My People."



Rebuild

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Why Rebuild?

How is this to occur? It will not occur through the establishing of conservative voting blocks, the sending up of more communication satellites, or the printing of more books. The Church will defeat the powers of Hades and extend the reign of God's love only when the Christian People rediscover their call to be God's Church, *God's Assembly*.

The purpose of this newsletter is to stir up God's People to embrace this divine call, and once again "assemble" as God's holy nation, a people set apart to proclaim His excellencies (1 Peter 2:9).

What is Needed

What will it take to rebuild the Church? Here are three essentials...

The Church is *Being Before Doing*
We all know that the Church is not a building, yet most see Church membership as an issue of attendance. In the early Church, Church membership was not merely a call to attend "services," but a call to live the gospel *with* other brothers and sisters. The Church was a community, an environment where the gospel was *seen in the way God's People loved one another*. We lack evidence of this visible Gospel today.

We do not lack for words.



We lack for a place where we can take people to "come and see" the Gospel, a place where the Gospel can be touched and felt in the lives of believers. This incarnation of the Gospel was evident in the Church at Pentecost. This is what God wants to rebuild among us today.

The People of God Are to Be For the Kingdom, and Against the World I know that this sounds obvious, but I do not believe that we American Christians have really grasped this. For most, the Church in its best form is a support system to help a person to survive the world. For another segment of Christians, the Church is to make room for teaching that inspires people to be all they can be, to be a "success" in the world. The Church of earlier centuries had no room for either model. The Apostolic Church demonstrated a way of life that ripped the festive paper from the world's rewards, showing them to be the cheaply disguised exhibits of death that they are.

James says with blunt clarity that those who accommodate the world—live to win its prizes—are at odds with God (James 4:4). How can one be at odds with God and yet extend His Kingdom?

The Church Needs To Be Truthful
Again, this sounds like another obvious truism. "Yeah, I know, and water is wet. What's the point?" The point is that we act

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as though speaking the truth and being the truth are the same thing. They are not.

Paul told Timothy that the Church of God was the "pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:15). What did he mean by this? He meant that the Church's task went beyond preaching. The Church is to



be an example of what she preaches. It is not enough for the Church to spot a counterfeit; she must herself be an example of the real thing. The most powerful way to demonstrate that a ruler is warped is to lay a straight one right alongside of it.

Integrity demands we place a higher priority on *being* truth than *preaching* truth. Sure, we will never fully measure up to our ideal, but how can we even honestly say it is our ideal if we practically ignore it? Is it an ideal if we constantly

choose charisma over character in our selection of leaders, place an emphasis on doing things for God over being what God wants us to be, or tell people the Gospel is the "pearl of great price" yet remain unwilling to simplify our lives so we can be freer to declare its eternal value?

People need to not only hear about the light, but to actually see it. The People of God must stop and ask, "What will better extinguish the darkness — an eloquent treatise on fire or an ignited torch held high in one's hand?"

We do not need more words. We need to submit to *God's* Word; we need to be a People who re-present Him through lives of love and integrity. If we accept this mandate, the gates of Hell will be set afire and God's light will overcome the darkness in a way words alone always fail to do.

Jordan Bajis

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