

**DISCIPLESHIP 3  
GOD'S PLAN  
SERIES**

**UNIT III - LESSON 7, 8  
THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH  
THE LOCAL CHURCH**

for

**CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE  
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## **UNIT III - SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

### **LESSON 7 - GOD'S WAY TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY - BETHEL - "THE LORD ADDED UNTO THE CHURCH"**

The Apostle Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 2:8,9 says,

**"For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves: it (faith) is the gift of God: not of works (self-effort), lest any man should boast."**

As we discuss, "Living according to God's Plan (Ways)" it is most important that we NEVER loose sight of the fact that we are saved, made members of the kingdom of God, that we are in Christ Jesus and Jesus is in us, NOT because we are worthy of this honor, NOT because we deserve any thing from God - BUT, rather we are saved as it plainly states there in Ephesians 2:8 by the GRACE OF GOD without any help from us. God in His grace GAVE us faith (saving faith) as a gift of His love.

"Saving faith" is a faith that believes in, latches onto, stands firm in the eternal truth of God, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and that in Him (Jesus) there is life and salvation for whosoever will believe and trust in Him as their personal Savior from sin, death and hell."

**"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).**

We are saved by the grace of God. Not by anything we do or have done. Not by repentance. Not by Baptism. Not by "living according to God's plan". We are saved BY THE GRACE OF GOD WHO LOVES US AND GAVE HIS SON, JESUS, FOR US, BY FAITH THAT IS WORKED IN US BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE WORD OF GOD. Amen?

It is important that we never loose sight of the fact that we are saved by the grace of God because if we do, Satan will come and bring confusion and as we discuss the ways and plan of God for our living, we will begin to think that these are things which God requires of us if we are to be saved (keep our salvation).

You see Satan cannot do anything about the fact that you are a child of God. But if he can bring confusion into your life by taking your eyes off of Jesus, causing you to lose sight of the fact that you are saved by grace through faith and that not of yourself but the gift of God, then Satan will be able to rob you of the abundant life your Jesus came to give you.

WHY? because you will become so involved in the self-effort of survival and striving to please God that your Father God through the working of the Holy Spirit in and through you will not be able to bring you into His order.

You see, it is as we REST IN GOD'S GRACE that His order is established in our lives. Amen?

As His order is established in our lives the outworking of the Holy Spirit will enable us to LIVE ACCORDING TO THE PLAN WHICH GOD IN HIS INFINITE WISDOM OUT OF LOVE FOR US HAS DEVELOPED. This plan of God if followed by His children

will have the results of you, His children enjoying the fullness of His provisions for you bring success to everything you do. Amen!

I for one appreciate the fact that my God is a God of order and that He wants to work His order in my life, that I through His OUTWORKING, may live and enjoy the abundant life.

In this lesson we want to continue talking about **GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY** as revealed in 2 Kings 2:1-15. His plan is revealed in the meaning of the four places mentioned - Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan.

We have noted that the progression of spiritual maturity is from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho, then to the Jordan.

**Gilgal** = whirlwind - it speaks of the filling and moving of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Let us understand that without the power dimension which the Baptism with the Holy Spirit brings to the Christian walk, the child of God will remain a child or baby spiritually. He will not grow up in Christ and be the overcomer that His Father God would have him become.

**Bethel** = house of God - it speaks of the need to be in a local church (Body of Christ). Here in the local church is where the maturing (perfection) process begins. As the believer submits to the leadership in the church, and to the ministry of the Word, healing and restoration begins to take place. Here in the local church the ways of God are learned.

**Jericho** = delightful fragrance = becoming a disciple = dying to oneself. As we die to our self the sweet fragrance of Jesus is upon us. We are being seasoned in the Word.

**Jordan** = the decender = submission to a spiritual father in order to receive a double portion of his anointing.

We have for the past several lessons been talking about Gilgal - "Be filled with the Spirit". The baptism with the Holy Spirit being the initial filling.

With this lesson we begin to discuss the second step in **GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY**. This step is revealed in the second stop of Elijah and Elisha on the day Elijah was taken up.

The next stop after Gilgal was Bethel. Bethel means the House of God. This speaks of the local church which is the Body of Christ. Ephesians 1:22,23 says, "...the church, which is His body..." Gilgal, also, speaks of the need the believer has to be in a local church.

Why does the believer need to be in and part of a local church? Why? Because the Church is the Ark of safety and protection which God in His infinite wisdom has provided for His children.

It is not without significance that the children of God are referred to as sheep in the Bible. Referring to the child of God as a sheep speaks of his helplessness.

You see, sheep are the most helpless and vulnerable of the animals which God created. If they are not watched over and cared for, they will scatter and become prey to the beasts of the field. They have to be led to food and water. Left to themselves they would soon perish.

Like sheep, we are helpless and vulnerable. If left to our own devices, to do our thing we would soon scatter from the fold and perish at the hands of our Satan, our enemy.

As you come into, and become a part of a local body of Christ, local church, you come under the covering of God. You are abiding under the shadow of God the Almighty. You enter into the the Ark of His (God's) safety and protection.

Secondly, the believer needs to be in a local church for here is where the perfecting process begins. Here as the believer SUBMITS himself to the leadership - the Elders in the local Body - healing and restoration begins to take place. This healing and restoration is the beginning of the maturing process. Let us also note, healing and restoration will not take place unless the believer is under the covering of a local church and is in submission to the Elders of the local body of Christ.

**Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls . . . "**

Through the guidance, direction and counsel of the Elders the healing and restoration process takes place and the child of God by following this counsel avoids the hurtful pitfalls which doing one's own things will bring.

We need the guidance and counsel of the Elders in the church. There is not a single one of us, who of ourselves can and will at all times make the right decision, the right judgment, or do the right thing. We need help with the oversight of our souls. Our soul, our self is not competent to oversee, watch over itself. Amen.

Jeremiah 10:23 puts it this way,

**"O lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."**

A word concerning submission. The primary element in submission is trust, NOT AGREEMENT. I say this because there are some who believe that unless there is complete agreement in everything they cannot submit to the one they are under.

Also, here at Bethel as the believer submits himself to the leadership in the body, he then begins to learn the ways of God from those who God has ordained and set in as teachers in the local church.

Thus we want to see and understand that the local church is, also, to be and is a training center for ministry. In the local church the child of God, is taught, disciplined under the anointing of the Holy Spirit as he submits himself to those whom God has anointed to teach His Word.

Once again, Bethel which speaks of the local church, then is speaking of the need of the believer to in and a part of a local church if the child of God is to grow up and become a mature Christian. God's plan for the spiritual maturity of His children is in the local church which is the Body of Christ.

Now from the book of Acts we see that the order of spiritual maturity as revealed in 2 Kings 2:1-15 is confirmed. Acts, chapter two begins with the 120 disciples being baptized with the Holy Spirit of promise. Then in chapter 2:41-47 we see God placing in the church those who believed, accepting Jesus as their savior. God immediately added them to the Church, the *ecclesia*, the local assembly. They were not placed into some nebulous, mystical, invisible body of Christ, but into the local church, the assembly which He was building there in Jerusalem.

In Acts 2:47 we read,

**"...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."**

You see, our Father does not want His children out in the world fending for themselves, rather He wants them in a local church so that they can be nurtured, fed, have fellowship and pray one with the other.

O, that our Father God would give us the vision of the local church as an institution which He has established for us, His dear children because He loves us. If we had that vision we would not neglect our assembling together as the manner of some is. Rather, we would with eager anticipation, look forward with great excitement and expectation assemble together with every opportunity made available, not allowing anything or anyone to hinder us. Here in the local church the Holy Spirit is at work in all His power and glory. Amen.

**QUESTION**, what can one expect to find going on in the local Body of Christ.

- Worship, praise and glorifying the God of heaven and earth, 1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 13:15.
- Winning souls for Christ, Mark 16:15.
- Providing ministries for the perfecting of the saints, Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:11-13; Colossians 1:28.
- Sharing the power dimension of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:8
- Being a House of Prayer, Luke 19:46.
- Fellowship, Acts 2:42.
- Ministering from house to house, Acts 5:42.

Now let us look at God's promise for those who are rooted in the local church. Psalm 92:13-15.

**Psalm 92:13-15, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."**

## **LESSON 8 - GOD'S WAY TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY - BETHEL - THE LOCAL BODY OF CHRIST**

In this lesson we want to continue talking about **GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY**. We see this plan revealed in the meanings of the four places mentioned in 2 Kings 2:115, Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho and the Jordan.

We have talked about Gilgal - "Be filled with the Spirit."

That next stop after Gilgal is Bethel. Bethel means the House of God. This speaks of the local church which is the Body of Christ. It speaks of the need of the believer to be in a local church for here the perfection process has it's beginning. Here in the local church as the believer **SUBMITS** himself to the leadership of the Elders in the local Body, **HEALING AND RESTORATION** takes place. Healing and restoration is the beginning of the perfection process. The process of growing up in Christ.

Oh, let us understand, this healing and restoration will **NOT** take place unless the believer is under the covering of a local church and is in submission to the Elders of that local Body of Christ.

As we noted in the last lesson the primary element of submission is **TRUST, NOT AGREEMENT**. We make this distinction because there are those who believe that unless there is absolutely complete agreement in every thing they cannot submit to the one they are under.

Another facet of the local church is that of a training center for service (ministry). Here the believer as he submits himself to the Word being taught he learns the ways of God from those whom God has ordained and set in as teachers.

We, also noted in the previous lesson the importance of being in a local Church is seen in Acts 2:47, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." You see our Father God doesn't want His children out there in the world fending for themselves. Rather, He wants them in the church so that they can be nurtured, fed, have fellowship, and pray with and for one another.

God has established the church to be the **HUB** around which the child of God moves.

We see an example of this with the children of Israel in the wilderness. The tabernacle was located in the center of the camp of the Israelites. The different tribes were located around the tabernacle (Numbers, chapter 2).

You see, it was never meant for the church to be just a fragmentary part of the life of the child of God. The church as established by God is of such a nature as to provide the child, having been called out of the world, a place where not only his spiritual needs can be met, but also where his social needs could be met.

Our Father God does not call His children out of the world and the ways of the world and then not provide a place for them. The church then is that place which God has provided where the child of God can be established in a new way of life. A way of life which is compatible to his new nature.

**In this lesson we want to talk about the church as to what it is and what our relationship is to be to the church.**

Let us begin with the definition and usage of the Greek word ECCLESIA which is most often translated church in the New Testament.

Ecclesia, literal means the called out ones (ek/out, kaleol/to call). From it's usage, however we see that the full meaning is the assembling of the called out ones.

For example: the usage of ecclesia among the Greeks before and during the time of Christ primarily had reference to a body of citizens gathered together to discuss or carry on affairs of the town, state etc. (cf. Acts 19:39,41). Also, had meaning of assembling for specific purposes (cf. Acts 19:32).

Ecclesia is used in the Septuagint (Gk. translation of the O.T.) to designate the gathering of Israel, summoned together for any definite purpose (cf. Acts 7:38).

Thus the primary and basic meaning of ecclesia is the assembling, gathering together, the congregating of ones who have been called out. The assembling, gathering together makes the ecclesia local in nature.

**Ecclesia is used in the New Testament to designate:**

- local churches, Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 4:16; Galatians 1:2, 22; Acts 14:23
- house churches, 1 Corinthians 16:19b, Colossians 4:15; Romans 16:5
- churches collectively, Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 10:32; Philippians 3:6; Acts 9:31; 20:28; Gal. 1:13
- the Body of Christ, Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18

**Ecclesia is never used in New Testament to designate:**

- a building, such structures apparently not built until 3rd century. When they did come into existence they were called kuriake, "The Lord's House." (Scottish, kirk meaning church).

We might, also note that the origin of the English word "church" is the Greek word kuriakon (belonging to the Lord) NOT ecclesia (the assemble of the callout). Thus the Mystical, Invisible, Universal Church is a reference to the body of believers who belong to the Lord (the kuriakon) and not to the ecclesia.

We must, also note that since the Body of Christ is the ecclesia and therefore is

local in nature it is incorrect to speak of a mystical, invisible, universal Body of Christ.

**What is the Church/Ecclesia?**

- The Church/Ecclesia is the body of Christ, made up of citizens of the Kingdom of God (the kuriakon, those belonging to the Lord) who are gathered together to carry out the designated purposes for which it, the church was established by God.
- The Church/Ecclesia as the Body of Christ is a living being (organism) and not an organization. A living organism whose life is provided by the indwelling Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9).
- Christ is the head, the ecclesia is the body, Colossians 1:18.

**The believers relationship to the Church/Ecclesia:**

- Member of the body, 1 Corinthians 12:20, 27
- One with the body (unity), Ephesians 5:30,32; Romans 5:12.

**The Believers responsibilities in his relationships with the other members of the Body:**

- love one another, Hebrews 13:1; Romans 13:8
- submission to one another, Ephesians 5:21 (accountability)
- preferring on another, Romans 12:10
- esteem other better than themselves, Philippians 2:3
- exhorting/encouraging one another, Heb. 3:13, 10:25
- regular and faithful assembling with the members of the body for worship, partaking of Communion, fellowship, ministry, and teaching. Hebrews 10:25; 2:12; 1 Cor 10:16,17; Acts 2:42,46,47; 17:11
- openness, James 5:16
- praying for one another, James 5:16

One further note concerning the Church/Ecclesia. As the Body of Christ, the Church/Ecclesia is the PHYSICAL manifestation of Christ on earth today. Therefore you relate to Christ in a like manner as you relate to the Church which is His Body. Thus if your relationship with the Church is right, then your relationship will be right with Jesus and vice/versa.

**END of Series**

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