

*If God
Started
A Church ...*



By John Horner

Preface

It all started in May 1990. A few months before I entered a paid ministry position in a "booming charismatic 'church,'" a young humble man came to me and handed me a book about the life and ministry of John G. Lake. With a very cautious and zealous look in his eyes he said, "John, you really need to read this book." I felt the quickening of the Lord and began to read. Consumed by the truth John Lake practiced and preached, I seriously began to wonder why I had not heard these truths in any "church" I had been a part of. I then began to press the Lord and study His Word to discover in fullness who He really was/is, not necessarily what I had been told He was. Upon getting a higher personal revelation of who Jesus was/is, I began to intensely study the book of Acts -- particularly the first eight chapters, (I'll explain that later). I then realized that at the heart of the Acts Church and its power was this revelation of who Jesus was/is. The Acts pre-church came together and could pray truly "in one accord." That continual praying in one accord brought the first church fire (Acts 2:3) and continual releases (Acts 4:31, 5:11-12, 12:5-7). But, all these were predicated on the first church fire. This was not an accord that merely states that Jesus is my Savior, and we need revival. That seems to be the depth of unity basis for prayer in a lot of "churches" today. The Acts accord was an accord that would be the earmark of true Christianity causing it to be utterly and totally distinct from every other religion and philosophy. This was an accord based upon the most important question that Jesus asked His disciples -- "Who do you say I am?" That revelatory question/answer combination would be the foundation for Jesus Christ's definition of Church. It would also forever invalidate all of the subtle and overt definitions that men would try to give to the word "church" thru the centuries -- and I believe Jesus knew there would be hundreds (if not thousands) of attempts to register a different foundational question and answer combination thereby creating a man-made definition of "church."

But the disciples' allegiance to the truth about the Truth was the necessary foundation for the history-changin' fire of Acts two.

So where does that leave us? Jesus said that guides would always be around, and many blind ones. Then, about them He said, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots" (Matt. 15:13). Are you a part of a true church as Jesus defined it, or just a part of a fellowship? Your answer is your destiny. Jesus did not ever say that even sincere or seeking fellowships were going to overcome the gates of hell in the end--He only said His true church would, Matt. 16:18.

So, if God started a local church yesterday one way, would He start a local church today differently? Hebrews 13:8 and Acts 2:38,39 answer that--He is the same yesterday, today and forever; and the promise of the history-changin' fire is for everyone.

If God started a church, what would it look like?

Read on...

Chapter One

The Lion-Tamer

It was like this: At the turn of the century, people were more earnestly searching for answers to the ongoing and deepening problems of man. Communities were, at large, helpless in trying to deal with the social outcasts and all their problems. Why so much violence? Why so much depression? Why so many marriages destroyed? Why so many sicknesses and diseases? While the questions were increasing, the answers were decreasing--until a very peculiar band of people came on the scene.

Definitely not a sight for sore eyes, but, oddly enough, these uncommoners had an unusual draw about their lives. They would enter a town and set up to demonstrate with very little said. Their unity even in setting up denoted that something special and different was behind it all. Even where they would set up was unusual. Most shows that came to town were preceded by much advertising, as well as needing to have the most visible location in town. Not this band of renegades. It was almost as though, in their set-up, they had no thought of drawing a crowd, almost as if they weren't doing it for the people. They acted as though their audience was heaven, and yet, right there in their midst. For in everything they did, they strongly felt that they only had one audience--the Lion-Tamer.

As they would set up, you could frequently overhear them heralding the Lion-Tamer's wisdom, weighing his words, praising his power, and always revering that peculiar, fiery presence on him. They no doubt recognized that he made it all happen, and without him, nothing happened. In fact, they often spoke that he was not only "center stage", but that none of them would even be there if it were not for his powerful presence. "You should see him deal with those lions!", "the fat lady" would say. Even that was a majestic sight, and as unusual as could be. For the Lion-Tamer didn't use a whip, or a chair, or anything else--just his words. The people would be awe-struck as they would watch the Lion-Tamer use only his spoken words to make the lions do whatever he said, and they did it quickly.

So rare an event was this that the common folk came from hundreds of miles to see the Lion-Tamer. Everything that happened in the event prior to his appearance just seemed to glorify what he did.

The clown came out with a sad face, trying to juggle three balls, and not doing very well. He would then point to the Lion-Tamer. In a short while, he would be on his favorite unicycle, confidently cruising around and juggling ten balls--never dropping even one. At a certain point, he would tilt his head back, yield a deep-seeded smile, close his eyes, and continue to ride and juggle ten balls--most said it was miraculous. Then the fat lady came out and stood next to the carriage, the one marked with the peculiar words, "the power of the Lion-Tamer", above the door. She would point to the Lion-Tamer, and then, with difficulty, try to get into the carriage. Instantly she would get out on the other side--thin. The gasp from the crowd was just as sure as her smile when she would get out, and once again point to the Lion-Tamer. Soon, the crowd's attention was drawn upward as Mr. and Mrs. Actsrobot were preparing for flight. Standing a

good fifty yards away from Mrs. Actsrobot on a small platform way up high, Mr. Actsrobot once again pointed to the Lion-Tamer. With unusual timeliness, they swung toward each other; each one let go of their individual swing, Mr. Actsrobot catches his wife in mid-air, and then they both catch the swing that comes right up the middle--the beauty of unity--never a net at this event.

As neat as all the acts were, the crowds were always curiously drawn back to the peculiar, fiery presence of the Lion-Tamer. His presence made it all happen perfectly.

Then, they came....

Seemingly out of nowhere, the lions darted in with an apparent viciousness. The gasps were just short of screams as the lions prowled toward the crowd, looking for someone to devour.

Then, it came....

The deafening roar that drowned out the far lesser roars. Even this roar was unusual, for it had the distinct sound of rushing waters, but with fiery authority. It was his voice, the Lion-Tamer's--unforgettable. The lions, mighty as they seemed, could be seen to quiver a little at this fiery roar. At the point that a lion would be close to destroying someone, the Lion-Tamer, with unparalleled authority in his voice, would say, "Go!". Without fail, each lion would squall and run. He could send them into a cage, or out of the country--his dominion seemed way beyond human. Some even said it was supernatural. Frequently, one could hear the words of awe coming from the crowds, "No whip?!? No stick?! Not even a chair? We have never seen such authority!" The Lion-Tamer also established a perfect record when He went to heal the folks who had been diseased through previous lion attacks and bites. He even healed a few so that the fear of lions was erased from their hearts.

After a few years of this, an even more unusual and yet powerful transformation occurred in this band of renegades. The Lion-Tamer physically left, and yet became an even greater and more powerful force in their midst. Crowds continued to flow in to experience all this, and what they now found was shocking...everyone of these band of renegades had that peculiar fiery presence on them. "They all look like the Lion-Tamer!", yelled a man from the crowd one time. The crowds increased to thousands as this powerful event gained notoriety over the whole region. Not only did the clown and "the fat lady" demonstrate their changed lives, but they too controlled the lions, sending them fleeing with their very words. The people marveled as these renegades healed all who came from anywhere with bites and diseases from other lions. The kind of miracles happening caused everyone from the most hated, to the most loved, to be magnetically drawn...and changed.

The peculiar fiery presence on Mr. and Mrs. Actsrobot enabled them to lead and do things in the air that had never been done before. They also healed all the sick who came to them. The greatness of the Lion-Tamer in this band of renegades was producing radical changes in cities and towns across the land. All of these renegades preached until the peculiar, fiery presence began to overtake even the commoners, radically changing them. No doubt to all of them that it was this fiery presence that was moving the movement. Order was coming on the earth.

Many years later, however, things began to change; it appeared that no one knew why, except that a few thought that the events needed to be a little more controlled. With the man-made control came a quenching of this peculiar, fiery presence so remembered because of the Lion-Tamer. From those who knew him it just seemed like the focus was no longer on the Lion-Tamer and his peculiar fiery presence. With a little offense in their voices, the headmasters frequently would say, "But the people are here, so the show must go on!".

The clown tried to get four balls up in the air while on his unicycle, and after several attempts, he managed to get three. But he feared closing his eyes lest he might wreck. The fat lady got into the carriage one time, and after four hours of hard work, they managed to get her out. After that, she feared getting into, "the power of the Lion-Tamer". Mr. and Mrs. Acrobat decided to change their name to Mr. and Mrs. Acrobat, and change their act a little too. In mid-air, he first tried to grab the swing; having barely caught it, he missed Mrs. Acrobat as she was coming through the air to him. But, they sure were thankful; even though before they had never needed a net due to the awesome presence of the Lion-Tamer, they were so grateful it was there just in case He wasn't.

As sad as the show began to get without the Lion-Tamer and the peculiar, fiery presence, there was something very strange about it. Not only was the Lion-Tamer not to be found, but neither were the lions. Oddly enough, the effects of the lions on and in the people were escalating. Their growl could sometimes be heard, the fear they brought could be felt, even the damage to the souls and bodies of men and women was increasingly more apparent; but it seemed as if no one could see or control the lions anymore. It seemed to many old renegades, that upon noticing the absence of the peculiar, fiery presence in the band, they also noticed the increase in the effects on the lions. But, in frustration, they wondered how could they control lions they couldn't see? So they decided to try to control the damage done by the lions, instead of the lions themselves.

Well, the show did go on, and on, and on....But, so did the lions. They went on and on stealing, killing and destroying--with no fear of the show. Once in awhile, one would be seen, but to not much avail. For without the peculiar, fiery presence of the Lion-Tamer in the renegades, there was very little they could do to the lions. So, most everyone, everywhere, without even realizing it, lived in fear of the lions and just continued to try to control their damage. It became very sad to a few renegades to see the great loss; for even the attempt to control the damage got a little twisted. They tried to manipulate the victims' bodies with medicines, to little avail. They also tried continual indoctrination and counseling in hopes of freeing the souls of the deeply wounded--this too failed. They even tried cages. But, where the Lion-Tamer would cage the lions to keep them from the people, the new band found it easier to cage some of the people to keep them protected from the lions. This too was very sad, for at times the caged folks would act the lion was in there with them. Some finally dealt with it by deciding that because the lions had not been seen in so long, they didn't exist; it was only in the victims' minds they said. All the attempts just took a pitiful backseat when compared to the Truth of the Lion-Tamer's ways, and that unusual, fiery presence he yielded. Meanwhile, the ultimate proof and power of the lions once again began to rule the land--fear. They continued to prowl around looking for more flesh to devour.

But, as hidden in history as it was, the lions also had a fear. It was not a new fear, for it was one that had always been with them. The effect of the Lion-Tamers' few eventful years had deposited a fear in them that they couldn't shake. But this fear they had grew to terror when the Lion-Tamer's peculiar, fiery presence was transferred to the band of renegades--for it clearly multiplied in its intensity as it was transferred. To a lion, it's like a single fire that moves in a grassland fire.

So the lions continued to look for, and devour much flesh; but with the resident fear that's always ready to run, should any peculiar, fiery presence be spotted. Without a shadow of a doubt, whether the fire is in the heart of a forest, or the heart of a man, lions will run from it.

Chapter Two

The Church -- God's definition or man's?

If you take just a casual glance at this book, it may seem harsh at times. That's okay. It will probably even offend you; that's okay too. It's been prayed over that it would cause division (Matt. 10:34,35), and be one of the sickles used by the Lord to fulfill the prophecy in Malachi 3:18. Whatever else it does to you, I pray God that it may pierce your heart with twice the zeal for the purity of God's house, (not the pseudo-one built by human hands), as what David experienced when he said, "Zeal for your house has consumed me." It really kind of starts there. If there were even five Davids in America, their passion for the honor of God's house would drive the five million Sauls to repentance or retirement.

You see, there's a real pride stench in this country's "churches." Every time we show up to a "church" service and walk out (instead of crawling out or, at minimum, crying out on our hands and knees) we have stated, either actively or passively, that God has changed his plan for the church and we're the new standard! We go into a "church" service; we're faced with the Bible we casually study, and God's holy and timeless record of the pattern first church found in Acts 1:1 thru Acts 8:1; we compare it to this "church" service, and the comparison is simple--there is none.

If you're honest, and you compare God's church at Jerusalem as seen in the first eight chapters of Acts, with your "church," there simply isn't any substantial resemblance. And to create a theology that explains why the early church had Holy Spirit power to heal the sick and cast out demons, and God doesn't want to display His glorious power that way anymore, is to deny Hebrews 13:8 and Acts 2:38-39. It's also to defend the powerless Christianity that has bewitched this country. If Stephen, Philip, and the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Spirit said and showed that demonstrating the miraculous power of God was the best way to secure Gentile unbelievers' faith in God, then it's settled according to the Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:4-5 and Acts 6:8). At this point, those who are not honest or not hungry will either put this book down or put it

in the trash, and they'll go on defending their man-made church, built by human hands, governed by human traditions and immersed in humanistic ideas.

God does have a dictionary in heaven that perfectly defines what a real church is. On earth this dictionary is called the Bible, the word of God. And the Mighty, Covenant God who came in flesh -- Jesus -- gave the first and most precise definition to the church, (literally, *eklesia*, "the called out ones") when he said, in Matt. 16:18, that it was the place where the gates of hell would not prevail. (He also put the entire sentence in the future tense, meaning that the church as He defined it, had not yet been birthed or seen on the earth).

"So, John, you're telling me that if our 'church' gathers with people who love the Lord, love to worship, love to give their tithes, love to feed the poor, and love to listen to the message every Sunday, that we're not a true church if the gates of hell are prevailing in our midst?"

That's not what I'm telling you, that's what God Almighty is telling those who have ears to hear. Are yours open?

I have heard some try to take Jesus' definition of the church, used only to refer to local bodies of fire baptized believers in Acts, and try to say this definition refers to the "universal church." In other words, there are those who think that it's only individual believers around the world that fit his definition in their personal lives, and not Jesus giving this definition of consistent power over Satan (Matt. 16:18), to a local body. Well, needless to say, those who believe this won't ever do what Jesus did, (much less the greater things! [John 14:12]), because they would rather justify sin and sickness in their local "church" than confront it. This theology is a lie right out of the pit of hell. Not only does the word of God never mention the phrase, "universal church," (God's understanding of all believers together is found in the understanding of the "bride of Christ"), but the references to "church" in Acts refer to local bodies of fire-baptized believers. Study it for yourself. We've got to get out of the "refuge of lies" and hold fast to the truth -- Jesus' definition of church, Matt. 16:18.

It's always troubled my spirit when I've heard things like, "My Uncle Tim went to New Zealand and started a church there," or "So and so planted a church." Why has it troubled me? It brings glory to a man, and not Jesus. Ironically, if flesh started it, it's not a true Matt. 16:18 church. Only Jesus was given the authority because of his untainted and perfect life of obedience and his perfectly obedient death, to take the fire from the heart and nature of God and release it back into the nature of men whose hearts had already been cleansed and covered by the blood He had shed, thereby starting a Matt. 16:18 church. God has reserved certain unique honors for Jesus, and this is one of them. And if you will notice thru Acts, it is called "the church of God" because the Father God birthed it. He birthed the true Matt. 16:18 church by giving to His son Jesus, thru his perfect-blood-purchased-right, the authority to now take the nature of God (represented by fire, "Our God is a consuming fire" Heb. 12:29), and send it back into the blood-cleansed, zealously waiting, night-and-day praying, hearts of the disciples. You see, if the new thing that God starts is gonna be pure, it has to be started with fire. Fire must go before him to purge out, on a deeper level, the impurities that still stand in the way (Ps. 50, "Fire goes before him...." Does the fire still go before him, or did it die out?). When God got ready to start something local with Abraham, He started it with fire, (Read Gen. 15:17). When God got ready to start something local with Moses, He started with fire (Ex. 3:2). When God got ready to start

a church, He started a local fire in Jerusalem. It wasn't a universal church that took the gospel and shook the whole known world in twenty years, it was several local churches.

The New Testament is replete with comparing God's calling of his people out of the world with God's calling of the Israelites out of Egypt, (I. Cor. 10:1-11; Heb. 11:29, 39, 40; Acts 7:36-38). One parallel I find more than interesting and important: Every time God was moving the Israelites forward and onward, there was a cloud moving them by day and a fire moving them by night--every single time--Ex. 40:34-38. Now, Jesus said that "the night" would begin when He left the earth, John 9:4-5. God has always led his people with fire during "night." In the O.T., this fire was clearly seen even though it was from without. In the N.T., this fire was to be from within, and would start in the "night." Jesus stating that this "night" would begin when He was gone. Fire is also, by its nature, aggressive and fearless. This is exactly how Jesus, who had this perfect fire, attacked the kingdom of darkness and commanded others to, (Matt. 11:12). We also know that Jesus was (and is) the exact representation of the being or the nature of God (Heb. 1:3). Now, understanding that God uses elements and other things to enhance our understanding of Him, follow this: Fire is the purest and most powerful form of light that we presently know--look at the sun. Jesus, perfect bearer of the nature/fire of God, said that He was only gonna be the light of the world while He was in the world. Which can only mean that right now, because the man Jesus is not in the world (Heb. 1:3), He is not the light of the world. But He did not leave the world lightless. He told his disciples that they were the light of the world and that they were to light their world so that men would see their light and praise God for them. I again find it more than interesting that no one praised God for the light of the disciples in the Gospels, but many praised God for the light of the disciples after Jesus released his fire/light/nature into the disciples in the Pentecostal prayer room. When Jesus' fire, which was God's nature making him the glowing light He was, was put into the disciples' souls in Acts two, their light was first turned on; and men for the first time awed and praised God for the disciples' fire/light, and their accompanying works, Acts 2:43.

With no uncertainty, the serious students of God's Word have to agree that the early disciples (and the city they lived in) did not change with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. They did not even really change (and certainly did not do the greater things Jesus promised, Jn. 14:12), when they saw the resurrected Lord Jesus. Some even returned to their occupations after seeing the dead man alive again!

Even though these men had already been cleansed by the Lord (Jn. 13:10), and had received the deposit of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22), this only brought a little change in their lives, not internal spiritual revolution. Change can be temporary, revolution is "thorough replacement" (Webster's). The fire of God in Acts two was the start of the revolution called Christianity. Thru "thorough replacement" (exchange of natures) it brought permanent change and permanent power. It did not bring an end to the temptation to fall into unbelief (as Peter did once [recorded] thereafter). But, Peter, after seeing his Lord resurrected (and before Pentecost fire) was still not the fearless apostle that rejoiced when flogged for Christ, resurrected the dead, and told the power hungry Sanhedrin to save their breath. That fearless apostle was born the day fire rushed into his soul in an upper room, along with many others, and a true church was born.

Jesus' definition of church as the place where the gates of Hell would not prevail is very clearly seen in the local Jerusalem church, before it went out into Judea. The true fire/nature of

God fell on these 120; although they were already saved and had the Holy Spirit as a deposit (Jn. 20:22), now with this heavenly fire on them, they had a glorious exchange of their Adamic nature for the Christ nature; and with this fire/nature change came the authority over sin and sickness, the two posts on which the gates of Hell are hinged.

This was Jesus' church.

It was a local body, in a city, baptized in the fire/nature of Almighty God; and, as a result, this body led by the apostles (Peter and John), dealt a death blow to every demon, every sickness that came forth, and every public sin, Acts 5:9-10 & 16. This was a true church as Jesus defined it, because Hell had no claim on this body, just as it had no claim on their head Jesus (Jn. 14:30). The body will always be in unity and reflect its head. If the body reflects that there is open sin and/or sickness, then its reflecting a head with sin and/or sickness -- which wouldn't be Jesus Christ. Somewhere down the time line this was apparently lost in this Jerusalem church, but it doesn't change the fact that there was a place for several years, on the earth, in a local body, in a city, into which Satan could not go lest he be publicly defeated and ousted.

The baptism of fire/nature of God into the disciples' hearts was clearly what established a place that Jesus called "church". Without this Baptism of fire at the inception of a local church, sin and sickness will either prevail a little or a lot, thus proving it's only a shallowly unified fellowship at best. Because the Jerusalem church was birthed by God's fire/nature, it was therefore God's church; and Hell, represented by sin and sickness (called "the power of the devil" in Acts 10:38 of which Jesus first healed all from) could not prevail.

It's clear: if Jesus is the same, then only the fire of God can put you into the local church of God. And God hasn't changed, and gone to plan "B" as to how He brings it, Acts 2:38-39.

Now, the next question. Why did the fire fall on the upper roomers? What moves the Father and Jesus to release it? Even fire looks for foundation to land on. Before fire comes foundation....

Chapter Three

The Church -- How God founded it.

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Cor. 3:11.

The Father made the Truth of who Jesus was and is, the foundation for the church. In fact, Jesus made clear to the woman at the well exactly what kind of worshipers the Father

himself was seeking--those who will worship him in spirit and truth. Of these two, God made truth more important than spirit. How do I know? Because God himself set Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6), as the chief cornerstone of His church, Eph. 2:20.

So the Truth of Jesus is the cornerstone for God's Church. For God to release His fire/nature in that upper room, He had to have had men who had the Truth of Jesus firmly planted as the cornerstone of their life in God. So what is this Truth of Jesus that the Fire of God must rest on? It is the truth that Jesus Christ is the Covenant establishing-and-keeping Jehovah God of the Old Testament in flesh. Jesus had already made that clear in Matthew 16:16,17 and John 20:28,29 for those who have eyes to see.

In Jesus' life time, there were many times He spoke general blessings over people and little children, (Mk. 10:16; Matt. 5:3); but only twice did Jesus personalize the blessing to individuals by looking right at them and blessing them for a particular response they had toward him. Once directly to Peter, and another time indirectly to Thomas. It's more than interesting that both times the personal blessings were given, it was because Peter and Thomas had just declared that they now knew that Jesus was the Christ/God, the promised Messiah, the mighty covenant God now in flesh. Being Jewish, they would've known by scriptures like Isa. 9:6 and 7:14 that the Messiah had to be the Everlasting Father, coming in the flesh, who made a powerful, all inclusive covenant with Israel, and kept it without fail!

There was much more to their short, sweet confession than we've seen or taught. Most of us who are non-Jews were not first taught and steeped in the Law and the Prophets before we met Jesus. Most of us did not know the seven major covenant names of God (there are a few more than this), before we accepted Jesus as our Messiah. These names are Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Rapha, Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Shalom, Jehovah Roi, Jehovah Tsidkenu, Jehovah Shammah. But the disciples, as Jews, did not that the Messiah was the fulfillment of these covenant names; they were raised and trained in these truths as a part of their proud heritage starting at a very young age, (Gal. 1:14).

When Jesus asked his disciples, and He asked all of them this question, (the Greek "you" is plural), "Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15), He just asked them the most important question that has ever been (or will ever be) asked. How do I know? It was Jesus' right question plus Peter's right answer that combined to give Jesus the hell-piercing statement that followed. Jesus shone the first light on the last mystery right here: He released the wind of God into defining what would carry His redemptive power to the end of the age -- the local church. I truly believe that Hell shook with these words, every imp cringing, because they had dreaded the day when Jesus would define what would soon destroy them. Peter's revelation from the Father, that Jesus as the Everlasting, Covenant-keeping Father in flesh to fully redeem man, was the rock--the sure foundation for life in God. Jesus was going to require that they had this truth as the foundation for the fire, nature and power of God needed for Jesus' church.

This cannot be overstressed.

I can almost hear the shallow replies even now, "I believe that. What's the repetition on this for?" Cause after walking with the Lord 18 years, serving in a booming "church" (really just

a shallowly unified fellowship as the Lord revealed) for 4 years, I can truly say that most Christians don't know whom they have believed and called their Savior, Messiah and Lord. They can't say with the apostle, "I know whom I have believed."

Now, let me say something concerning what I will say next about who scripture reveals this glorious person to be: I am not saying a person has to know and believe Jesus is the fulfillment of these seven major covenant names of God in order to be saved. I didn't. I was saved when I repented of my sins and made this Savior of sins, Jesus, the Lord of my personal life. Luke 13:3 and Romans 10:9,10 well summarize how to be saved.

It's interesting, though that the Holy Spirit through Paul did not say in Rom. 10:9 that it was making Jesus Christ the Lord of your life that made you saved, but rather, making Jesus the Lord. I believe that God in His mercy and compassion did not require that the full understanding of the "Christ" part of Jesus be understood before allowing a miserable lost sinner to be saved. However, the Holy Spirit did, in I Cor. 3:10-15, require that the foundation of Jesus as the "Christ" (the promised Isa. 9:6 Messiah, Everlasting Father, who made and fulfilled the covenant from heaven, then in the flesh), be believed in order for our works to have lasting value. Interesting. A person must confess Jesus as Lord to be saved; but new believers must go on and learn that Jesus Christ is what your life's foundation must be built on. These New Testament believers being taught right away about Jesus being the "Christ" is right in line with what the apostles preached (Acts 5:42), and what the Holy Spirit said is the elementary or first doctrine that new believers should be taught--Hebrews 6:1.

This revelation of truly believing Jesus to be these covenant names of God (and to fulfill them) is what Jesus was requiring of the disciples as the foundation for the fire of God to come in and start a Matt. 16:18 church; and Jesus personalized blessing only twice--to Peter and Thomas when they got this revelation. When they called him the "Christ" (God in flesh), they stated, in no uncertain terms, that Jesus was the Everlasting Father, Jehovah Jireh of Genesis 22:14, in flesh to fully redeem them (as well as the other six major Jehovah names). Thomas made clear when he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28), what the others had already come to believe about Jesus. They knew the truth about the Truth now. Calling Jesus, "Christ," was to them declaring him to be the Everlasting Father, who, at least seven times, attached His name "Jehovah" with an adjective in the Hebrew that best describe our seven basic needs. God had declared to the Hebrew people, thru various servants, that He would meet our every need. Then, to fully secure that promise, He attached His very name to the need He stated and knew we had.

There are seven major covenant names of God in scripture that Jesus Christ came and fulfilled. Since Jesus was the Christ, then He was also Jehovah Jireh, The Lord our Provider (Gen. 22:8,14); Jehovah Rapha, The Lord our Healer (Ex. 15:26); Jehovah Nissi, The Lord our banner/protector (Ex. 17:15); Jehovah Shalom, The Lord our peace and relaxation (Judges 6:23-24); Jehovah Roi, The Lord our shepherd (Ps. 23:1); Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6; Ex. 31:13); and Jehovah Shammah, The Lord is there (Ezek. 48:35). There are a few other covenant names.

Therefore, the foundation of Truth that the Father and Jesus released their fire into is disciples who had confessed and believed that Jesus is the Christ, or Messiah. What does that mean? According to the Isaiah 9:6 prophecy of who the Messiah is, this means they were

confessing that Jesus is the Everlasting Father in the flesh. The same Everlasting Father who exclusively made Himself, and only Himself...

(I will focus my attention on the first 3 names/promises God gave concerning Himself. These three are the foundation for the rest.)

1) Their personal provider (Jehovah Jireh in Hebrew), Gen. 22:8,14. The Holy Spirit said thru Abraham that the Lord Himself will provide for our needs. Jesus, as the Christ, manifested that He was this name in flesh when He supernaturally met their need for wine at the wedding, (Jn. 2:6-9), and food on the mountain (Jn. 6:5-13). To confess Jesus as the Christ, is to confess him as your provider, which can only mean, if He won't provide it, you don't need it. It also means that debt is sin, because God said that His obedient, covenant, blessed people would only be the lenders and never the borrowers -- Deut. 28:12. The Holy Spirit also said to "owe no man anything except to love" Rom. 13:8. Why haven't we "publicly" declared debt and welfare as sin? God has! I pray you get eyes to see that many, many Christians in this country have not declared Jesus as the Christ, Jehovah Provider in flesh, and hence don't have the Truth foundation for the Fire of God to fall on.

2) Their personal healer (Jehovah Rapha), Ex. 15:26. Since God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5), He also is a jealous healer. He was Israel's personal covenant Physician; and Jesus, as the Christ, manifested that He was this name in the flesh when He instantly healed the invalid (Jn. 5:7-9), and declared in Lk. 4:13 that He was always willing (Grk. verb, "am willing", is syntactically a durative present tense), to make the sick whole. To confess Jesus Christ as your personal healer automatically renounces all of the world's methods of healing--drugs, surgeries, exams, therapies, etc. Jesus Christ never healed these ways (and neither did the apostles, Matt. 8:10) in the past and He hasn't changed. God cut King Asa's days short because he sought for healing in the medical system (II Chron. 16:12,13); God also commanded his people not to look to Egypt (the world) for help of any kind, Isa. 31:1; He promised in Deut. 7:12-15 that if we kept his Covenant of Love that He, He, He, would keep us free from every disease. Jesus, as the embodiment of Truth, refused to let a very popular medical drug--gall--into his body to ease the pain before the crucifixion, Matt. 27:34. If He is in us, and Lord of our body, would He let drugs into us? (I can hear it now, "But Luke was a physician...." Men like Luke who left everything to follow Jesus Christ, were still distinguished by their trade, even though they had left their trade. Matthew was still called, "Matthew, the tax collector" even though he and all the other disciples had left their trades to follow Jesus Christ, Matt. 9:9, 10:3).

One more very serious heartcy for God's people to reject the arm-of-the-flesh medical system and cling to only Jesus Christ for healing: Read Revelation 18:23. God very clearly says that Babylon is going to lead the whole world astray thru sorcery in the last days. America and Western Europe are quickly fulfilling this Babylon. Not only is America the hub of drug experimentation, but she is fast exporting them to every nation in the world. The last part reads, "for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived." The word rendered "sorceries," is the Greek word "pharmakeia." Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon states, as the primary definition for "pharmakeia":

1. "Employment of drugs for any purpose" (emphasis mine).

2. Secondly, "sorcery, magic, enchantment."

A simple substitution in verse 23 of the primary definition for pharmakeia, now reads: "for by thy employment of drugs for any purpose were all nations deceived."

Neither Jesus, who spit the drug out, nor His Word, which condemns it in Rev. 18:23, can justify for any purpose, the use of drugs. To prepare for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire (the Acts two kind), you must confess Jesus Christ as Jehovah Rapha in flesh. In closing this section, let's look at I Thess. 5:23:

"May God himself (Grk. "autos", reflects more intensity on subject--God!), the God of peace, sanctify (Grk. "hagiazō", to purify) you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless...."

Kept blameless and made pure by who? God!! And He's never needed any man's help. He can and will if you will simply obey Him and trust Him. John G. Lake, who had the greatest documented healing ministry of the last two centuries, said:

"God, seeing that men were in difficulty, and that sin, sickness, and death prevailed, in order to save the race from extermination, was compelled to manifest the Redeemer and the redemption. Jesus Christ came to this world as God's divine remedy. He has no other remedy, but the Lord Jesus Christ. God's remedy is a person, not a thing."

He also went on to say that Christians keep "a little medicine god" behind the cabinet door because they don't know or trust God.

3) Their personal Banner/Protector (Jehovah Nissi) Ex. 17:15. The Holy Spirit thru Moses declared that God Jehovah was their protection when the Amalakites attacked them. Psalm 91 is a powerful amplification of this same promise of protection from any harmful thing (disease, a stray arrow, falling, etc.) from the same covenant keeping God. Jesus Christ manifested himself as Jehovah Nissi in Mark 4:37-39 when He protected the disciples from the furious squall on the sea that they thought would drown them. He just rebuked it, and like the fig tree, it died. (And He said we would do what He had been doing, John 14:12). When a believer buys insurance, he rejects the protection of Christ Jesus/Jehovah Nissi. Insurance is man's way of protecting and providing for himself in the event of an accident. But in the kingdom, there are no accidents; "the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord..." Ps. 37:23. If the Lord has ordered that you take certain steps, then He will protect you and nothing will harm you (Luke 10:19). Why do you lock your home when you're away? Do you believe that Jesus, as Jehovah Nissi, would protect your home and things if you didn't lock it? You say, "So what if someone takes something?" Do you believe that Jesus was just kidding in Luke 6:30 when He said, "...and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back"? Security and alarm systems on believers' homes and cars are a rejection of Jesus as protector and/or a rejection of Luke 6:30.

The "church," like Simon the Sorcerer, is still trying to buy, with money, the power of the Holy Spirit primarily in these three aforementioned areas: 1) They're trying to buy (through selling so many years of their life to come) bank loans, credit card loans, gov't help, etc., because they reject Jesus Christ as Jehovah Provider. 2) They're trying to buy drugs, surgeries,

doctor's advice, etc., to heal them because they reject Jesus Christ as Jehovah Healer (and His healing atonement, I Peter 2:24). 3) They're trying to buy protection through alarm systems, insurance, etc. because they reject Jesus Christ as Jehovah Banner/Protector.

I also find it more than interesting that Jesus Christ manifested everyone of these seven names before He made the profoundly paramount statement in John 6:29.

The crowd had gone to search for Jesus as well as his disciples. Upon finding him, Jesus sees through their motive for seeking him so earnestly and tells them not to work for food that spoils. Perplexed, and not willing to give up, they point blank ask Jesus "what must we do to do the work that God requires?" Jesus proceeds to unleash the supreme truth for life in God -- "the work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent".

To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that He is your healer, that He is your protector, that He is your provider, etc. and remember . . . He is a jealous God. You can quickly discover if you have the same spirit of Simon the sorcerer by seeing if you, like Simon, are trying to purchase with money any one of these above mentioned gifts that have already been provided by the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

The foundation of Jesus Christ, I Cor. 3:11, is to confess and believe Jesus as all of these Jehovah names -- this then is the truth foundation that God wants His fire to fall on, and will have this true fire fall on.

So how did God establish a true church in Jerusalem around A.D. 30? We'll have to back up a few years, and you'll have to pardon my simplicity. But since this is how He did it then, and it was His thumbprint, (as we'll see more clearly in a little bit), and thumbprints can't change, then this is how He'll do it again. First, God called some men to follow Jesus. Then He called them to follow Jesus together. Then He called them to understand and trust His Son. Then as each one finally came to believe who Jesus was (that He was Christ, or God), the Father called them to an upper room to pray for the fire -- the Acts 1:14 standard. Here is the literal rendering from the Greek of the first part of Acts 1:14, "These ones, all were intently engaged in, with one mind and accord, prayer...." So after they came into one mind and accord as to whom Jesus was, then they could "intently" engage in prayer. It was obedience to Jesus' Acts 1:4 command, that brought the 2:3 fire of God, that then produced the 4 fruits or corners, as I see them, of the church; this is the one built by human hands which of course leave human thumbprints.

Chapter Four

The Acts Church -- The timeless thumbprint of God

In these last days the devil is making haste to deceive believers in anyway he can. A little of his deception in your thinking always opens your life to a little more of his deception. We must

not even begin to entertain or accept a standard lower than the Acts standard when it comes to God's church (or God's anything). We're ultimately supposed to exceed it! (Jn. 14:12, Hag. 2:6-9). Acts 1:1 through Acts 8:1 is the only divinely inspired account of day to day life in the church -- God's play by play narrative of a local church that all of the rest of history must submit to and cry out for. Why? Because it's His thumbprint.

A thumbprint is unique to its owner's being, and if law enforcement officials find it on a murderous weapon, they're coming after the owner of the thumbprint. Because the thumbprint on that weapon meant the owner's approval of its activity, (not necessarily its every activity, but its activity). God's thumbprint on something means God's approval of it. So what does God's thumbprint look like? It is something unique to God and couldn't be pawned off or attributed to man. Jesus said let every matter be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Mt. 18:16). So if a "church" is God's church, meaning it has God's thumbprint, it will have the accompanying signs that only God could take credit for, just like the Acts church did. In fact, the Lord spoke to my heart that there were four accompanying fruits that the Acts church had that proved God's thumbprint on them. And the Lord proceeded to show me that these four were confirmed either two or three times in the first eight chapters of Acts--God's narrative of the first local church--in very similar wording:

Fruit 1) This real church body joyfully received persecution, Acts 4:21-23; Acts 5:40,41.

Fruit 2) This real church body lived sacrificially and communally, providing for any other believer who had need, (not by welfare, unemployment checks, or loans) by the other believers selling things and giving to their needy, Acts 2:44-46; Acts 4:32-35.

Fruit 3) This real church body was constantly demonstrating the miraculous--casting out demons, and healing the sick--and all the sick were healed who came to the real church body, Acts 2:43, Acts 4:33, Acts 5:12-16. (Many fellowships see occasional healings--the one I was a part of even saw a man who was documented with AIDS get healed--this is the mercy of God with some faith involved. But when the real fire of God comes, the real church comes, apostolic/Christ authority resides, and all the sick will be healed. Compare James 5:15 with Acts 5:15-16. If they're lost, the Acts five passage applies; if they're saved, the James five passage applies. Nevertheless, it's all either way in God's church.

Fruit 4) This real church body was being added to daily by the Lord, those who were being saved, Acts 2:41, 47, Acts 4:4, Acts 5:14, Acts 6:7.

The Lord witnessed to my heart almost audibly that these four fruits, repeated as they are, are the thumbprint of God, declaring that it is God's church by God's definition. Your "church" is not a real church unless it is by God's definition--Matt. 16:18. This then means that it has God's unchanging thumbprint--the four fruits, witnessed to at least twice in God's first church.

I believe that every believer in this country has been, or is being, summoned by the Lord to reject the past man-made definitions of "church," and humble themselves, and return to allegiance to God's definition. He is summoning them to believe that Jesus is the Christ, all the covenant names of Jehovah God, and then to join with other believers to cry out for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire--NOT the one you were always told you got when you got tongues, or got

saved, or got knocked down, etc. If you don't have the fruit, you don't have the fire. God's fire brings God's fruit; and the four mentioned above are the only indisputable ones, forever etched in the Word of Acts.

The early disciples made the preaching that Jesus is the Christ pre-eminent--Acts 5:42, 8:5. Notice: when the Lord had once and for all established the definition of a true church, and thumbprinted it in Jerusalem, then, and only then, He took it to Judea and Samaria. Also notice what Philip went up there and preached--the Christ, Acts 8:5. When the people heard the truth about Jesus being the Christ, and saw the miraculous signs that Philip did, "they all paid close attention to what he said." We have esteemed the world's ideals, and even if no one else starts rejecting these, "as for me and my house" we will serve and adhere to the Lord's standard.

I believe it buns in the heart of the Father to be able to look down in this country and point to at least one local place where those four fruits are being produced. You could strive and strain to try to work these four up in your local fellowship, or be complacently satisfied with the occasional mercy healings and salvations, but you won't ever produce all these fruits, even in your greatest effort. Why? They won't all come together unless God does it, because it's His unique thumbprint. ***He wants an exclusive claim to this thing.*** He won't let men strive their way into what He first brought about through the baptism of Holy Spirit Fire. And this first baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire didn't come until those upper room disciples knew that Jesus was the Christ Provider, Christ Healer, Christ Protector, etc. Then, when they knew this, they came together and prayed truly "in one accord." And they prayed until the fire of God came.

So, there it is. If you want to be a part of a Matt. 16:18 thumbprinted church of God, reject the arm-of-the-flesh systems--welfare, loans, drugs, surgeries, doctor's advice, insurance, security systems, etc., and put all your faith in Jesus Christ to meet your needs in these areas. Then, if you cry out to the Lord, He will bring you other believing believers in the Christ to unite with you in your cry to be baptized in His Holy Truth Fire. According to Ephesians 5:27, Christ is going to have a fearless, wrinkle-free, (the wrinkle here in the Greek is the wrinkle above the eye denoting worry/fear), bride. In the natural, fire is the most fearless force on the earth. When it's blazing strong, it winces at nothing. In the spirit, the fire of God is the only thing that can make a fellowship a real church and ***fearless***. Laughing at death, mocking Satan's greatest attack, and bringing untold pleasure to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father by bringing their kingdom to the earth--this can only be accomplished by having the Consuming Fire in us. This is why it is called a consuming fire--because it will consume anything not of Him. That's victory. That's New Testament dominion. But it's all built upon His blood first, and His fire second. Then when you get the fire of God, don't stop: the Acts church is just the whisper of God, the shout of God is what's coming... and it's worth dying for.