
Ekklesia and the Second Reformation

By Orlando Mostert
Kingdomvision.co.za

Jesus said **“I will build my Church”**. Our problem in getting an accurate vision for the Church is that we need to really understand what He meant by “Church”. A building and a Sunday morning meeting was not what the word “Church” as Jesus used it meant. As we move into the Second Reformation that will heal the nations....we need a radical new vision of the Church

To prepare us for the coming era of Restoration of Power and Discipling the Nations we are about to go through the Second Reformation when the church structure is going to be reorganized into a fighting army of the Lord...helped along by technology and a collapsing world order.

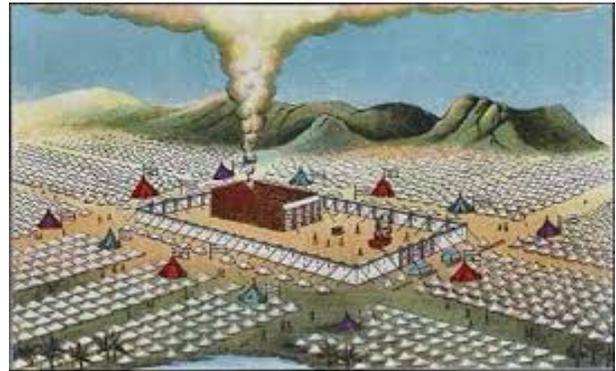
But for this coming outpouring to actually happen we are going to need what I call a Second Reformation of the church on the scale of the first Reformation of Luther and Calvin started in 1517.

The Second Reformation Church

You remember when Jesus said ***“I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”*** (Math 16:18)? Please consider the possibility that what He had in mind was not necessarily what we have in mind when the word "church" is used.

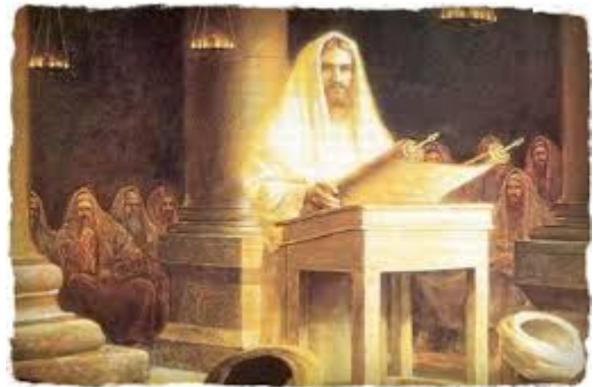
Here are graphics of what I believe Jesus saw when He said "church and what we think of as "church".

Please note that Jesus did not say "I will build my synagogue". Synagogues were common in Jesus day. The Pharisees built them everywhere. Jesus attended weekly. Synagogue comes from two Greek words meaning "meeting together". A Synagogue was people coming together for a meeting. That is our present idea of a "church", people coming together for a meeting. Actually in Jesus day we would be a Synagogue and wonderful news...Jesus still at-



This is a Church

This is the what Acts 7:38 called "the church in the wilderness." A “church” in Greek is an “ekklesia” ..the called out assembly. It was a political term for a governing assembly.



This is a Synagogue

Jesus regularly attended Synagogue every Friday evening. He read the scripture there. He taught there. The weekly synagogue meeting was initiated by the Pharisees to teach people the Torah, law of God.

**Jesus did not say
“I will build my Synagogue”**

tends our Synagogue meetings because He promised "wherever two or three gather together in my name I will be there in their midst".

But Jesus used the word "Church" as the Greek idea of, "ekklesia". And in His day on earth that was a well known entity. Athens was an "ekklesia". It was a political, commercial and religious entity that was a city state that governed its affairs, that organized its commerce and that had courts of justice, taxes, and a gathering of people that debated its issues and plans.

Acts 7:38 describes the camp of the Israelites in their tribes around the Tabernacle with Levites and Priests in attendance, with the people divided in camps of warriors with leaders as an entity called "the **church in the wilderness.**"

God is not building Synagogues. He is building an army of warriors in a camp of the saints overshadowed by the fire and cloud of His presence, an army He calls "His Ekklesia", His governing polity, His Tabernacle, His warriors that must enter enemy territory and establish His rule...and the gates of Hell will not prevail against this army.

The New Testament Ekklesia

What is the difference between Church and Ekklesia?

It will help our understanding of we look at the original Greek words used in the New Testament as well as some good dictionaries. In the Oxford Universal English Dictionary we have the following meaning for Church:

Old English, circe; Middle English, chirche; whence: church. From the Greek, kuriakon; Scottish form Kirk. The Greek word "kuriakon" means belonging to a lord. This word is used twice in the New Testament: In 1 Corinthians 11:20 it is used in "the Lord's supper" and in Rev.1:10 it is used in "the Lord's day". So a "kuriakon" or a Kirk or a Church is "something belonging to a lord."

The Greek word used 115 times in the New Testament for "church" is ekklesia coming from two

Greek words, "ek" meaning out and "kaleo" meaning call, giving a meaning of those who have been "called out". The other three times where this word was translated properly is found in Acts 19:32,39,41 where it is correctly translated "assembly" to describe the town council and civil body of Ephesus. The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words by Lawrence Richards (Zondervan Publishing House) gives us a good description of what an "ekklesia" was understood to be at the time that Paul used the word:

"In Greek culture an ekklesia was a political assembly. By the fifth century BC ekklesia had come to mean an official gathering of the full citizens of a Greek city-state (Polis) who were called together to make political and judicial decisions. The Greeks never used ekklesias to refer to religious gatherings."

In fact if Paul wanted to use a word for a religious gathering he could have used "Synagogue" which is not a Hebrew word but a Greek word meaning a gathering of people. Synagogue's were everywhere. Paul preached in them all over the Roman world. They were well known religious meeting places and are the equivalent of what we today would call "church". But the Synagogue system of religious meetings was not what Paul had in mind when he thought of what the church was meant to be; he purposely used a political word well used and understood in his day. **Athens was an ekklesia. An assembly of people gathered together in a city-state. The church is an ekklesia, a body of people in community who are called out of the world and called to live as a community under God's laws as a witness to the world.**

Now you might say, what's the difference? To illustrate the difference I need to take you back to the dawn of the Reformation when there was a heated battle on this very issue. The issue then that divided the church is the issue that is once again going to divide the church as we move into the Kingdom reality: **are we a community of believers living our lives according to God's Kingdom laws or are we a Sunday morning religious meeting leading our lives under an oppressive Babylonian economic, political and cultural captivity?**

The Battle over Ekklesia or Church.

There is an interesting history behind the translation of the King James Bible and it actually had to do with the battle over the Greek word “ekklesia” and it’s proper translation and interpretation. This little known historical battle had on its one side William Tyndale (the English martyr who translated the Bible into English) along with the Reformation leaders in Geneva and on the other side King James and the establishment Church of England. An important result of this dispute was that a group of Puritans from the south of England rejected King James and his interpretation of church as a religious meeting and headed for the New World in 1620 to form an “ekklesia” or what they called a “Holy Commonwealth”. Which is why today it is still called the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. These were the Puritans who boarded the Mayflower and before landing at Plymouth Rock signed the Mayflower Compact dedicating their new “ekklesia” to the glory of God and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

Tyndale, Geneva and King James

William Tyndale, an Englishman, travelled to Wittenburg, Germany to meet with Martin Luther when he heard that Luther had translated the Bible into German. He staid on and set about translating the Bible into English and three thousand copies were printed up and smuggled back into England. This caused an uproar in the Anglican hierarchy who immediately banned the translation. For his efforts Tyndale was captured and burnt at the stake. Why this extreme fear from the authorities in England? Tyndale made two important corrections in his translation that they realized would undermine the Church-State hierarchy. He translated “ekklesia” as “congregation” (just as Luther had done in the German using “gemeente”) and he translated “presbuteros” as “senior” instead of “priest”. That meant no church and priests but communities and elders. Unfortunately, “congregation” today has lost its original meaning for us as for most of us it merely means the folks attending the local church. But back then “congregation” meant the community of believers and that was a radical and dangerous idea at the time.

The outworking or result of this idea of “ekklesia” in the Reformation was to have a huge political and religious impact. In 1536, as the Reformation ideas were spreading like wildfire, Calvin came to Geneva and Geneva declared itself an independent Protestant city-state (an “ekklesia”) breaking away from the Duchy of Savoy and formed a ruling council of elders. It was the embodiment of the Reformation idea of the “ekklesia” a community of believers under an elected eldership. Queen Mary of England (Catholic daughter of Henry VIII) persecuted the English Protestants and many fled to Geneva where they produced the great English translation, Geneva Bible with its famous notes on the scriptures in the margins. These marginal notes again explained what the church was really supposed to be. The Geneva Bible became the most popular Bible among the Puritans. It too was banned in England by both Mary and King James but a loophole in the law allowed the Protestants in England to continue to publish the margin notes which explained the difference between “congregation” and “church”.

By the time King James ascended the throne he was desperate to keep the Puritan movement under state control and in the “church” so he authorized a new translation of the Bible to counter the effects of the Geneva Bible and its radical ideas. He gathered 47 of the best learned men in the Kingdom and gave them instruction to produce a new English translation. They were instructed to faithfully translate from the Greek and Hebrew but they were from the start instructed by King James that “ekklesia” was to be translated “church” and not “congregation”. In 1611 this “Authorized Version” of the Bible appeared but the Puritans stuck to their Geneva Bible and it took 80 years before the King James “Authorized Version” would supplant the Geneva Bible.

Today of course King James’s Bible is beloved by all evangelicals but the King’s interference in its translation has done its work through the centuries...today nobody knows there is a radical difference between an “ekklesia” and a “church”. But the Puritans knew the difference and that is why they went to the New World to establish “ekklesias” in order to escape the “church”.

Oliver Cromwell and the English Commonwealth

Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan army marched against King Charles with the Geneva Bible under their arm and sword in hand declaring that God's rule on earth was a "Commonwealth of the believers" and that Kings were not above the law of God. After cutting off Charles's head they declared England to be a "Commonwealth". The Puritans who landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620 with the Geneva Bible in hand declared it to be the "Commonwealth of Massachusetts" which it is still called today. They lost half their number in the first year to starvation, disease and war but by 1640 more than 4,000 Puritans from England had joined them to further the vision of the Kingdom of God on earth, the New Jerusalem. Their community was to be a "commonwealth" of believers who by their example of living the Word of God before all men, they would be a light unto the nations.

It was this vision of what the church was meant to be in the world that inspired the vision of the Geneva Protestant Republic, the English Commonwealth and the Massachusetts Commonwealth. They wanted to live in communities of believers that did not just say we are Christians but would demonstrate to the world by practical example: This is how Christians live!

It is this dynamic witness to the world that Micah the prophet speaks of when he said:

"But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob and he shall teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths..." (Micah 4:1-2)

It is this vision of the "City on a Hill" that would draw the nations into the Kingdom of God by its example, that inspired the Reformation Puritans. Sadly this vision has been lost in the years following the Reformation...but it is now time to reclaim the vision of the "ekklesia" of God.

The Second Reformation and the Coming New Vision of the Church

Look again of that picture of the army of the Lord, the Israelite encampment in the wilderness. I am going to be coming back to that in future to give you a structure and vision for the future of the Church: It is this:

- We are going to have to see the spiritual reality of the 'City Church' the way Jesus saw the "Church of Ephesus", the "Church of Laodicea" and begin to see "the Church of Joburg", the Church of Cape town"
- We need to see not denomination division but different encampments and different tribes of the same Israel army.
- We need to see each other as valuable skill providers that when brought together are able to possess the land for the Lord.

Let me give you an example of what I believe is the coming new church structure of the future...

Before 1600 AD the whole world had about the same economy regardless of where you lived and about the same standard of misery. Then something happened in the west to propel mankind into unheard of levels of prosperity. Before this time economic production consisted of each family producing for their needs and with a little surplus to trade in town. This was basic home production and universal poverty.

Then men realized that if we wanted to really do big things like build a ship to trade overseas or build a railroad to connect cities for trade we cannot do this by individuals doing their thing. We need to get people together to work together, we need to get capital savings together. That was the start of the first corporations and the first banking institutions, started for a specific purpose: Create a receptacle to bring people and resources together to tackle big problems that you cannot solve on a family level.

What they discovered was that by bringing people together with their labour and technical skills and combine that with their savings you can accom-

plish really big things that have far more value to everyone than all those people working for themselves at home. That launched the Industrial Revolution and with it the enormous wealth creation of the last several hundred years.

Now let me apply that principle to the church and the issues and problems before us...

There is precious little that you can accomplish on your own. God has created this world in such a way that you are continuously confronted with problems and challenges. The vast majority of those problems He has created the world with cannot be solved by individuals, they can only be solved by people working together. God forces us to need one another so we can develop the character He wants in us for eternity. That is what you leave this earth with, your character, all the problems stay behind. He wants you to see His "fruits of the Spirit" developed in your life. For that He gives you problems in this life to tackle but He expects you to work with others otherwise they will never get solved. So He gave us families and the church...

Corporations and banks were created by men to bring labour, skills and capital together to solve problems. Nation states were created to bring larger pools of labour and capital together to solve even bigger problems.

But here is the big problem we are now facing: While companies, banks and government were functioning reasonably well we could carry on with church as a Sunday morning meeting, get people saved and wait for the return of Jesus. But something has been happening over the last 20 years that is now becoming very urgent: Governments, banks and corporations are no longer functioning. They are no longer solving problems. They are creating problems. The result is that massive unemployment, social dislocations, non-functioning schools, collapsing health standards...and I can go on and on....the world system of order and productivity and social standards are in an accelerating state of collapse.

This is starting to make increasing hardships for our Christians who are functioning or not functioning in these areas of life. It is affecting our

marriages, our finances, our schools, our children. How do we as leaders of the church called by God to be shepherds of His flock to care for them, to protect them from wolves, to feed them, how do we respond to these challenges? Well I know what is not going to work in the future. More meetings, more sermons, more books, more seminars...these are not going to be the future of the church. At some point we are going to have to roll up the sleeves and get to work! With every great challenge that faces the world we need to stand up and say. "The Church of Jesus Christ has the answer!" And then we have to go out and do it!

The answer to "What now?". Is the same as it has always been: We face such enormous challenges that none of them can be solved by any of us individually. We have to find a way to bring God's people together with all the resources they possess in the form of their anointing, their labour, their skills, their love, their dedication, their capital...take all these and find a way to harness those giftings into an army of the Lord to do the work of God in the earth.

We can no longer just carry on with church as a Sunday morning meeting because at its core is a lie: We assume that if we just give that person in that meeting more knowledge, another sermon, another exhortation, he can go out on Monday and armed with faith and knowledge he can conquer the set of problems facing him and his family. Yes some problems can be solved by a person and his faith in the Lord. But most of the challenges facing our people today can only be solved by being part of a larger group of people working together. And that is what the Church, the Body of Christ is all about. But we are not there yet...

As much as people talk about "the Body" or "the fellowship of the saints" the sad reality is that our "fellowship" revolves around meetings, talking, listening passively etc. I do not believe this is the future of the Church. I believe the Lord is going to take those comfortable feathers out of the nest and He is going to force us into a new form of fellowship - a family of believers whose fellowship is centred around the work we do together and not the talking we do together.
