



GRAND THEFT JESUS



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Grand Theft Jesus

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Preface

“What you know, you can’t explain, but you feel it—like a splinter in your mind.”

*The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work... when you go to “church”... when you pay your taxes. **It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.***

- Morpheus, “The Matrix”¹ (emphasis by the author)

He’d hunted the mystical “Matrix” relentlessly, and Neo now sits face-to-face with legendary Morpheus, who has the answer. Longing for this moment—risking his job, sleepless nights, and nerve-racking police evasion—Neo’s quest for truth consumes him.

In a secret parlor with storms raging outside, Morpheus offers a quest: take the blue pill from his outstretched hand, wake up in his bed, and remember nothing of the night—or take the red pill to open the Matrix door, a truth to be shown but never told, a reality more radical than Neo could have imagined. Driven by desperation and desire, Neo chooses red, and his quest demands a life that will never be the same.

Morpheus names Neo’s condition: a festering splinter haunting his mind. Nothing could prepare Neo for reality, stripped of everything he’d ever believed.

I’ve searched for “Morpheus” my whole life. Before I had the words, I also searched for the depths of genuine Truth and Life. Digging deep, one clue at a time, bits and pieces began to fit together, and long-trusted pieces were trashed. Jesus emerged in a brand-

¹ “The Matrix”, Warner Bros., 1999

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new revelation: a real, live Person infinitely beyond religion's inadequate framework where theology redefines, systematizes, and controls.

Discarding religion, a trusted pillar of my life, is both liberating and terrifying; deprogramming from it challenges my soul. Consider a lifelong medical treatment that not only doesn't work but also cements disease in your body, prevents future cures, and you have convinced your friends and family to try it. Then you realize you never had a problem in the first place, but were deceived by professionals into taking medicine that caused the feared disease.

My quest is a giant jigsaw puzzle—which I've been doing my whole life. My grandfather—he always kept the last piece in his pocket... I never remembered until he did it again... and again. In grade school, I'd get bored with the same old puzzle, so I'd do it upside down for fun—puzzles are in my blood.

Deprogramming from religion is like a 2,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, where pieces are blank on both sides, revealing the picture only when placed correctly. Slowly and without a picture to follow, I start to see the masterpiece that sidelines a forgery, hidden for all ages until Jesus.

Puzzle pieces fall into place as life happens, and my quest for the "Matrix" intensifies. The splinter in *my* mind screamed that something just wasn't right with "church." In Neo's "Matrix", he woke up to a devastating reality, and so did I. My religion—starting with the "church" nursery—isn't just a little off, needing a little reformation, revival, or a corrected statement of faith. The reality of my religious reality jolted me as badly as Neo's. They are both imposters.

Learning true ideas that contradict traditional theology has satisfied me for quite a while, but just knowing them is no longer enough. We all have the same choice as Neo:

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take the blue pill, put this book down, and be satisfied with life as we know it, but this is a red pill book: keep reading to see how deep the rabbit hole goes.

Ah ha! You must be curious about the rabbit hole!

First, who is this person writing this book:

1. I love Jesus with my whole heart. He is magnificent, embodied Life and Truth.
2. I trust that scripture testifies to Him: “The mystery of the ages: Christ in me, the hope of glory.”²
3. I have participated/ served in “church” at several levels for many decades.
4. Cumulatively, I have spent years ‘in the word’, attended and led small groups, read many really great authors, and been to retreats and conferences.
5. I don’t have a 501(c) 3 nonprofit to donate to, a new theology/creed (statement of faith) to launch another denomination, anything to sell (including this book), or a button to follow me.

I’ve known something is ‘wrong’ with the religion I used to practice, but pragmatically, I’ve lived as if something were wrong with me. I’ve been accused (sometimes by myself) of being rebellious, of spending too little time in “the word”, of lacking accountability, of not having enough faith, and of having insufficient theological training for the questions I pose. Thank God Jesus rejoiced in ‘little children’ instead of the wise and learned.’³ I may not be disqualified after all.

Questioning religion is met with religious solutions:

- If I change my behavior, the questions don’t matter.
- Dismissed as formally uneducated who just doesn’t get it.

² Col 1:27

³ Matt 11:25

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- I might not 'be saved' if such questions are bothering me.
- My problem with authority is at the root of my questions.
- and so on

Ironically, putting a stop to religious activity, its theological answers, and rejecting its authority to speak for Him draws me closer to Jesus, which religion is designed to prevent. Also ironic: the splinter began serious festering decades ago after hearing a sermon passage intended to improve spiritual lives and resolve our woes by 'spending more time in the word':

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.⁴

Flaunting my 'problem with authority,' I applied the passage to the sermon itself. Unless I assume 'time in the word' in advance, Paul is praising the Bereans for checking Scripture to see whether Paul and Silas were telling the truth.⁵ Scripture teaches us to question preachers and their doctrine thoroughly. The passage was misrepresented and contradicts Jesus.⁶ Now I look up every passage a "pastor" quotes! I'm amazed by sermons with conclusions unrelated to the scripture they quote.

A Berean attitude satisfied me—for a while—but gaps between sermon, book, and guided Bible study quotes are commonplace. I no longer see a bridge over the chasm between scripture and my former religion. I invite you to join me on my quest to know Jesus *from* Him, rather than *about* Him through religion. Uncovering my history of

⁴ Acts 17:11

⁵ Acts 17:11 - Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

⁶ John 5:37-40

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learning *about* Him reveals an illegitimate system that **uses** His name but cannot speak **in** His name, so it doesn't know the difference.⁷

Many authors describe the 'splinter' in various ways. They agree that "church" does not predictably or even frequently produce disciples of Jesus: i.e., Willard, Tozer, Moreland, and Kierkegaard (see appendix 9). Instead, religion produces religious consumers, attenders, and good "church" members. From Willard's writings:

*"The greatest issue facing the world today... is whether those who are identified as 'Christians' will become disciples... or remain just 'church members.'"*⁸

Oswald Chambers put it this way:

*The last three months of those years things reached a climax; I was getting very desperate. I knew no one who had what I wanted; in fact I did not know what I did want. But I knew that if what I had was all the Christianity there was, the thing was a fraud.*⁹

I was committed to doing "church" right, but I now see it as a question of sanity.

"Church" malaise of the past 200 years is common knowledge, but the assault on Jesus and God's Kingdom has been a recurring theme since New Testament times¹⁰ and every period in between.¹¹ "Church" has repeatedly demonstrated corruption,

⁷ Matthew 7:21-22, Matthew 24:5, Acts 19:11-20

⁸ Adapted from themes in Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (2006), on the distinction between disciples and mere professing Christians.

⁹ Edman, V. Raymond. *They Found the Secret: Twenty Lives That Reveal a Touch of Eternity* (Clarion Classic) (pp. 53-54). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ 2 Cor 4:2, 2 Pet 3:16, 2 Cor 2:17, Gal 1:6-7

¹¹ i.e., Wycliffe, Luther, and Calvin, for example

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ineffectiveness, and secular behavior for centuries. Today, we call it the imperfect “church.” Rather than investigating the roots of the institution, we *assume* “church” to be True and repeat the cycle, expecting different results, when we should know better after two millennia. I no longer ask, “How do we do ‘church’ correctly?” but whether “church” is something that Jesus even said at all.

Questing down the red pill rabbit hole, I felt downright anger at being fed religion instead of Life in Jesus. I’ve been incredulous to uncover traditions of man masquerading as doctrine that supposedly honor Him. You may experience my devastation, too—like discovering a close friend red-handed as he betrays you.

Sitting obediently in pews for decades—confident that I was rich and needed nothing,¹²—Jesus called me *out* of religion¹³ and into Life.¹⁴ My Berean quest has grown from religious curiosity into desperate hunger for Him, because religion cheats me out of my inheritance! Religious beliefs have fallen away to give way to believing, and my mind is renewing,¹⁵ as I accept that I’ve ‘held the wrong end of the stick’ for a very long time.¹⁶

Truth and religion collide into devastating wreckage, but undeniable and irresistible Life in Him rises from the ashes. Regardless of what I leave behind, it’s not Jesus—*I cling to Him now more fiercely than ever*: Jesus only, Jesus ever, never settling for an alternative—or an impostor—Jesus in me, Jesus in you, and Jesus in our fellowship together in Him. Yes, I have deconstructed—from Jesus’ impostor, and its claim to His Name.

¹² Rev 3:15-16

¹³ Rev 18:4

¹⁴ John 5:40

¹⁵ Rom 12:2

¹⁶ Oswald Chambers

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Introduction

Why did I choose a ‘secular’ movie quote? Because it portrays the reality of our world better than any sermon—Paul said the same thing nearly 2,000 years ago:

*... we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's Word [logos], but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our message is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the message of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.¹⁷*

When it hit me, Truth hit religion like a freight train. The aftermath reveals a chasm between Jesus and “church” and the religious system it operates—***the worldly system*** pulled over our eyes, blinding us to the truth. Life in Jesus has nothing to do with the religion “Christianity” or with attending its “churches.” One is Life; the other is religion. One is The Original; the other is forgery. This one idea sets off earthquakes in my soul.

Ironically, “church” accelerated my religious deconstruction.

A friend in a high-level “church” position made a bad choice and was exposed in a humiliating way. No question: he had ‘blown it.’ According to the “church’s” commitment to scripture, its statements of faith, and its list of beliefs, the “pastor” and elders should have resolved to gently restore him, which he was more than willing to do.¹⁸

¹⁷ 2 Cor 4:2-5

¹⁸ Gal 6:1

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That's not what happened.

The “pastor” fired him on the spot, immediately kicked him out of the “church” building, and led a religious comedy—if it weren’t such a tragedy. Within minutes, the “church” staff knew the scandal, and within hours, the congregation was spreading the ‘news.’ My friend was stripped of his professional and church positions, and lifelong friends shunned him because of their official “church” jobs (their words).

A few weeks later, the “pastor” preached on the woman whose religious leaders ‘caught’ her in adultery—and encouraged us to be more like Jesus in such situations. He filled vacancies. Jesus fiercely railed against this kind of religion.¹⁹ My festering splinter burst open—something certainly is not right with “church”, and it’s not just cosmetic.

The Berean mindset kicked in. As I began to search scripture—even dabbling in Greek—I looked for a “good church” and tentatively settled into a fondly remembered denomination. I still didn’t get it. Still contemplating “church” in general, the new “pastor” preached about the man lowered through the roof to see Jesus. Approaching the sermon’s point, the “pastor” closed: “Who is going to pay for the roof?” The leader of an entire worldwide denomination turned Jesus’ glory into a fundraiser.

These examples, among many others, opened my eyes to the forged hierarchy of one member of Christ’s body over another, religion-inspired guilt, hypocrisy of those in charge, the overreach of “offices of the church,” and institutional trust in money. I cannot imagine Jesus doing or saying what “church” just did in these two cases.

Then I stumbled upon a deception beyond my imagination. “Church” is fundamentally void of Jesus’ leadership because He never even said the word “church.”

¹⁹ Matt 23

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Nor did He model it. This set off a cascade of religious dominoes. If “church” is a forgery, then “offices of the church,” “church” authority, “church” tradition, and “church” discipline collapse in a pile. Peter’s reference to “twisting words” hits the heart of religion. And neither Jesus nor scripture said words such as “pastor,” “repent from sin,” or “gospel”; these ‘translations’ come from kings of the earth.²⁰

Stripping human schemes that create words such as "church," "repent," "gospel," and "pastor" unveils Jesus entirely independent of religion. Many more words have been abused by “church”, but these four paint its forgery of Life in Jesus.

Religion invents endless human traditions—including “church,” which Jesus emphatically condemns, because they nullify God’s Word, His *logos*—Jesus Himself.²¹ “Church” traditions are the paintings that illustrate its religion—a blockade to God’s kingdom—and to Life in Jesus.²²

My soul aches for profound transformation in Jesus—Life in Him is my only hope. Sometimes, my desire burns so intensely that it overshadows even food and sleep. The festering splinter launched an all-out quest for firsthand knowledge of Jesus and His *ekklesia*, disposing of religion’s narrative for Jesus’ own words.

What if Life in Jesus is entirely distinct from religion and “church”? “Church” has never touched my desire to overflow like streams of living water.²³ I know Chambers’ desperation—unsure of exactly what I want—but I know that my religion has frustrated and diverted me from finding it.²⁴

²⁰ 2 Peter 3:16

²¹ Mark 7:8

²² Matthew 23:13

²³ John 7:38-39

²⁴ Matthew 23:13

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If you crave Jesus so intensely that you embrace the chance to exchange your life for His—even risking life as you know it: relationships, opinions of others, and every piece of religious baggage—then read on. You may not agree with anything I say, but so understand that religion holds Jesus at arm’s length while constantly using His name. My goal is to share Jesus as I know Him and invite you into your own quest.²⁵ If you’re not interested, that’s OK—it's not too late to take the blue pill.

First, I have dismantled those beliefs that I ***thought*** were absolute, but are religious traditions that have diverted me from Jesus. I realized that I cannot say I know Jesus and embrace as doctrine things He did not say. Second, I must restore a picture of the Original, founded on words that He did say or inspired in scripture before kings of the earth altered it.

Please forgive me in advance. I will slip into intense “teacher” mode from time to time, so grant me one favor and assume that it would sound much more conversational in person.

Word usage

Human tradition reflects religion’s forgery, and altered scripture is its provenance, so I treat altered words differently. Transliterated, mistranslated, or substituted words are enclosed in double quotes, such as “church”, “pastor”, “gospel”, and “repentance.” Words in other languages are in italics, such as *ekklesia* and *poimén*, which religion has substituted and transliterated with “church” and “pastor”. I also capitalize some words, like Life, when they refer to Jesus’ Life, as opposed to life before or without Him.

Jesus reads differently when we use the words that He did.

²⁵ Luke 5:11

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PART I

THE SPLINTER

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Chapter 1—Mary Magdalene, “*Where Can He Be?*”²⁶

At the mouth of Jesus’ tomb, Mary wept uncontrollably, maybe wringing her hands in despair—drowning in hopelessness.

Being with Jesus is Life itself. After all she had seen, there wasn’t anyplace else to go—but anointing Him with burial spices was all that was left. Can you imagine? Some things are just *too* much.

Now, He’s not even in the tomb either, cheating Mary’s heart to its core. Staying at the tomb was hopeless. Wrenching away from it seemed worse.

He was gone.

Mary knew Jesus. She’d traveled with the King as He delivered God’s announcement, and she personally experienced God’s Kingdom when Jesus freed her from demons.²⁷ Whatever else we do or don’t know, Jesus wasn’t doctrine to Mary—or weekly tradition. He was her Lord, her deliverer, her companion, and her friend. And He’d just been executed before her eyes. Where is Life now?

She’d watched Him as he was nailed to the cross and lifted up to hang until dead.²⁸ He had been severely beaten from head to toe—beyond recognition.²⁹ Then it was over. What was Mary supposed to do with herself? He was hurriedly placed in a tomb, while she had to go home and try to sleep. I wonder what she did all night and all of the next day. She ran back as soon as the Sabbath was over—only to stare in disbelief at an empty tomb.

²⁶ John 20:1-18

²⁷ Luke 8:2

²⁸ John 19:25-27

²⁹ John 19, Isaiah 52:14

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Even after the others left the tomb, Mary stayed. She could not bring herself to leave. What would she do, now? She could go back to her old life, but she *knew* where that led. *This just **can't** be happening.*

Then God's messengers at the tomb told her that He wasn't there—He had been 'awakened.' She could see for herself that He was gone—but their second sentence must have been beyond cruel.

Still weeping, pacing, hand-wringing, and unable to process an empty tomb, Mary catches the gardener out of the corner of her tear-filled eyes. She pleads with Him for Jesus' body.

The "gardener" calls to her: "Mary."³⁰ And she collapsed at His feet.

She knew!

Hope collided with despair—and stole her breath away; death does not get the last word.

When we look at religion and realize that Jesus isn't there, either, what will we do? Will we despair like Mary before He found her; will we hear Him call our name, or will we have already gone home? Will we accept that religion is all there is, only to slowly and painfully realize that we, too, are looking into an empty tomb?

Later, when Jesus said it would be better for Him to go away, I wonder what Mary thought then. I cannot believe Jesus really meant that "church" as we know it describes a relationship with Him that is better than Mary's. I have yet to see *that* service.

³⁰ John 20:16

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PART II

THE FORGERY

Painted by Emperors—Signed by Kings

Enforced by Empires

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Chapter 2—Anatomy of Forgery

In 1799, Abraham Kuffner borrowed a friend's famous Dürer self-portrait to make a copy. The original was on a piece of wood about 26" by 19". Kuffner cut the wooden canvas in half lengthwise, like cutting a slice of bread into two thin slices.

The back contained dates, conveyances, and stamps that proved the paintings' authenticity—the painting's provenance. Documents may also accompany paintings to complete their provenance. Then Kuffner painted a forgery onto the newly sliced back half, thereby unifying the forgery with provenance from the original.

Kuffner kept the original and returned the forgery to his friend. He was only caught because he sold the original, and its new owner put it on display in Munich, unaware that the forgery was also on display in Nuremberg.³¹ Oops.

I admire Kuffner's ingenuity but feel like the duped owner of the original; my religion is the forgery. The Way, Truth, and Life in Jesus were under attack before the New Testament writers finished, and the attack continues today.³²

Kuffner painted his forgery in secrecy, but men forged religion in plain sight by ordinary people in positions of power. They just did what humans do with power; they used it to serve their own desires.

The Forged Painting

My quest to investigate the roots of "church" uncovered a mass forgery painted by 'kings of the earth.'

³¹ Dolnick, Edward. *The Forger's Spell: A True Story of Vermeer, Nazis, and the Greatest Art Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (P.S.) (pp. 153-154). HarperCollins e-books. Kindle Edition.

³² 2 Peter 3:16, Jer 23:36, Matt 22:29, Gal 1:6-7, 2 Cor 2:17, etc

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Forging an old masterpiece is an intricate endeavor. For example, the paint Vermeer used wasn't the same as the paint used 300 years later. Old canvas can be distinguished from new in seconds; nails used to attach canvas to a frame are unique, and 'aging' a new painting is very difficult.

A forger, Van Meegeren, discovered that infusing Vermeer-style paint with a newly developed plastic, when baked, produced cracks that mimicked aging. Then he painted the cracks with black ink to mimic dust and dirt that accumulates in old paintings. Finally, Van Meegeren applied the altered paint to overlay old paintings with little value to secure the appropriate canvas and nails for the forgery's timeframe. Van Meegeren purposed to deceive by forgery, but I think that Constantine forged "church" and Christianity out of sincere, though mistaken, motives of an emperor.

Constantine is heralded as the hero who brought Christianity to Rome. Technically, that is true. Perceiving Christian popularity as a religion, he treated it like one (in his words),³³ and he granted it (and all other religions) legal status. Then he applied Roman religious, cultural, and imperial practices along with religious definitions to scriptural words. Constantine did indeed legally bring Christianity to Rome, but that new religion and Life in Jesus are mutually exclusive.^{34 35}

Constantine had two official titles that empowered him to legalize Christianity: the Emperor and *Pontifex Maximus*—High Priest. Constantine wasn't trying to paint a forgery; he was trying to stabilize his Empire by embracing its diverse religions.³⁶ Given previous persecution, Constantine probably thought that he was doing Christians a favor.

³³ See Appendix 3, the edict of Milan

³⁴ John 19:11

³⁵ Matthew 22:15-22

³⁶ Constantine's stated purpose as written in the Edict of Milan

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Other than mimicking its lingo, the Christianity of Rome had little in common with the Way of Jesus. Looking back at the foundations of ‘Christianity’ and its offspring, the “church,” it looks like a massive conspiracy. However, I don’t think that the forgers were trying to derail Jesus or His followers; they didn’t think about Him much at all. Constantine didn’t have anything against Jesus. It was perfectly natural for him to integrate a popular new religion (in his view) into the Roman religious system. From his perspective, granting official status was an honor and an upgrade. Nevertheless, Constantine’s religion is the mother of today’s Christianity and its “church.”

The Roman religious paradigm was about 1,000 years old before Christianity was added to Rome’s list of legitimate religions. Constantine himself did not abandon all to Jesus; he absorbed a movement to serve *under him*. He personally ruled the new religion along with all Roman religions. The priests who reported to him were allowed to be called “bishops,” and he built places of worship, just like other Roman gods had their temples, while Constantine followed his choice, the Sun god—Sol Invictus.

Instead of gathering to build each other up in Christ who lived in them, they gathered in buildings for religious ceremonies conducted by “bishops” for the ‘god’ of their choice, which now included the Christian god.

The parallel between Kuffner’s forgery and the Roman Christian religion was an eye-opener to me. “Priests,” “bishops,” and “pastors” are part of a forged painting that operates the different flavors of Constantine’s religion today under an umbrella called Christianity, which is practiced in “church.” Scripture was its provenance.

Constantine’s forged ‘painting’ features two profound heresies. First, by definition, Christianity is a religion accountable to imperial authority—emperors, then the Papal State, other kings of the earth, and “church” authority. Second, Constantine’s *ecclesia*, in stark contrast to Jesus’ *ekklesia*, appeals to scripture as the provenance of its religion by

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persistently redefining scripture's words to fit Rome's religious paradigm, reserving scriptural interpretation for religion's rulers, and altering scripture as needed to support itself. This is how *ecclesia* became synonymous with the religious institution itself and the buildings where it is practiced—today, the word “church”.

Jesus' *ekklesia*, on the other hand, lives within the person and presence of Jesus Himself, trusts His words as when they were spoken, and follows Him as He leads through His presence in those who trust, listen, and follow Him.³⁷

Rome was not Christianized; the Way was Romanized. It turns out that Constantine and Theodosius are the early “church” fathers. Projecting Roman “church” onto the Way after Jesus' ascension retroactively projects Constantine's new religion onto Jesus' *ekklesia*—a forgery of Jesus and the Original Life He Offers.

³⁷ John 10:1-4

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Expert Testimony

‘The Forger’s Spell’—the story about Van Meegeren slicing a painting in half to tie a forgery to original provenance—taught me that a really good painting is only part of a forger’s strategy. Great forgers also depend on experts’ testimony to give credence to their forgeries. Museum curators and private collectors are examples. Van Meegeren studied experts and crafted forgeries with their idiosyncrasies in mind, choosing which one would ‘discover’ his paintings.

The greatest asset a forgery can have is an authority’s endorsement.³⁸

When an expert endorses one forgery, future forgeries of the same style are easier to get endorsed, and once an authority endorses a forgery, it’s rarely reexamined.

In Constantine’s religion, once “church” and Christianity were established, mandated by Theodosius, and imperially enforced for centuries, few thought to question the institution. It’s been reformed, its provenance retranslated, its interpretation controlled by the institution, and its modified provenance elevated to “God’s word.”³⁹ Sincere and faithful attenders assume “church” to be true and, therefore, administer according to various theologies—denominations. The offices of the “church”, filled with graduates of its educational and apprenticeship prerequisites to teach its theologies, are today’s ‘experts’ who testify to the religion and its “church’s” authenticity.

“Church’s” first ‘expert’ testimony comes from the Emperor’s endorsement by legalization, followed by creeds written at councils organized and presided over by High

³⁸ Dolnick, Edward. *The Forger’s Spell: A True Story of Vermeer, Nazis, and the Greatest Art Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (P.S.) (p. 157). HarperCollins e-books. Kindle Edition.

³⁹ Westminster Confession, Ch 1 & 2, et al.

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Priests (a 2nd title held by Roman emperors).⁴⁰ Emperor Theodosius then mandated the religion for all Roman citizens, declared all other religions heretical, and enforced it by Imperial power for centuries, exacting punishment for noncompliance.⁴¹ The impostor was virtually unexamined for well over a millennium.

Rome's enforced religious paradigm created an expert class within Christianity, religious "offices" we now call clergy, who dictate and control 'orthodox' vs 'cult' theology according to their religion's brand via statements of faith, founding documents, approved seminaries, weekly sermons, and "church" discipline—today's version of Imperial enforcement. The forgery's centerpiece revolves around putting church" in Jesus' mouth.

⁴⁰ The original version of the Nicene Creed.

⁴¹ See Appendix 4, the Edict of Thessalonica, the law that mandated the Constantinian religion and Imperial enforcement.

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Religion's Forged Provenance

A skilled forger paints good paintings and plays to experts' weaknesses, but he also establishes false provenance. Kuffner's forgery boasted indisputable testimony: the original provenance on the back of the false painting.

Religion uses scripture as its provenance. Control over the religion flows down from the Emperor/High Priest/Supreme Governor, who controlled scripture translation and interpretation for the same reason the religion was established in the first place: the interests and security of the state. When government and religion render *ecclesia* (Latin) as the building where their institutions meet, it mimics Jesus' *ekklesia* (Greek) in name only. Theodosius, both Emperor and High Priest, mandated a universal religion for the Roman Empire and altered its creeds and scripture to align with his edict, cementing *ecclesia's* new definition as "church" doctrine.

When Jesus proclaimed God's "gospel,"⁴² substituting *paenitemini* (Latin) for *metanoéo* (Greek) turned transformational believing into punishment for not conforming to the state religion.⁴³ "Repent" derives from *paenitemini*, not *metanoéo*, a "church" doctrinal pillar. Just before scripture was altered, Theodosius 'updated' the Nicene Creed to include faith in his universal "church" along with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, another piece of provenance. The Westminster Confession labeled this altered scripture "the Word of God, written."⁴⁴

Today's religious culture of Bible-based, Bible Study, Opening the Word, Preaching the Word, time in the Word, and being grounded in the Word is based on the same

⁴² Mark 1:15

⁴³ See Appendix 4

⁴⁴ Westminster Confession, Article 6.001

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altered scripture—its provenance. Ironically, even altered scripture condemns human tradition, which nullifies Jesus—God’s Word—which we call the creeds we recite.

1200 years after the Edict of Thessalonica, King James ‘translated’ “church’s” provenance into English, adding the bold step of dictating which words translators must use. Referred to as the King James Bible or King James Version, “church’s” provenance now bears the King’s stamp of approval. Among James’ 15 directives, he dictates that all ecclesiastical (“church”) words be used, including the word “church” itself, overriding several English translations over the previous 85 years. Limiting Bible printing to the King’s presses and exclusive use in the official “church” created an effective monopoly on Bible publication.

Like Roman emperors, King James held an additional title: Supreme Governor of the “Church” of England, officially empowering Him to rule over scripture in the same way. Most scripture translations today inherit “church” rather than “congregation,” as James demanded.⁴⁵

Before the KJV, William Tyndale translated *ekklesia* as “congregation” in 1526, based on the original Greek scripture. When Jesus said it—and Tyndale translated it—*ekklesia* described the people who gathered together as Jesus called them to, building each other up. It did not refer to the religious class of attenders who sat in pews and followed “pastors” who administered services. “Church” convicted Tyndale of heresy in “church” court and remanded him to the Belgian government, which executed him. The “Church” then confiscated and burned Tyndale’s Bibles. “Church” commitment to enforcing its provenance proved lethal. King James ensured that this version of provenance and “church” tradition was passed on to the English-speaking world.

⁴⁵ See appendix 2 for a list of guidelines that James gave to translators.

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Coverdale, John Rogers, and others translated scripture using ‘congregation’ like Tyndale. King James overrode all of these translators, instead mirroring the newly published Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible from Rome.

With Jerome’s substitution of punishment for *metanoëó* in 382, Constantine’s religion embraced punishment, imperial interpretation, imperial translation, mistranslation through misuse, and the perpetuation of non-scriptural words such as “church”, “repent”, “pastor”, “gospel”, and others in its provenance.

Reformation perpetuated the counterfeit by remodeling “church,” an incorrect and illegitimate institution. Reformation’s offspring are “church” denominations that recite Theodosius’s version of the Nicene Creed, rejoicing that believing in “church” applies to them as well. Many follow some form of the Westminster Confession, which claims Scripture as “the rule of faith and life,”⁴⁶ and “church” as the recipient of its revelation,⁴⁷ replacing the king as “Supreme Governor of the Church of England” with Scripture as the “church’s” Supreme Judge.⁴⁸

Kuffner forged a portrait on the front of actual provenance, deceiving its owners into believing they had the original, just as religion paints a false portrait of Jesus based on scriptural provenance. Unlike Kushner, religion adds the boldfaced twist of altering scriptural provenance in addition to painting a forgery.

⁴⁶ Westminster Confession, Chapter 1, Article 6.002

⁴⁷ Westminster Confession, Chapter 1, Article 6.001

⁴⁸ Westminster Confession, Chapter 1, Article 6.010

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Chapter 3—Imperial Forgery: We Three Kings...

Suppose the President of the United States issued an executive order declaring which religions were and were not legal, and presided over conferences to decide which beliefs people are allowed to hold. For those of us who believe in Jesus to the level of trusting our lives to Him, can you imagine converting to such a religion because a president dictated it? This, I discovered, is the authentic “early church,” the foundation of Christianity as we know it. If this sounds crazy, I found it in Constantine and Theodosius’s own words.⁴⁹

Now haunted by disillusionment, I uncovered three kings and a legislated statement of Theology who ‘painted’ the Christian forgery: Emperor Constantine, Emperor Theodosius, King James, and the Westminster Confession.

These four made decisions about religion as it related to the best interests of their state, as they saw them, driven by a natural human desire to reinforce and expand their own power.

⁴⁹ See Appendices 3 and 4, The Edicts of Milan and Thessalonica, the laws given by imperial order.

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Step 1: Legalizing The Religion

Constantine legalized Christianity by edict in 313 AD, adding it to the list of Rome-approved religions to secure favor from the Christian god—along with all other gods—for the sake of his empire. His words.⁵⁰ Contrast his purpose with Jesus purpose for gathering believers to Him: to tear down the gates of Hell.⁵¹ Constantine absolutely brought an *ecclesia* to Rome, but it wasn't Jesus'. Those who trusted in Jesus for their lives before the Edicts of Milan and Thessalonica were called Christians. After the Edicts, Christians were those who practiced imperial religion under the Emperor and High Priest of Rome, in buildings he had built for it, and who declared faith in Rome's *ecclesia*.

While He was hanging on the cross, Jesus said to forgive the people who had hammered the nails. After presiding over the council at Nicaea to write the religion's creed, Constantine wrote this letter to justify celebrating Jesus' resurrection in relation to the spring equinox:

*And first of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul... Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd.*⁵²

He was not concerned with Jesus, but with Roman association with Jews.

Immediately after legalization, the empire began building structures called *ecclesiae* and invited "bishops" into the empire's administrative apparatus. *Ecclesia* became known

⁵⁰ Appendix 3, the Edict of Milan

⁵¹ Matt 15:18

⁵² Constantine Augustus to the Ecclesia 9 "Churches", <https://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/primary-texts-from-the-history-of-the-relationship/constantine-i>

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as buildings where the religion was practiced,⁵³ establishing “services” and ceremonies. Worshipping Jesus and His Father was legislated—as if Jesus would appeal to an Emperor for validation, let alone leadership and regulation!

Constantine had barely consolidated the Roman Empire under his rule when theological divisions within Christianity threatened again to divide the empire.⁵⁴ Aligned with his stated reason for legalizing Christianity, He wrote to the leaders of opposing doctrines:

“... I was informed of your controversy... I consider it of little significance... yet because it has produced discord among you, it must be corrected...”⁵⁵

I am taken aback that he wasn’t concerned about the content of the dispute, but about the Imperial discord. The threat to the Empire’s unity, rather than concern for Jesus and His message, is the purpose of the first Council of Nicaea as well as legalizing it in the first place.

Absurdly, I failed to apply Berean thinking to the Nicene Creed until just recently. I trusted “church” and its traditions instead. But I found that Constantine convened the council and personally presided over the official imperial creed.⁵⁶ Constantine wasn’t trying to articulate what was true regarding Jesus, nor did “church” leaders gather to discuss Life in Him. Instead, he attempted to create a uniform, empire-wide definition of

⁵³ “The emperor... commanded that a house of prayer worthy of the Savior should be built... a most magnificent **church** (ἐκκλησία).” — Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.30–32.

⁵⁴ (by defeating, imprisoning, and executing Licinius, co-emperor in the Western Empire and co-author of the Edict of Milan)

⁵⁵ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, Book II, chs. 64–72, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace.

⁵⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine* 3.6–13.

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Christianity for the entire Roman Empire to end the infighting that was disrupting order. The first of two versions of the Nicene Creed introduced the official reference to the “universal” (katholikē) ecclesia, referring to the uniform beliefs of an imperial religion rather than a spiritual doctrine.

Today we recite the 2nd version of the Nicene Creed, written about 56 years later, after Emperor Theodosius mandated universal (within the Roman Empire) observance of the Nicene religion.

The first Nicene council didn’t settle the Arian-Orthodox controversy. It worsened, culminating in confrontations like one set of riots between the factions in Constantinople:

The result was horrifying. It's related here by the historian Socrates Scholasticus:

[They] attacked one another with great fury, and great loss of life was occasioned. The churchyard was filled with gore, and the well in the yard overflowed with blood, which ran into the adjacent portico, and from there into the very street.⁵⁷

Constantine attempted to resolve the internal theological dispute of the legalized religion by exiling the Arians at Nicaea. Ironically, he brought back Arius, the founder of the heresy he helped condemn, and was baptized by another Arian bishop on his deathbed.^{58 59}

⁵⁷ Ecclesiastical History II:38

⁵⁸ Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, Book I, chs. 25–26

⁵⁹ Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, Book I, ch. 39

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This is what Constantine brought to Rome: the precedent that universal, correct theological beliefs are the foundation of Christianity, one of many Roman religions. Faith in “church” comes later with Theodosius.

The splinter in my mind festers; I now realize that the issue with “church” isn’t a matter of correctly practicing Christianity *or* “church,” because Jesus has nothing to do with either concept.

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Step 2: Mandating The Religion

Now imagine a subsequent president selecting from all legal religions in the US and issuing an executive order dictating one as the country's sole religion, and adherence enforced by threat of military punishment.

Co-Emperors Theodosius, Gratian, and Valentinian issued such an order in the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 AD, which did exactly that: it legislated Nicene Christianity as the single, official Roman religion. Believers in Jesus and followers of all other religions who refused the state religion were legally guilty of being deranged, insane, and heretics, subject to punishment by God and the Empire. Christianity was no longer just legal; it was enforced upon Rome. Jesus was neither the reason nor the foundation.

Within a year of his edict, Theodosius convened and presided over the First Council of Constantinople in 381, confirming government-ruled Christianity. Among other items, the Council modified the Nicene Creed, inserting the phrase:

“And [we believe] in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church...”⁶⁰

“Church” is *ecclesia* in the original edict language, revealing a radical redefinition through usage compared to Jesus’ *ekklesia*. In the creed language, *ecclesia* means a Roman religion that operates as an integrated department of the Roman government. The first Nicene Creed establishes empire-wide beliefs for a new state-approved religion. The second version is the version we recite in “church” today.⁶¹

⁶⁰ See Appendices 4 & 5

⁶¹ The official creed name is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, but used as the Nicene Creed today.

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Once legalized and mandated, the religion's creed updates formed its provenance. Under Theodosius, the religion's provenance was strengthened one last time. In 382, one year after the Nicene Creed was updated, the bishop of Rome, Damasus, commissioned Jerome to retranslate the scriptures.

This is when Jerome substituted the Latin *paenitemini* for the Greek *metanoéo*, second in impact only to “church” substituting for *ekklesia*. I’ll talk more about this later, but *paenitemini* shares roots with punishment, penal, penitentiary, and pain. Scripture, the religion's main provenance, now aligns with the Edit that legislates punishment for non-conformity to the state religion. *Paenitemini* is also the root of the English words “repent” and “repentance,” further widening the gap between scripture's intent and religion's provenance.

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Step 3: Enforcing the Religion

Some laws ‘are toothless,’ like speed limits on some roads. Such is not the case in Theodosius’ religion. First, He mandates that all Romans follow the Nicene religion by the name of Catholic Christians; then, in the same legal pronouncement, He legally defines those who don’t conform as deranged and insane heretics. So far, it just sounds like name-calling, but read on. Theodosius then calls on God to condemn them and have the empire inflict punishment. As just mentioned, he then adds this *ecclesia* to the Nicene Creed and updates scripture to synchronize with this punishment.

It is not surprising that the Roman Empire embraced punishment. Shockingly, it was also “church” policy. Just a few decades earlier, Rome persecuted Christians mercilessly. Under Theodosius, Christianity became the persecutor. [See Appendix 10] In one account of Roman conquest and “church” punishment:

The intensity of that conflict surpassed that of other types of armed confrontations. In Bohemia, for instance, there were whole sections of the country in which nobody was left to bury the dead. The total population of Bohemia decreased in the 17th century from about 3 million to 500,000.⁶²

For over a millennium, “church” partnered with government to enforce this policy and went unopposed or punished those who did for almost 1,000 years before John Wycliffe did so. He was condemned by the “church” but escaped execution by dying first. However, the “church” ordered his remains exhumed, burned, and his ashes scattered in

⁶² Krus, D.J., & Webb, J.M. (1993) Quantification of Santayana's cultural schism theory. *Psychological Reports*, 72, 319-325.

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posthumous damnation.⁶³ It doesn't take a Berean to know that Jesus never did such a thing. He is more likely to call the "church" a son of hell.⁶⁴

"Church" executions began in 385 AD with Priscillian of Avila and continued until Cayetano Repoll in 1826, with the notorious execution of William Tyndale in 1536. Countless wars were waged 'in the name of Christ,' committing genocide along the way.

Forced exile, imprisonment, and property confiscation were other punishments inflicted by the state religion. "Church" held court, and the government partner performed the executions. It's bad enough that people were executed for not believing the same way that the state religion demanded; that it was "church" policy until the 1800's is a fruit that Jesus does not claim. This is how "church" enforced its expert testimony to the forgery.

⁶³ Concilium Constantiense, Session VIII (1415)

⁶⁴ Matt 23:15

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Chapter 4—The Imperial Forgery in English

The most influential language in the world, English is used in politics, commerce, technology, education, and common social interaction. I'm fluent only in English, but I've communicated in 10 different countries without knowing a single word of the local language in most before I visited. I also worked for the North American branch of a German software company, collaborating on complex technical issues...in English.

English grew to global dominance with the rapid rise of the British Empire, so all the details of Rome's religious forgery are just a history lesson if the English-speaking "church" shares the same foundation. I find that modern "church" is rooted more deeply in forgery than it was under Constantine or Theodosius.

Britain was part of the Roman Empire and/or under the religious control of the Roman "church" from the time of Christ until Henry VIII broke away in 1534. After the break with Rome, the differences in "church" administration were minor, but serious challenges to Rome's religious forgery were threatening to break out.

Luther had pinned 95 theses to the Wittenberg door 7 years before Tyndale published the first Greek-based English translation of the New Testament in 1526. Intentional or not, Tyndale attacked the heart of Rome's forgery by translating Jesus' words directly from Greek into English, rendering *ekklesia* as 'congregation.' The "church"/government partnership killed him for it.

However, the die was cast, prompting Coverdale, John Rogers, and others to build upon his work, producing several more translations over 85 years before another ruler intervened. King James dictated that translators of the King James Version use "church" instead of 'congregation', the same concept that Constantine had established for *ecclesia*.

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In addition to dictating the word “church,” he also instructed translators to treat all ecclesiastical (“church”) words the same way, resulting in substituted or transliterated wording such as “pastor,” “deacon,” “bishop,” “repent,” and more.

If the KJV translation were an accurate rendering of Jesus and the scripture authors, we could rejoice. King James, however, did not commission a translation of scripture from Greek into English; he legislated it to align scripture with his official title: “The Supreme Governor of the **Church** of England.” If *ekklesia* were translated as “congregation,” as it has been for the past 85 years, then his title would have no meaning. “Archbishop” Bancroft, who was assigned to enforce the 15 KJV rules for translation, would also have an illegitimate title.⁶⁵ King James did the same thing as Theodosius before him; he aligned the forgery’s provenance to match the forgery that he ruled. King James did not attempt to preserve scripture and its testimony to Jesus; he violated scripture.⁶⁶

“Services” in Britain were similar to the Catholic liturgy they were used to; the King appointed the “church’s” bishops, and James ruled England’s religion in the same manner as Theodosius and Constantine ruled over the *katholikē ecclesia* in Rome.

Though Britain’s domain was much smaller than Rome’s, ecclesiastical courts and the enforcement of “church” law also mirrored Rome. King James is credited with:

I approve the calling and use of Bishops in the Church, [as well as] it is my aphorism, ‘No Bishop, no King.’⁶⁷

⁶⁵ See Appendix 2

⁶⁶ Rev 22:18-19, Deut 4:2, Proverbs 30:6

⁶⁷ **William Barlow**, *The Summe and Substance of the Conference... at Hampton Court* (London, 1604), often cited around pages 36 or 83–84 depending on edition.

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James was reacting to Puritan and Presbyterian proposals at the Hampton Court council in 1604 and had this to say to their proponents:

*“If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harry them out of the land...”*⁶⁸

Punishment in the Roman way. King James joined Constantine and Theodosius in the Christianity/“church” trilogy. He commissioned the KJV translation within 6 months of the quotes above, organized translation strategies under Archbishop Bancroft, and wrote and/or approved the translation instructions. How eerily this mirrors the edict/creed/translation of the rapid-fire mandates under Theodosius.

King James' part in the forgery is filled with self-contradiction. Instruction #1 from King James stated that the Bishop's Bible, the current official Bible of the “Church” of England, was to be used as the translation's foundation, with as little alteration as was possible. But the Bishop's Bible uses the word “congregation” in Matthew 16:18, as do the Tyndale, Coverdale, Rogers, and Great Bibles before it—contradiction #1.

Instruction #3 in King James' list instructs translators to use “the old ecclesiastical words, the *ecclesia* words inherited from the Roman religion. James traps himself in two ways.

1. He specifically directs translators to use the Bishops' Bible wherever possible, but to use different words when they apply to “church”—the ecclesiastical words.
2. The Bishops' Bible and all but one of the Bibles listed above have already rendered *ekklesia* as “congregation” in published Bibles since 1526. James

⁶⁸ *ibid*

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contradicts himself by instructing the use of the Bishops Bible while specifically dictating a textually unjustified change, contradicting instruction #1, and overriding a direct translation of *ekklesia*—contradiction #2.

It is important to note that ‘congregation’ then meant the people gathered to Jesus, not the people attending “church,” separate from clergy.

Instruction #14 says to use all of the above Bibles where they agree best with the [Greek] text. Yet, all of the accurate Greek translations for *ekklesia* in these Bibles are overridden by Instruction #3—contradiction #3.

However, in addition to the dramatic shift between “church” and ‘congregation’, Instruction #6 prohibits translators from using “margin” notes. This prevents the most popular feature of the Geneva bible, presumably because they criticized the monarchical hierarchy of “church”. This may have been the first of what we call a ‘study’ bible. While the Geneva Bible, as an example, is “included”, its features are specifically excluded by King James’ instructions—contradiction #4.

King James' words (“No bishops, no king”), combined with his self-contradictory instructions to translators that place his motives above translation, are smoking guns revealing forgery in the religion he leads. Words like “church”, “pastor”, “gospel”, and “repent” are traditional “church” words rooted in Catholic tradition and at the roots of the Anglican “church.” James violates well-known scripture translations to preserve traditional structure.⁶⁹ The Douay-Rheims Bible, the first Catholic English translation, was published shortly before the KJV and closely aligns with its ‘translation’ from the Vulgate.⁷⁰ The KJV aligns more with the Latin Vulgate than with Greek manuscripts.

⁶⁹ 2 Cor 4:2

⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douay%E2%80%93Rheims_Bible

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The bottom line is that “church” would not exist today, in word or concept, if King James had not overruled 85 years of translation from Greek, leaving us with translations of scripture that scripture prohibits.

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Chapter 5—A Retouched Forgery is Still a Forgery

“Church” forgery, its ‘painters’, its resulting religion, and the scriptures it changed, cannot be unseen once seen. If “church” is not from Jesus’ own mouth—conceptually or linguistically—then “church” leadership, “church” discipline, “church” tradition, “church” doctrine, and all other “church” adjectives are meaningless. “Church” services, “church” plants, and “church” offices are network marketing. “Church” member, going to “church”, and joining a “church” sound like a cult. “Church” budget, “church” offering, and “church” revenue are a Ponzi scheme. Let me be clear: I’m not bashing the Catholic “church” because I don’t agree with how its “church” operates; I reject the concept of “church” altogether—Catholic was just the first. All other “churches” are offspring, so I no longer look for a good “church.”

“Church” reformation starts with the assumption that “church” is Jesus’ concept, and then proceeds to operate “church” correctly—as if that were Jesus’ goal—even though the entire idea of “church” is a forgery. ‘The Reformation’ didn’t result in a system that predictably makes disciples of Jesus. Instead, it multiplied “church” offspring, spawning 10s of thousands of denominations. I disagree:

This impotence of “systems” is a main reason why Jesus did not send his students out to start governments or even “churches” as we know them today, which always strongly convey some elements of a human system.

They were, instead, to establish beachheads of his person, word, and power in the midst of a failing and futile humanity. They were to bring the

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presence of the kingdom and its King into every corner of human life simply by fully living in the kingdom with Him.⁷¹

One day, I discovered that Jesus said “My *ekklesia*” only once across all 4 Gospels combined, leaving no room for a systematic religion using His name, because it is, at best, unbiblical.⁷² Another profound insight that hit me is that since He mentioned it only once, every other New Testament reference to *ekklesia* either explicitly refers to what Jesus said or it is talking about something else.

If Jesus ‘institutes’ anything, it certainly isn’t the religious system, “Christianity,” which is practiced in “churches.” Jesus ‘instituted’ a Life transplant in Him, a Life never before seen in mankind—His actual Life, the Life only God’s only Son can actually give to replace the one we have, and as unpredictable as the wind—a life *in* Him, not *about* Him.^{73 74} Jesus did not come to improve our lives, our “church” life, our home life, our work life. He didn’t come to help us improve our lives; He came to offer us a chance to join His Life.

Reforming “church” merely reshuffles theological nuance, service logistics, and nominal structure created by a few kings of the earth. Reforming “church” is like AI – it only regurgitates assumptions based on what others have said about theology, service logistics, and nominal structure. Reformation cannot produce Life from above;⁷⁵ it is mostly about who runs the “church”: kings, elders, overseers, bishops, or pastors.

⁷¹ Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ with Bonus Content (Designed for Influence)*, Location 190. NavPress. Kindle Edition

⁷² Matt 16:18

⁷³ John 3:8

⁷⁴ James 2:19

⁷⁵ John 3:3

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PART III

THE SWITCH

The Forger Redefines Jesus' Words

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Chapter 6—Religious Forgery Hidden in “The Greek”

Degrees of Separation—from Jesus

I searched scripture to determine if what the “church” teaches about “church” was true and found it wanting.

I soon tossed “pastor,” “repent,” and the rest of King James’ ‘ecclesiastical’ words into the trash,⁷⁶ realizing that essential “church” doctrines are products of kings’ agendas. The Westminster Confession codified scripture as “God’s Word, written,” resulting in “church” statements of faith listing it first in their list of beliefs. Some even call themselves “Bible churches,” further testimony that it is not Jesus’.

Jesus always referred to *graphé* as *graphé*, as did all scripture, so if faith in scripture can’t bring Life,⁷⁷ how can creeds or “church” statements do better? I’ve finally heard what Jesus said:

*... the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.***⁷⁸

Jesus Himself reveals the chasm between having faith in beliefs or scripture versus coming to Him as a Person, in person.

⁷⁶ Phil 3:8

⁷⁷ John 5:37-40

⁷⁸ Ibid.

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‘Bible-based’ directly rejects Jesus direct words, and it doesn’t even use the actual words from the original scripture. Not only did Jesus condemn scripture-based life, but scripture is four degrees of separation from what Jesus said about believing in the Person, Jesus, for Life in His name:

1. Alteration by usage of *ecclesia* starting with Constantine
2. Substitution of *paenitemini* for *metanoieó* by Jerome
3. Dictated translation by King James
4. Elevation of altered scripture to ‘the word’

Even if “church” was a legitimate translation for *ekklesia*, Jesus said, “**My** *ekklesia*”, not “**Scripture’s** *ekklesia*.”

I need to deprogram.

King James didn’t need to redefine every word in scripture to align it with his role as Supreme “Church” Governor, just words related to “church” authority. Dictating “ecclesiastical” words reframes the lens through which the balance of scripture is read and separates Jesus from people. There are many words that He replaced rather than translated, but examining just four of them demonstrates “church’s” forged foundation—its false provenance.

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It's all Greek to Me

My quest out of religious forgery took me to “the Greek”, bypassing degrees, interpretations, and traditions—what Bereans are supposed to do.

I've let “Greek” intimidate me for decades, content to take a “pastor's” word. I believed them when they claimed there are no good, direct translations of some Greek words into English. Then, in a blinding flash of the obvious, I saw it... “pastors” were using English words to describe untranslatable Greek words. Religion's words nightmare? Online Greek translation tools and word-by-word scripture translation so we can see if we are being told the truth. We can compare “Christianity's” definitions to Jesus', Socrates', and Homer's. It's no more complicated than looking up Spanish on Google.

It takes a little work, but it doesn't require us to be ‘wise and learned’⁷⁹, occupy “church” offices, or hold advanced degrees to understand Jesus and His message. Knowing Greek isn't a prerequisite to knowing Jesus, at least as well as the little children, or He would have told us so,⁸⁰ but we need such credentials to decipher religion.

Through the KJV lens, spiritual gifts intended for believers are stripped of their meaning, the hierarchical structure inherited from Rome is set in concrete, and monarchs' position as heads of religion is codified. In addition to hijacking leadership from Jesus, altered words also change His message: from "God's Kingdom has arrived" to ‘do penance so that you can get saved,’ a sin-centered religion. It takes a minute to realize that “Christianity” is the appeasement of a god via repentance in exchange for life after death.

Four altered words demonstrate how fundamentally religion opposes Jesus:

⁷⁹ Matt 11:25

⁸⁰ John 14:2

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1. “Church” A word substitution for *ekklesia* through institutional usage
2. “Repent” A word substitution for *metanoëó* from Roman retranslation
3. “Gospel” A transliteration from Old English
4. “Pastor” A transliteration from the Latin Vulgate

If these words are just semantics, then my book has no purpose. But these are not translations or even mistranslations; they are transliterations and substitutions instead.

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The “Church” Substitution

“Church” comes from *kuriakos*, a Greek adjective meaning “the Lord’s,” used twice in scripture in ‘the Lord’s supper’ and ‘the Lord’s day.’ “Church” is not connected to Jesus’ *ekklesia* in any way, except through King James dictation to use it.

Imperial edicts use the Latin transliteration, *ecclesia*, to describe Rome’s religion in its edicts and creeds that formed “Christianity.” Later, the religion was enforced upon Germanic/Gothic cultures as they were conquered, who naturally referred to buildings and religion as the Romans did. Renderings of *kuriakón* emerged—meaning ‘the Lord’s House’—in the 8th and 9th centuries, and later became “church” in English, Kirk in Scottish, Kirche in German, and so on. “Church” comes from the usage of Latin *ecclesia*, not from the translation of Greek *ekklesia*.

Jerome cemented imperial *ecclesia* usage in the Vulgate, choosing the Constantinian usage, rather than an accurate translation, *congregatio*, as Tyndale did a millennium later. Well-versed in Greek, Jerome knew the definition of *ekklesia*, but by 382, *ecclesia/ecclesiam* had been used consistently for buildings and the new religion for almost 70 years. Scripture now mirrored the Edicts of Milan and Thessalonica.

In the 1500s, Tyndale and others translated scripture into English directly from Greek manuscripts for the first time, rendering *ekklesia* as ‘congregation.’ Nearly 100 years of official “church” and cultural use, King James dictated that “church” be substituted for *ekklesia*. King James aligned himself—perhaps unconsciously—with Constantine, Theodosius, Jerome, and the Douay-Rheims Bible. Otherwise, James would have had to change his title to ‘Supreme Governor of the Congregation of England...’

Although familiar with the words *kurios* and *oikos*—Jesus used one or the other about 180 times—He never said *kuriakos*. If He wanted continuity of buildings and religion, He could have said either My *kuriakos* or My *sunagoge*, and organized at least

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one building campaign to show the way. Describing a riot in Ephesus, *ekklesia* is rendered three times as ‘assembly’—a synonym for ‘congregation’—without any religious connotation⁸¹ by both the King James and the Douay-Rheims translators. *The translators knew that “church” is not a translation of ekklesia!* Translators today know it, too. And nobody asked Jesus what He meant by My *ekklesia* when He said it.

If we strip all of the ecclesiology, “church” tradition from *ekklesia*, we are left with Jesus calling a few fishermen, a tax collector, a guy under a tree, and a few others to be with Him.’⁸² To do what? To tear down the gates of hell, not go to services with Him. Jesus used the common term *ekklesia* in passing to celebrate what he and His followers were doing as envoys of God’s kingdom. Religion invented the institution.

The very heart of Christianity, the “church”—one of four things to place faith in, according to the Nicene Creed V2.0—doesn’t hinge on semantics. “Church” is unbiblical and was substituted decades after many correct translations. “Church” gathers in religion’s name and is founded by kings of the earth; Jesus gathers His *ekklesiai* for His purposes as He desires, which religion cannot systematize.

⁸¹ Assembly and Congregation are valid translations of *ekklesia*, neither have institutional meanings at the time. Only after clergy is established did “congregation” come to mean those who attended “church”.

⁸² Mark 3:14

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The “Pastor” Mistranslation

When “church” is found to be unbiblical, the offices of the “church” become irrelevant, nullifying “pastor” as even a valid term. It turns out that “pastor” is not a translation at all, but a transliteration of a Latin word. *Poimén* is translated from Greek as shepherd in the Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthews, Great, and Bishop’s Bibles, the latter two of which were authorized translations used in the “Church” of England. The Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible transliterates, rather than translates, *pastori* from the Latin Vulgate to preserve Roman ecclesiastical tradition. The King James Version likewise preserves ecclesiastical terms rather than translating them. The KJV aligns with Roman scripture, ignoring the fact that the same translators render *poimén* as “shepherd” nearly 100 times in the Septuagint and the New Testament.

Even if “church” was a legitimate translation, Paul’s letter to the Ephesians was not addressed to an elder, “pastor,” or any other supposed “office of the church,” or even to the “church” itself. It was addressed to the saints who are in Ephesus.⁸³ Moreover, the five spiritual gifts are listed as gifts to men, not to an institution, its administrators, or even Jesus’ *ekklesia*.⁸⁴ “Church” siphons these gifts into “offices,” robbing people of their inheritance in the saints to whom the letter was addressed.

Jesus referred to Himself as the good shepherd (*poimén*)⁸⁵ and didn’t see fit to use a special word to describe His role even though He is the Son of God. Among the gifts given to Jesus’ people, nothing is more devastating than painting the shepherd as a “church” office rather than the identity Jesus gives Himself to manifest in His *ekklesia*.

⁸³ Eph 1:1

⁸⁴ Eph 4:8

⁸⁵ John 10:11

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Only if I assume that “church” and its ‘offices’ are true before reading Ephesians 4:11 can I imagine these gifts being treated differently from any others.⁸⁶

As Mary said at the tomb, where have they taken Him?

Within the American and worldwide “church”, “pastoring” is the dominant career path. There are “pastors”, “executive pastors”, “senior pastors”, “lead pastors”, “teaching pastors”, “assistant pastors”, and more.

Even more horrifying than “church” forgery is the devastation it brings upon believers when it absorbs believers’ gifts, resulting in all of the disasters they are supposed to prevent:

...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes... we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.⁸⁷

“Church” offices don’t prevent deceitful schemes; they are the deceitful scheme. We cannot fulfill the purpose of the Ephesians 4:11 gifts if we are facing a transliterated staff member instead of each other when we gather. We are not even aware that we are the ones who are supposed to be ministering Jesus to each other. The hijacked gift of shepherd is the mechanism by which gifts intended for the people to share are eliminated

⁸⁶ 1 Cor 12, 14

⁸⁷ Eph 4:12-16

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from “church” gatherings, exposing the forgery. Peter teaches us how shepherding is designed for Jesus’ *ekklesia*:

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.⁸⁸

Peter, an eyewitness to Jesus’ Life, death, and resurrection, calls himself a fellow elder, not “bishop”, “apostle”, “pope”, “father”, “pastor”, or even “one of the 12”, deliberately relating as an equal member, rather than an officeholder. He encourages fellow elders (not “bishops” or “pastors”) to “shepherd” the flock, directing them to do so “not under compulsion”, but “willingly” (the same word for voluntarily), not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering, but by example. Jesus had similar insight into hired hands.⁸⁹ “Pastors” in “churches” cannot avoid the label of “hired hand.”⁹⁰

In utter irony, Peter warns against “lording it over” those entrusted to them, using the verb *katakurieuo*,⁹¹ built on the root *kyrios*—lord, master, owner. That same root produces *kuriakos*⁹² (“belonging to the lord”), from which “church” is derived. If translators were consistent, the translation should be a warning against “churching” over those entrusted. “Church” and “lording over” derive from the same Greek word.

⁸⁸ 1 Peter 5:1-4

⁸⁹ John 10

⁹⁰ <https://biblehub.com/greek/2961.htm> , <https://biblehub.com/greek/2962.htm>

⁹¹ <https://biblehub.com/greek/2634.htm>

⁹² <https://biblehub.com/greek/2960.htm>

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Jesus established what authority within His *ekklesia* looked like before Paul and Peter lived it out. And He taught from the reality that Gentile kings “churched” themselves over people, but His disciples were not to do so.⁹³

Constantine created a religion that he and his staff “churched” over Rome’s citizens. Theodosius confirmed the structure with an iron hand. Emperors, as High Priest over all Roman religions, “churched” over Christians by design. “Pastor” is a child of this tradition, not an honest translation or interpretation. Roman and Anglican “churches” did so through “bishops.”

What Jesus forbade is impersonated institutionally; what Peter prohibited in practice is normalized in “church” governance. Jesus protects His people by prohibiting titles like “father”, “rabbi”, and “teacher”.⁹⁴ Why would using the name of a Spiritual gift for a title be any different, considering that Jesus calls himself a shepherd? It’s His shepherding presence within His people that leads us to Life in Him, which “pastoring” cannot deliver from a “church office.”

⁹³ Matthew 20:25-28

⁹⁴ Matt 23:9

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The “Repentance” Substitution

The Greek word *metanoëó* is captured by one English word, *metanoia*, defined as a deep change of heart, mind, perception, or orientation.⁹⁵ *Metanoëó* is the Greek verb form that persuades to change mind, perception, or orientation... after. After what? After what was just presented. In other words, change your mind after what you just heard.

“Church”⁹⁶ and “pastor” aren’t the only pivotal words that King James substituted into scripture. “Repent” is the modern “church” policy to enforce religion through punishment.⁹⁷ Jerome substituted *paenitemini* for *metanoëó*, aligning scripture with the Edict of Thessalonica regarding punishment, causing scripture to contradict itself.

The final thought in the Edict subjected anyone who didn’t practice the official religion to condemnation and punishment by God and the Empire. Since “ecclesia” was officially and culturally aligned with what we call “church” today, aligning scripture with the punishment/guilt philosophy provided provenance. I can’t reconcile Jesus proclaiming the Kingdom of God is near with the prerequisite of self-punishment.

Jerome used *paenitemini*, a Latin word associated with penance, punishment, regret, and moral wrongdoing,⁹⁸ instead of translating what Jesus said, producing “church” guilt today. Just this one substitution, institutionally embraced and imperially enforced, redefines Jesus' glorious message of Life in God’s Kingdom as a sin-based religion demanding *paenitemini*.

⁹⁵ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/metanoia>, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metanoia>

⁹⁶ 1 John 4:18

⁹⁷ See Appendix 4, the last few lines of the Edict of Thessalonica.

⁹⁸ *paenitentia* — repentance, regret; derived from *paenitet*; historically connected with *poena* (punishment/penalty).

P. G. W. Glare, ed., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), entries *paenitentia* and *poena*.

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When Jesus emerged from the wilderness, announcing, “The time is now, God’s Kingdom has arrived,”⁹⁹ He had been Living for the past 40 days as God’s publicly ordained heir to His kingdom.¹⁰⁰ The Spirit had driven Him into the wilderness, where He confronted and defeated Satan,¹⁰¹ unheard of in human history. God’s personal anointing and this victory demonstrate that God’s kingdom has arrived and that its power rests in Jesus, evidence that the time is fulfilled. NOW!

In light of this stunning victory, He announces in royal verbiage [see “Gospel” section] that God’s Kingdom has arrived,¹⁰² and then urgently persuades, “Rethink to the depths of your heart and believe the message I just gave you; I just won!”¹⁰³ After watching the heavens torn open at Jesus’ baptism and listening to His story about rebuffing Satan, standing dumbfounded with open mouths is understandable. Four fishermen leave their boats to follow Jesus as He demonstrates God’s Kingdom, casting out demons and healing the sick¹⁰⁴—unhinging the gates of hell. This is Jesus’ first *ekklesia*—not a religious service. James, John, Peter, and Andrew transformed their thinking (*metanoéo*) after hearing Jesus and followed Him, too.

“Church” is a substitution for *ekklesia*, and its doctrine of “repentance” from sin is the opposite of Jesus’ message. Instead of setting captives free, it strengthens the prison bars. Mark’s account presents Jesus persuading people to accept the glorious reality that God’s Kingdom has arrived in power; “church” does not.

This is so important! Unless “repentance”, a direct derivative of Jerome’s wording, is assumed in advance, scripture reads as a glorious invasion of God’s Kingdom. The

⁹⁹ Mark 1:15

¹⁰⁰ Mark 1:9-11

¹⁰¹ Mark 1:12-13

¹⁰² Mark 1:14

¹⁰³ Mark 1:15

¹⁰⁴ Mark 1:16-34

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“repentance from sin”-based “gospel” negates Jesus’ unilateral sacrifice “to take away the sins of the world: for all time—before anybody even said they were sorry—and results in a sin-centered religion. “Repent”, like “church”, is unbiblical and nullifies Jesus, God’s *logos*.

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The “Gospel” Mistranslation

Substituting *paenitemini* for *metanoeó* devastates Life in Jesus in two ways:

1. It replaces joyful revelation about God’s Kingdom with sorrow, guilt, and self-centered remorse – a sin-based and repentance-centered religion.
2. It permanently associates sin-oriented religious dogma with God’s message that His Kingdom is at the gates. God’s “gospel” is not only transliterated rather than translated but is also tied to Jerome’s inserted command to do penance upon ourselves, and he placed it in Jesus’ mouth.

The story of God’s “gospel” is not just a mistranslated verse quoted out of context and disconnected from what Jesus said; God’s message requires the context of the entire story, from Jesus’ baptism to His invitation to four men to join Him in spreading the message. After Jesus was “baptized,” the heavens were torn open, and God publicly proclaimed Jesus as his son, thereby anointing Him as heir to His Kingdom. Astonishingly, the first step in His mission was to face Satan in the wilderness,¹⁰⁵ and He emerged victorious:

Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming God’s “gospel,” saying, “The time is fulfilled, and God’s kingdom is here; “repent” and believe in the “gospel.”¹⁰⁶

This is the only time Jesus referred to anything as God’s “gospel.” As I dug in, I also realized that this was, and is, a personal message from God to people, not a theological concept to create dogmatic systems. Paul said later that if anyone preaches another

¹⁰⁵ Mark 1:9-13

¹⁰⁶ Mark 1:14-15

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message, he is asking for trouble.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, any other time that “God’s royal announcement” is referenced in scripture, it either refers to what Jesus says in this passage or is another “message” altogether. “Repent from sin” is another message.

The Greek word transliterated as “gospel” is *euangelion*,¹⁰⁸ meaning “message”. John Wycliffe first translated the Latin equivalent of *euangelion* into Godspell, Old English for “God’s message,” a partially accurate translation. But instead of translating directly from Greek, the King James Version used Wycliffe’s Old English as a transliteration. Some translations use “good news” today, but that’s monumentally inadequate. It’s not a headline; it’s a message from the Lord of Hosts to gather for war.

Euangelion was a well-known term when Jesus said it, and it’s far more profound than either “gospel” or “good news.” No question—Jesus was sharing good news. But *euangelion* doesn’t refer to the content of a message; an *euangelion* message is “good” because of its source, royalty. Jesus’ message as He came out of the wilderness is good because it comes from God, the King of kings. The “*eua*” part of *euangelion* indicates that a message, an “*angelion*,” is from royalty. [“angelion” is another transliterated word: “angel,” rather than a translation: “messenger.”]

Messages from Roman emperors were, by definition, *euangelion*. They were sent to towns ahead of an emperor’s visit, a message to an enemy of the declaration of war, to announce the birth of the emperor’s son, the coming of age of the son, or the ascension of the son to the throne.

Jesus was proclaiming God’s message, which is why scripture says *euangelion*, because Mark had revealed in the previous verse that it was God’s message. God had

¹⁰⁷ Gal 1:8-9

¹⁰⁸ <https://biblehub.com/greek/2098.htm>

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already recognized Jesus' coming of Age—at His “baptism”—out of the torn-open heavens. Now, His Kingdom is invading, winning the first battle against Satan, and later tearing down the gates of hell. This isn't just a news teaser—stay tuned for details at 11.

Luke's version reinforces the *euangelion* context of war declaration—God's Kingdom invading, quoting Isaiah regarding setting captives free.¹⁰⁹ This is why Jesus, Paul, and others preach the Kingdom¹¹⁰—because that's what Jesus revealed in God's message. God did not tear open the heavens, empower Jesus to defeat Satan, free captives of sickness, disease, and demons all over Israel, suffer a brutal beating, and die on a cross, so that we might have the opportunity for a lifetime of attending “church” and doing penance for sin that Jesus took away. It was “finished” regardless of what we do or do not do. But it is not the same as believing in Him, which **is** what He asks for.

When Jesus announced God's Kingdom and its first battle with Satan, He probably saw the blank look on their faces, so He appealed to them to reconsider and believe the message from God that He had just told them. Today, it might sound like “I'm not **kidding**; I've seen it with my own eyes.”

Jesus lived and died for God and His Kingdom. He paid the price for sin with His Life and rose from the dead, giving us the chance to live that resurrected Life in Him. But Jesus never presented what He did as God's message; it was something that He did in His unique role in God's Kingdom. Even after His resurrection, He didn't say a word about “repenting” or proclaiming “repentance for sin” to get saved; He spent 40 days proclaiming God's Kingdom, just as He did after baptism. Getting saved from sin through “repenting” is never presented as the “gospel.” God's message is that His Kingdom is here.

¹⁰⁹ Luke 4:18

¹¹⁰ Jesus: 91 references, Acts 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 28:31, and more

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Period. Turning the “gospel” into an opportunity for lifetime “repentance” robs us of our inheritance in the unsearchable inheritance of believers,¹¹¹ such as:

1. An age-old mystery, a perfect message directly from God, Christ in us^{112 113}
2. Joining Him and God’s kingdom to invade this dark world^{114 115}
3. Fellowship in this new life with Jesus, our Father, and each other¹¹⁶
4. Understanding His parables describing His kingdom¹¹⁷

... and much more. This is what we forfeit when we follow religion’s “gospel” instead of God’s message.

¹¹¹ Eph 3:8

¹¹² Col 1:26-27

¹¹³ Mark 1:14-15

¹¹⁴ Mark 1:17-20

¹¹⁵ Eph 6:12

¹¹⁶ 1 John 1:1-3

¹¹⁷ Mark 4:11

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Chapter 7—"Church": A Forgery of Jesus' Authority

In the beginning the "church" was a fellowship of men and women centering on the living Christ. Then the "church" moved to Greece where it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome where it became an institution. Next, it moved to Europe, where it became a culture. And, finally, it moved to America where it became an enterprise.¹¹⁸

Halverson's point is clear: "church" isn't Jesus' *ekklesia* at all, and he identifies the core symptom, perpetuated across cultures over thousands of years: "church" mimics Jesus' *ekklesia* in lingo, but reflects current culture rather than Him.

American "church" culture is evident. "Churches" speak of core values, relevancy, institutional beliefs, and mission statements. "Church" colleges specialize in "church" administration and specialized career paths. There are fundraising consultants and industry conferences to streamline "church" operations. There are specialists to train in sales, which we call capital campaigns and giving strategies. These phenomena are sprinkled with "church" language but only thinly veil a religious industry.

Articles of incorporation filed with Secretaries of State, boards of directors, corporate bylaws, tax-exempt certificates, corporate officers, and staff payroll mirror American business. We discuss felt needs, org charts, budgets, tax returns, and programs. "Church" lobbies the government in its own interest. I just can't picture Jesus lobbying Pilate for special tax treatment for the 12.

¹¹⁸ Quoted by numerous publications, including CS Lewis Institute – no original publication documented. But I would say the same thing if he didn't.

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“Church” Overreach

Homeschooling triggered amazing support networks, organically emerging as like-minded families connected, loosely calling themselves ‘homeschool groups.’ We looked up to those with experience, and we just helped each other. There were people from “church,” friends of friends, a few from the neighborhood, and others through the grapevine. Occasionally, one parent would teach biology to a neighbor’s kids along with their own, and the other would teach Spanish in return. Everybody shared their insights and experience with others who homeschooled, whether they were ‘in the group’ or not.

People connected all over the county in person, over the phone, through email, and through plain old networking. I didn’t get it then, but Jesus called His ‘group’ that was kind of like this, His *ekklesia*.

Nobody was elected leader, and nobody suggested meetings to “run the group”... until “church” got wind of it. Hearing about the ‘group,’ a “pastor” organized a meeting to incorporate it as an “official ministry” under the “church” umbrella, specifically “pastoral” oversight. Even the people from his “church” didn’t want this, and those who didn’t attend “church” were amused. The “church” launched its ‘new ministry’ anyway, but the original ‘group’ kept helping each other without regard to the “pastor” or the “church.” Some shook their heads and dropped out.

Another example. Some “churches” focus on spiritual gifts; some never mention them. One “pastor” where I attended held classes on spiritual gifts in what is otherwise a non-charismatic denomination. Intrigued, I later realized that the discovered ‘gifts’ all aligned with the “church’s” volunteer needs. Gifts of hospitality were directed toward

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ushering or kitchen duties, etc. The higher gifts that scripture encourages¹¹⁹ apparently weren't needed in this "church." Clergy had those covered.

One Sunday, during the service's singing time, something was different. The "pastor" and others later expressed the sense of a spiritual gift, perhaps prophecy, from someone in the congregation. Ignoring the spiritual nudge, "pastor" later admitted he didn't want to disrupt the service. Gifted with shepherding, rather than the title of "pastor," we might have listened to and considered what Jesus was trying to say.¹²⁰ "Church" order squelched the Holy Spirit, preventing people from hearing what God might have to say from their inheritance in the saints.¹²¹

Another example: a few from "church", the next-door neighbor, a couple of co-workers, and a high school friend got together weekly at my house. We had dinner, shared our lives, and enjoyed each other's company while deliberately seeking Jesus. It just worked. We were like family—not just once a week, but whenever—helping each other move, sharing cars, and even our houses when fire forced evacuation.

We shared the Lord's supper for years before I attended the "church" in question. Upon hearing this, the "pastor" encouraged me to use official elements blessed by "church" clergy rather than use my own bread and wine. He also encouraged us to focus on next Sunday's scripture reading instead of how we were following Jesus. I didn't mention any "pastoral" suggestions to our group. I don't see Jesus or anybody else even implying this.

¹¹⁹ 1 Cor 12 and 14

¹²⁰ 1 Cor 14:29-32

¹²¹ 1 Thess 5:19-21

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Symptoms of “Church” Overreach

In the “Pastor Mistranslation” section, Peter and Paul explicitly reject anyone, including themselves, from “lording/churching” themselves over Jesus’ *ekklesia*.¹²² If “church” is illegitimate, then clergy “church” authority and “church” discipline are also forgeries—they are unbiblical—and only mimic His authority to lead.

Jesus didn’t “church” His authority but pleaded for us to believe in Him.¹²³ This isn’t just semantics; it is a clear distinction between Life in Jesus and “church” life. “Church” life revolves around...

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Systems of organization | versus | gifts from above |
| 2. “Church” fellowship | versus | fellowship with the Father and Son |
| 3. “Church office” authority | versus | the gift of shepherding |
| 4. For the sake of the “church” | versus | the sake of each person’s Life |
| 5. Theological principles | versus | actively listening to Jesus |
| 6. Etc. | | |

Life in Jesus does not manifest as “church” authority/discipline, and He emphatically prohibits authoritarian “titles” within His body of believers:

1. I am the Good shepherd...so that there may be one flock, one shepherd.¹²⁴
2. Don’t let anyone call you rabbi, father, or instructor.¹²⁵
3. Since we have a great high priest...¹²⁶
4. Head of the *ekklesia*¹²⁷

¹²² 1 Peter 5:2-3, 2 Cor 1:24

¹²³ John 6:66

¹²⁴ John 10

¹²⁵ Matt 23

¹²⁶ Hebrews 4:14

¹²⁷ Ephesians 5:23

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5. Head of His body¹²⁸

6. There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.¹²⁹

Since Constantine coopted “Christianity” for the empire, titles such as Pontifex Maximus, Father, “Pastor,” Teacher, Vicar, Supreme Governor, Archbishop, and others rule Christianity. “Pastor” is the most egregious, as it hides clergy’s use of a title Jesus used to describe Himself, transliterating a common word to support the forged theology of “church offices” and their counterfeit authority to rule. Shepherding is priceless when Jesus manifests Himself in believers for the sake of His *ekklesia*. It directly conflicts with Him when used as a title of a “church office.”

¹²⁸ Col 1:18

¹²⁹ 1 Tim 2:5

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Impact of False Authority

The “church” forgery and its “offices” strip God’s gifts from scripturally revealed recipients and render attenders unstable spiritual infants who are doctrinally deceived. “Church” spiritually castrates Jesus’ *ekklesia*, misdirecting them from Jesus within each other to imperial/corporate clergy as they run services. “Church” is the very deceit the Ephesians gifts are intended to prevent. Members remain unequipped to build each other up, lack unity of faith in Jesus, and fail to attain the ability to grow up into Him, all the while believing that they have Him in “church.”

Instead of strengthening one another, we face a podium as consumers of religious goods. Instead of being protected from deception through shared gifting such as shepherding, we depend on our “church” and its staff rather than on Christ in each other. Deception, forgery, and false doctrine flow from those whose titles have the same names as the gifts designed to prevent them.

This damage is neither semantic nor an opinion; it is well documented in scripture, in the same passage that the gifts are revealed.¹³⁰

Without these gifts among Jesus’ people, believers think like unbelievers.¹³¹ When shared gifting from above is mimicked by religious systems, fellowship with Father and Son isn’t weakened—it is never encountered.

No one and nothing other than Jesus has authority in Jesus’ *ekklesia*, but everyone in Him has His presence when gathered, equipped to share Him.¹³² Jesus reveals the only foundation for His *ekklesia* and for only one reason—proclaimed faith in the anointed

¹³⁰ Eph 4:11-16

¹³¹ Eph 4:17-19

¹³² 1 Cor 12:4-11

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Son of the Living God.¹³³ As with Jesus' singular reference to God's message (transliterated "the gospel"), every other time *ekklesia* is referenced in scripture, it either refers to Jesus' single mention or it explicitly describes someone else's gathering.

Jesus' gatherings are not based on statements of faith, founding "church" documents, lists of beliefs, or even scripture *about* Jesus. It's not based on our interpretation of Jesus' teachings. Jesus *ekklesia* happens only through trusting Him for Life, regardless of any theological beliefs. The first believers in Jesus are only the "early church" in "church" tradition, which retroactively projects its systems onto scriptural testimony to Jesus. Going to "church" is not following "Jesus."

¹³³ Matt 16:18

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“Church” Must Weaken Scripture

Unexpected?

Shocked and furious with “church” and how it came to be is understandable—but realizing that “church” *must* turn scripture *against* Jesus is hard to grasp. Because Jesus never mentioned or modeled “church,” it *must* violate scripture that testifies to Jesus. If “church” embraced Jesus as scripture says He is, it would condemn itself.¹³⁴

So “church” inserts itself into creeds, embracing them as “church tradition,” claiming they are bible-based, monopolizing translation and interpretation for over 1,000 years. Jesus said a lot about human tradition:

And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition...”

*...thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.*¹³⁵

Embracing creeds that declare faith in “church” elevates the creed to “church” provenance and demotes scripture from its purpose. Traditions nullify Jesus, the only Word of God, shifting faith in Him to faith in beliefs—better known as theology.

If Jesus is embraced as head of His *ekklesia*, if His *ekklesia* is His Father’s temple, if He leads it in Person, if His presence is literally in His people who hear His voice, and if clergy steal gifts of the people—then “church” collapses under its earthly foundations.

For “church” to be legitimate...

¹³⁴ See “Religion’s Forged Provenance” section above.

¹³⁵ Mark 7:9,13

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1. Scripture must read as if “church” is a valid translation for Jesus’ *ekklesia*.
2. Scripture must be interpreted as if “church” is something Jesus said.
3. Creeds developed under High Priests and Emperors must be deemed scriptural.
4. Scripture must be interpreted so that gifts to believers are institutional offices.
5. Scripture alterations and their authors must be trusted as inspired and inerrant.
6. It must reject Jesus’ purpose for scripture and accept it as “God’s Word, written.”

A reminder:

And the Father who sent Me has himself borne witness about Me. His voice you have never heard, His form you have never seen, and you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe the One whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.¹³⁶

God’s mystery of the ages isn’t “scripture in us” or “us in church”, but Christ in us—His hope of glory.¹³⁷ Hiding God’s *logos* in our hearts is about Jesus literal Life living in us. ‘Grounding ourselves in the “word”, calling ourselves Bible-based, or embracing a ‘biblical worldview’ are Pharisaic practices.¹³⁸ Instead, let’s ground ourselves in Jesus and seek His worldview—Him in us and us in Him, abiding.¹³⁹

These are not two competing principles, but principles that rely on human tradition *contrasted with* living every heartbeat in Jesus. Because Life in Jesus depends on hearing His voice as if it were oxygen, it cannot be reduced to theologically constructed principles that depend on our understanding. Being Bible-based is akin to claiming a deep

¹³⁶ John 5:37-40

¹³⁷ Col 1:27

¹³⁸ John 5:10,17-18

¹³⁹ See Chapter 10

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relationship with your spouse by reading an autobiography and considering it time spent together. It gets worse:

But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.¹⁴⁰

Our Bibles, Bible studies, and quote-based services dominate “church” life. Yes—scripture is absolutely inerrant and inspired, but we don’t have *that* scripture, starting with the word “church” itself. We quote scripture verses as principles to manage our lives, when it claims its purpose is to reveal Jesus. Even if scriptural principles were a valid concept, the scripture we quote has been corrupted and controlled by the religion we call “Christianity” from the times of Roman Emperors.

Following the scripture we’ve inherited today is practicing faith in Jerome, King James, the Westminster Confession—an imperial lens not to be confused with faith in Jesus.

Every time that Jesus referred to scripture, he called it scripture, explicitly separated *logos* and *graphé*, plainly separated scripture from Life in Himself, and clearly stated scripture’s purpose. Yes, I read scripture—a lot—always researching every “church” word to test translators’ allegiance to Jesus rather than King James, Jerome, and others.

¹⁴⁰ John 5:42

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Chapter 8—Lose His Name—Lose His *Ekklesia*—Lose Jesus

‘In Jesus’ Name,’ ‘In His Name,’ and ‘In Your Name,’ are religious habits. The “church” service version might be ‘In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’; and I’ve said some variation of these closing phrases countless times over the years. The most common phrase is “...In Jesus Name, Amen.” But what does this really mean?

When someone (the grantor) grants a power of attorney, the grantee (the agent) is authorized to act on the grantor's behalf, within the boundaries of the granting document. The agent can negotiate and sign legal agreements, execute financial transactions, and make medical decisions. Such actions are legal and binding on the grantor. Without agent authority, such actions are forgery, embezzlement, and fraud—felonies.

After punctuating prayers with the ‘right words’ for decades, I realize that *saying* Jesus name isn’t necessarily *in* His name. I had been using His name, but hadn’t been given the authority to use it however I wanted whenever I wanted. Saying ‘in Jesus Name’ didn’t heal the sick or raise the dead when I closed my prayers that way. The same habit—used in ceremonies and public prayer closings—is epidemic throughout Christendom. “Pastors,” strangers, and friends sound spiritually sincere, but the results rarely look like Jesus’ authority has been invoked. The 72 didn’t return after using Jesus’ delegated authority to report that nothing happened; they rejoiced, exclaiming that even the demons are subject to them in His Name. When people acted in response to Jesus’ permission to use His name, Jesus’ authority went with them.

Those who used Jesus’ name without His authority suffered the penalty—they were signing bad checks: the sons of Sceva learned the hard way.¹⁴¹ They copied words from

¹⁴¹ Acts 19:11-16

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others casting out demons, but without Jesus' delegated authority, thinking they could copy the exorcism process without actually following Jesus.

Jesus is emphatic:

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”*¹⁴²

In a blinding flash of the obvious, the chasm between *saying* “In Jesus’ Name” and *being* in Jesus’ name collided with my religious tradition. What if I am saying “in Jesus Name” while Jesus is simultaneously interceding with a different objective? Am I opposing Jesus? It may be fortunate that nothing happens when we say “in His Name” when He didn’t direct what we just said or did.

Compared to the “pre-church” era, saying Jesus’ Name when given the authority to do so caused crippled people to walk and demons to flee. Why doesn’t Jesus teach this closing phrase when He teaches prayer?¹⁴³ What constitutes a gathering of two or more to be ‘in His Name’?¹⁴⁴ What do we do with gatherings He didn’t call but use His name anyway?

A second blinding flash of the obvious: getting ‘in His Name’ right is a prerequisite for a gathering to be His. The 72 were not in His name because they decided to get together and go get some demons, saying Jesus’ name along the way; they were in His

¹⁴² Matt 7:21-23

¹⁴³ Matthew 16

¹⁴⁴ Matt 18:20

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Name because He gave them the authority to use it on the mission He gave them. Copying Jesus' mission doesn't make it in His Name; hearing His voice and doing what He says for the unique mission He assigns is nonnegotiable for us to act under His authority. Sincerely doing what we think is good and using His Name as we pursue it is not delegated authority.

Jesus gathered and led His *ekklesiai* for various missions. For His first *ekklesia*, He called four; then added a fifth; then accumulated a total of 12; and then at least 72.¹⁴⁵ He demonstrated His authority as God's Son by personally healing the sick and raising the dead as He traveled around Galilee with these *ekklesiai*. Then Jesus commissioned separate *ekklesiai* to go out on their own and do the same thing *in His Name*. Can you imagine going on a mission to heal the sick and cast out demons with the power of attorney from Jesus? What? 'Hi, I speak for Jesus...'

When Jesus said "My *ekklesiai*," He was referring to these groups He had already been sending. There was no institution now because there was no institution then; He was in the process of tearing one down, and He didn't arrange any *ekklesia* to get Himself worshiped. Jesus called His *ekklesia* out of fishing boats, tax offices, and out from under trees to come with Him as He announced God's arriving Kingdom. That's it. Religion later overlaid principles of its own institutional systems onto Jesus' simple groups and His purposes, using biblical language with alternative definitions.

Unless I assume a "church" institution before reading, Jesus said the words "build My *ekklesiai*" only once, without a hint of an institution. I hear something like "that's what I'm talking about" as the 72 came back in victory. Jesus *ekklesiai* sounds more like

¹⁴⁵ Mark 1:16-20, Mark 2:14; Mark 3:14, Luke 10:1-24

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the Old Testament *ekklesiai* in Judges, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Chronicles. “Church” looks more like Roman religious practices.

Since “church” is conceptually foreign to Jesus and His *ekklesia*, it cannot be in His Name since He never said the word. “Church” is therefore void of Jesus’ authority, cannot be in His name, and ‘done right’ is impossible. Deceived by forgery, we are robbed of our inheritance in the saints as we attend a service, rather than hearing His voice and sharing Him. “Church” excludes Jesus’ *ekklesia* and vice versa.

Returning to the “repent” section for a moment, Jesus didn’t require Peter, Andrew, James, and John to join Him in Bible study, solidify their synagogue life, or sincerely repent of their sins before joining Him to spread God’s kingdom. Jesus’ *ekklesia* didn’t have membership requirements. Jesus’ *ekklesia* is inseparable from His authority to call them. “Church” calls its meetings from another authority.

Gathered together two or more at a time is in His Name when those gathered hear His voice to do so, as opposed to summoning Him to join us as we gather. Conversely, going to “church” is responding to King James’ call and the voices of emperors past.

If Jesus lives in His *ekklesia*, His temple, then *attending* “church” is a forgery of *being* His *ekklesia*. We lose Jesus, even as we are told we have Him. Incredulity, anger, and embarrassment at being duped... and I can’t unsee it. The difference is seeking Him with my whole heart versus doing “church” the way “church” teaches to do “church.” My sincerity about previous “church” commitment doesn’t change the fact that Jesus never said the word or modeled the concept.

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Don't Forsake The Assembly: Hey, Who Said That?

Nowhere is “church’s” forgery more clear than its teaching about itself using Hebrews 10:25:

*And let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, not neglecting **to meet together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...¹⁴⁶*

The phrase, ‘to meet together’¹⁴⁷ communicates an action not to be neglected, and makes perfect sense when read through “church’s” lens. Through Jesus’ lens, this interpretation is unintelligible. But Jesus’ *ekklesia* is not a system of religious meetings but people who responded to His call. So, what is this passage talking about? We must be Bereans!

First, the word rendered “to assemble/to gather” in Hebrews 10:25 is a noun in the original, not a verb, so reading this as “to attend church” is true only if I assume it in advance.

Second, the word in question is *episynagogue*, not *ekklesia*. Even if “church” were a valid translation for *ekklesia*, this verse does not talk about either, let alone an institution.

Third, because *episynagogue* is a noun, there must be a nearby verb to either support it as the subject of a sentence or as the object of the verb. The verb is *egkataleipó*, meaning to forsake, abandon, or desert, and is modified by the adverb ‘not.’ The action being instructed is not to desert the assembly. Why? It’s in the same sentence: to encourage one another rather than desert those gathered together in Jesus’ Name. The

¹⁴⁶ Hebrews 10:24-25

¹⁴⁷ Also rendered, ‘meeting together’, ‘gathering together’, and ‘meeting together’ in various translations.

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word for "encouraged" is the same word Paul uses when teaching how to administer spiritual gifts: so that the gathered may be encouraged. It's the same word used for encouraging in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, and it's the same word in the list of spiritual gifts in Romans 12:8. The point is not to adhere to the habit of attending a gathering. The point is not to create a habit of forsaking Jesus' gathered—because that is where Jesus manifests Himself in His people to be shared among the gathered, including encouragement. Jesus' encouragement is found in the gathered, not in the habit of attending.

Hebrews 10:25 cannot be followed—we cannot encourage each other—if we are attending a “church” gathering that faces forward instead of each other. The same is true for every spiritual gift, including those siphoned from people into the staff.

The incredible Person, Jesus, the incredible things He has done, and the incredible reality that believers may join, trigger Hebrews 10:25 in this context:

Therefore, let us draw near with a true heart

...Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering

... Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

*...[let us] not neglect **[Jesus' ekklesia]**¹⁴⁸...*

... but encourage one another...

... But recall the former days

... Therefore, do not throw away your confidence

¹⁴⁸ Author interpretation, using a noun instead of a verb to correctly translate the original

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... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...

... Consider him who endured from sinners

...Therefore, lift your drooping hands and

... strengthen your weak knees,

.... and make straight paths for your feet,

... Strive for peace with everyone

... Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom

... and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship

Along with 1 Cor 14:26—Jesus’ *ekklesia* builds each other up in all things—Hebrews 10:25 is encouragement itself, reminding us not to abandon those whom Jesus has called to assemble. The habit of assembling—attending “church”—and the reminder that Jesus and his presence, including encouragement, live in His assembled for the sake of each other are unrelated ideas.

“Church” teaching Hebrews 10:25 validates its system of services to gather people according to scripture requires us to dismiss three points:

1. It’s a conflict of interest because it serves itself.
2. It is taught as a scriptural directive to attend an institution that Jesus did not mention or model.
3. “Church” invests enormous time, money, and energy in its central function, scheduled gatherings, when there’s no other passage in scripture that supports this idea, which is vital to the institution.

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Attending choreographed, prepared, and rehearsed presentations from a stage *prevents* attendees from building each other up and encouraging one another. Religion diverts our focus elsewhere, while we are taught that we are doing what He requires.

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Chapter 9—Sincerity, Good Things, and Temple Attendance Don't Legitimize Forgery

This chapter challenges me. Admitting my mistakes is bad enough, but knowing how it will hit others gives me pause. Admitting is indeed the first step, but not the only step. Religious forgery dogs me as I seek to deprogram from forgery, replacing *what* I believe with *Who* I believe in. "*Metanoéo* and believe" that God's Kingdom is right here, right now was completely outside of the people's religious habits of attendance and observance. So Jesus fervently persuades them to radically change their minds and hearts and believe what He's trying to convey. Until *metanoéo* happened, God's message through Jesus was inconceivable.

Personal sincerity while pursuing "doing church right" has no bearing on what is true. Paul's sincerity led him to a road to Damascus to put more believers in jail. He was very sincere about what He believed. *Metanoéo* happened to him on the way to exterminate Jesus' *ekklesia*. Paul was sincerely wrong.

We change hairstyles, diets, and bad habits with varying degrees of success, but to discard lifelong core beliefs is brutal. To realize that building life on a foundation of correct beliefs entirely misses the point is an isolating, humbling, frustrating, and confusing quest. The path is no map for this quest through uncharted waters, and Jesus Himself is the destination—and He cannot be captured in doctrine, traditions, or religion. Trusting Jesus is Life itself, when it becomes independent and regardless of doctrines we build, principles we have distilled, meetings that we attend, or traditions that we follow diligently. Life in Him versus religion dedicated to Him come from different universes.

My quest usually evokes one of two responses:

1. Those who don't care about religion, so Jesus and "church" are irrelevant.
2. Those who are so committed to "church" that they defend it with gusto:

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- a. Jesus attended Temple and Synagogue, so we should do the same.
- b. Attenders sincerely believe in Jesus and “His church.”
- c. Good things happen in “church,” so it can’t be totally wrong.
- d. Going to “church” versus believing in Jesus is just semantics.

I’ve argued for these points myself, but they now lie in shreds on the floor.

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Jesus 'Attended' Temple And Synagogue, So We Should Do The Same

I've assumed since grade school that, since Jesus attended something, attending "church" follows His example, but I've never heard what really happened during Jesus' "attendance." What we don't see Jesus doing speaks volumes:

1. Listening to sermons
2. Donating weekly "gifts and offerings"
3. Encouraging people to attend "services"
4. Developing systems to "worship" Himself

Compare this to what we do know happened when Jesus 'attended':

1. Synagogue and Temple staff tried to kill Him, trap Him in His words, labeling Him the son of Beelzebub.
2. He healed and cast out demons
3. He called Temple leaders hypocrites, sons of hell, and whitewashed tombs
4. He revealed that Temple leaders prevent people from entering God's Kingdom.
5. He called the Temple a den of robbers
6. He revealed the Temple's destruction, to be rebuilt in Him in three days

If we are following Jesus and modeling "Christlikeness", why do we do things that He never mentioned or modeled, yet leave behind those things that we know He did do when He attended? Should we imitate Christ like this? Shouldn't we be revealing the religious leaders' character and the "church" practices until they are so mad that they plot to kill us? Shouldn't we be dedicated to tearing down the system? Jesus did.

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Why would Jesus claim that His Father's house was to be a house of prayer, then commit to tearing it down and rebuilding it *in Himself*, only to establish another system meeting in *kuriakos*, the Lord's house?¹⁴⁹

I knew religious leaders arranged Jesus' crucifixion, but I didn't know His Temple visits triggered confrontations, assassination plots, and attempted murder. Being Christlike looks like calling "pastors" sons of hell, hypocrites, and vipers rather than "church" attendance.¹⁵⁰

Outside of duty to Jewish law, Jesus didn't mention Temple attendance and never associated it with His *ekklesia*—believers who followed Him—to tear down the gates of hell,¹⁵¹ including the Temple itself. If we are Christ's temple, do we tithe to ourselves?¹⁵² That's the only place where they were collected before Jesus. He didn't model dutiful attendance—He demonstrated how to treat religious tyranny.

If attending was critical to Jesus' message, why didn't He attend the scripturally prescribed festival, Passover, that continued in Jerusalem for five days after His resurrection? Was He disobeying scripture? Temple had become irrelevant, because He is now our Passover,¹⁵³ Unleavened Bread,¹⁵⁴ and Firstfruit¹⁵⁵—the Temple shadow now was in Him and Him alone. Jesus went to His believers rather than to the Temple, even though 10s of thousands had gathered for a feast. If there was ever a time to anchor a new institution with Temple attendance traditions, rising from the dead and attending a Temple feast was a missed opportunity.

¹⁴⁹ Review: "church" is a translation/transliteration of *kuriakos*/*kuriakón*, "The Lord's House"

¹⁵⁰ Matt 23, for example

¹⁵¹ Matt 16:18

¹⁵² 1 Cor 3:16-17, Eph 2:19-22, 2 Cor 6:19, John 2:19-21, Rev 21:22

¹⁵³ 1 Cor 5:7-8

¹⁵⁴ Mar 14:22-24. Jesus broke unleavened bread on the first day of Unleavened Bread, saying this is my body

¹⁵⁵ 1 Cor 15:20-28

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The rumor was out that the curtain separating people from God's presence was torn in two. But despite five sabbaths between the resurrection and the ascension, Jesus didn't attend. Instead, Jesus did the same thing that He did when He came out of the wilderness—He proclaimed God's kingdom—still the point, the whole point and nothing but the point.¹⁵⁶

"I say unto you, that something greater than the temple is here."¹⁵⁷

Jesus reveals Himself and God's Kingdom above the Temple. Those totally committed to the Temple structure were offended to the core. For those seeking God and His messiah, Jesus unleashed unlimited hope:

"...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... he was speaking of the temple of his body" —John 2:19,21

Not only is His body the rebuilt Temple, but His believers are the literal Temple. God, starting with Moses, the journey to the promised land, the building of His Temple, and finally, and completely, the manifestation of resurrected Life in Jesus, is the most stunning event in all History. Consider what Jesus said:

"There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."¹⁵⁸

... the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and is

¹⁵⁶ Acts 1:3

¹⁵⁷ Matt 12:6

¹⁵⁸ Matt 24:2

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now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” –

John 4:21,23-24

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.¹⁵⁹

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,¹⁶⁰

... being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.¹⁶¹

“Church” collects tithes, gifts, and offerings, claiming scriptural guidance, yet Jesus didn’t even attend a scripturally mandated feast after resurrecting in Jerusalem. Nor did He attend any synagogue on the five sabbaths before ascension. “Church” staff are priests, fathers, pastors, and other titles null and void in Jesus; some specifically prohibited. John drives it home:

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.¹⁶²

As does Luke:

¹⁵⁹ 1 Cor 3:16-17

¹⁶⁰ 1 Cor 6:19

¹⁶¹ Eph 2:21-22

¹⁶² Rev 21:22

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*Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?'*¹⁶³

The torn curtain in the Temple was repaired by hands of those who didn't realize they no longer had a job.¹⁶⁴ Life was no longer related to attendance.

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¹⁶³ Acts 7:48-49, Stephen quoting Isaiah

¹⁶⁴ Matt 27:51

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Some Attenders Sincerely Believe in “Jesus’ church”

Even when presented with the facts, many hold onto Rome’s creedal religion (protestant and Catholic), unwilling to confront the sincerity of faith in “church.” Whether sincere about Jesus instituting “church,” its traditions, or the creeds it recites, Truth is not defined by sincerity. I sincerely practiced and taught “church” and its religion for decades. My sincerity about “church” didn’t mean that Jesus said it.

Embracing sincerity sounds and feels compassionate; however, sincerity establishes intent but cannot establish truth, authority, or legitimacy. Sincerity about “church” doesn’t somehow substitute for actually being “in Jesus’ Name”. Having beliefs—even sincere, accurate ones—**about** Jesus is the opposite of trusting **in** Him.¹⁶⁵ That would be faith in King James.

We can be sincere, devout, and emotionally invested—and still be deeply deceived. Paul persecuted believers with a clear conscience and zeal for God, until He experienced Jesus in Person.¹⁶⁶ Many will realize that sincerely saying Jesus’ Name is not the same as knowing Him and will be told to leave.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ John 5:37-40

¹⁶⁶ Gal 1:13

¹⁶⁷ Matt 7:21-23

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Good Things Happen in “Church”

‘But I’ve experienced Jesus, scripture, and prayer in “church”, so it can’t be all bad.’ This logic says if things judged to be good (or “Christian”) happen in “church,” then they validate “church.” This logic destroys itself, because then bad and neutral things invalidate “church”, often dismissed as ‘the imperfect “church.”’ Since “church” is not a valid concept in the first place, an imperfect “church” is unintelligible.

Jesus’ *ekklesia* is not validated by the behavior of institutional members or staff, but exclusively by Jesus’ Personal call to those who proclaim Him to be the anointed Son of the living God.¹⁶⁸ Period. “Christian” was never meant to be an adjective that describes moral character—that is sin-based religion.

If ‘good things happening’ in our judgment were validation for an institution, then the road to Damascus, the chariot where Nathanael met the Egyptian, the well where Jesus met the Samaritan woman, and Lazarus’ tomb should be ordained. At least we know that Jesus was present at these events, as opposed to “church.”

In fact, the opposite is true; the good things that Jesus did at the Temple included driving corrupters out, calling the leaders sons of Hell, and predicting its destruction. Religion responded with attempted and plotted murder. The vast majority of what we consider the good things Jesus said and did happened elsewhere.

Good things happen in schools, grocery stores, coffee shops, and at dinner with friends. It is hard to overstate that these institutions provide no more validation as an institution ordained by Jesus than “church” does.

¹⁶⁸ Matt 16:16

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Isn't Going to "Church" and Following Jesus Just Semantics

If following Jesus and going to "church" are just semantics, you shouldn't have read this far:

1. Jesus' *ekklesia* describes people, Who they belong to, and what they do.¹⁶⁹
2. Jesus' *ekklesia* isn't a building or institution attended, joined, or believed in.¹⁷⁰
3. His *ekklesia* can't help but exclaim, You are the anointed Son of the Living God¹⁷¹
4. Scripture quoting Jesus says so.¹⁷²

Podium signs on the front lawn, websites that advertise attendance hours, and regularly choreographed events preclude "church" and *ekklesia* from being just semantically different; they are fundamentally and foundationally unrelated in action and origin. Can you picture Jesus setting up a sign with office hours?

Compare being actively married to attending a marriage seminar. One is a response between two people in an intimate relationship; the other focuses on the gathering itself—a community of like minds, teaching from a podium, and an agenda to work through. A marriage seminar may help a marriage, but it is not its foundation, let alone the marriage itself.

Oh, the agony of seeing Jesus, only to say, "Didn't I attend biblical gatherings diligently in your name?" only to realize that He doesn't recognize me.¹⁷³

Claiming mere semantics accuses Jesus of not really meaning *ekklesia* when He said it, but He meant *kuriakón*, which King James later corrected. Semantics, indeed!

¹⁶⁹ John 14-17

¹⁷⁰ John 4:7-14

¹⁷¹ John 6:68

¹⁷² Matt 16:16-18

¹⁷³ Matt 7:21-23

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Personal Preferences

The most powerful rejection of “church” is the way that **we** treat it. We all have our list of criteria for a “church” to meet before attending:

1. Where I feel at home
2. A solid kids' program
3. Where I feel like I'm being fed
4. Offer a good small group program
5. Missions' focus
6. Where we really like the “pastor”
7. Where my friends go
8. A familiar denomination
9. Activities like men's softball
10. Babysitter prospects

I used #9 and #10 myself once—low expectations. We may even pray for “churches” that meet our criteria and even call it “church” shopping. We earnestly seek what we expect to fulfill our needs, and claim that the Lord led us when they are met. Roman emperors created the “church” forgery on this premise to fulfill political goals—in their own words.¹⁷⁴

“Shopping” exposes “church.” Jesus didn't demonstrate services, appoint leadership, strategize how to meet people's needs, or call for belief in an institution. Cultural relevance, comprehensive age-appropriate programs, website content, and musical style share one objective: to attract attenders. Jesus did the opposite.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ See Appendix 3, The Edict of Milan

¹⁷⁵ John 6:26-66

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PART IV

The ORIGINAL

It Takes Your Breath Away

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Chapter 10—Jesus Is The Original, Genuine Son of the Living God

Altering scripture, whether by legislation, misuse, or religious tradition, alters God's testimony to Jesus. Ignore chapter and verse headings for a minute—they were added later—and read Mark 1 from Jesus' immersion until He begins preaching.¹⁷⁶ The story reads something like this:

Jesus comes to his cousin, John, known as the Immerser, who preached immersion into a transformative new life and ceremonially immersed them in water. John's preaching moved people to publicly acknowledge themselves as sinners. John prophesied that someone far greater than he was coming, who would immerse in the Holy Spirit.

So, John immersed Jesus. As He came up out of the water, God tore open the skies, and the Holy Spirit landed on Jesus' shoulder. God speaks from the torn-open skies, "You're my beloved Son; I take great pleasure in you," publicly crowning His Son heir to God's kingdom.

The Spirit then drives Jesus into the wilderness, where He battles and defeats Satan. Emerging from the wilderness, having demonstrated God's power, Jesus proclaims God's news: His kingdom has arrived, and the first victory is won. Jesus emphatically persuades stunned listeners to radically change their minds and believe God's message.

Jesus then calls a few fishermen out of their boats, and they follow Him throughout Galilee, healing the sick, casting out demons, and preaching God's Kingdom.

Jesus' first *ekklesia*.

¹⁷⁶ Mark 1:9-21

Grand Theft Jesus

God didn't choose a temple, "church", or synagogue—He anointed His Son as heir to His kingdom out in the wilderness, conspicuously ignoring religious venues for the ultimate event in human history—so far. From the very beginning, Life in Jesus had nothing to do with "church."

Why not usher Jesus into Jerusalem and install Him as High Priest to run the Temple the way it should be if attendance at services were the point? But the Spirit drove Him to face Satan instead. Jesus, the first human armed with God's authority, wielded that authority over Satan, the first victory of the invasion. After Satan retreated, Jesus emerged from the wilderness, delivering God's message: "God's Kingdom is here!" Only religion could turn this celebration of victory into a theological doctrine, put it in a box called "the gospel," and infuse it with *paenitemini*. God sent Jesus to lead His Kingdom, to invade what Satan has stolen, and we are invited! The Kingdom has come!

The mystery of the ages had just been revealed in Jesus: God's hope of glory is now vested in mankind.¹⁷⁷

God's Kingdom? Here? *Now*? If we set theology aside for a moment and imagine the stunned look on people's faces, we understand why He followed God's message with: "God's Kingdom is here. Believe me, I've just seen it and done it... reconsider, think again, come to your senses—**believe** God's message that I just told you after defeating Satan face to face—His Kingdom is here!" Inserting sin and penance for it into the greatest message ever delivered in human history lies at the feet of Roman-inspired religion. Altering scripture to integrate with culture, government, and religion sets the stage for elevating an impostor to "God's Word, written." Jesus came to take sin off the table, not to introduce tips, techniques, and penance to manage it.

¹⁷⁷ Col 1:27

Grand Theft Jesus

When we embrace the actual message that Jesus said, we begin deprogramming from religion's "gospel" and altered scripture that supports it. We start to embrace the original and come to Him for Life, trusting that He has taken care of sin because He is the only one who is able. Jesus rescues us from the captor, *paenitemini*, while religion doubles down on human repentance to obtain Jesus. The entire "gospel" of John doesn't mention repentance even once, but it says believe about 100 times.

God's Kingdom offers Life in Jesus by believing in Him, who alone can give it to us—the Original. Religion offers a formula for appeasing the Christian God through *paenitemini* and "church" attendance, appeasing Him for favor in this life and heaven in the next—the forgery.

Jesus preaches God's Kingdom:

1. He teaches us to pray for His Kingdom to come¹⁷⁸ not true repentance from sin.
2. "Forgive as we have been forgiven" rather than "forgive us according to our repentance."
3. Jesus' analogies ("parables") start with "the Kingdom is like..."¹⁷⁹ not repentance from sin is like...

Jesus preached God's Kingdom throughout Galilee and tried to teach it to Nicodemus. Paul preached, taught, persuaded, and testified about it.¹⁸⁰ Jesus instructed the 12¹⁸¹ and the 72 to preach the Kingdom, and He proclaimed, "The Kingdom of God has come upon you."¹⁸² Jesus said He would give the "keys of the Kingdom" to His people, His *ekklesia*, not the "keys to genuine repentance." And Jesus never said "repent from

¹⁷⁸ Matt 6:10

¹⁷⁹ Matt 13 – several examples

¹⁸⁰ Acts 19, 20, 28

¹⁸¹ Matt 10:5-7

¹⁸² Matt 12:28

Grand Theft Jesus

sin,” let alone intertwine it with “getting saved,” a prerequisite to entering His Kingdom, or “the gospel.”

Jesus exposed religious leaders: “Publicans and harlots enter the Kingdom before you,¹⁸³ with the ultimate reality: “Not only do you not enter the Kingdom, but you prevent others from entering as well.”¹⁸⁴

Jesus said, “Seek the Kingdom first”¹⁸⁵ not “do penance for sin first.” Freeing prisoners of war from the religion of *paenitemini* is at the top of Jesus' list. Of all of the captors, Jesus confronted religion at every turn. Jesus hardly mentioned sin and never called any person a sinner, and usually mentioned it to refute religion's position.¹⁸⁶ Jesus has only one direct comment on sin: “Stop sinning so that nothing worse happens to you.”¹⁸⁷ Jesus' concern is for our well-being, not our skill in repenting from sin.¹⁸⁸

“Neither do I condemn you”¹⁸⁹ demonstrates forgiving sin first and directing away from it later. He eliminates sin from our debt before we even say we are sorry. He takes sin off the table first.¹⁹⁰ Who had taken the adulterous woman captive, and therefore, who did Jesus free her from? The religious, the #1 prisoner of people, had ‘seized’ her. Jesus is the rescuer, not the condemner.

Jesus was killed for preaching, living, and sharing God's Kingdom with people throughout Israel, Galilee, and even Samaria—a Kingdom that Pilate could not tolerate and that Jewish leaders rejected. Death and resurrection didn't change a thing: Jesus

¹⁸³ Matt 21:31

¹⁸⁴ Matt 23:13

¹⁸⁵ Matt 6:33

¹⁸⁶ Luke 13:4-5

¹⁸⁷ John 5:14

¹⁸⁸ Matt 23

¹⁸⁹ John 8:11

¹⁹⁰ Mark 2:5

Grand Theft Jesus

proclaimed God's Kingdom for 40 days before ascending into heaven.¹⁹¹ He didn't attend Temple or synagogue, nor did he preach repentance from sin. From His very first message until He ascended to the Father's side, Jesus proclaimed God's Kingdom, and He took away the sins of the world so that we could join Him.

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¹⁹¹ Acts 1:3

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Didn't Jesus Come to Call Sinners to Repentance?¹⁹²

If we assume religion's version of "the gospel," "church," and "repent," then Jesus calls sinners to *paenitemini*. However, since Jesus never called anybody a sinner, nor did He confront people's sin before healing and delivering, we need a non-religious vantage point.

Picture Levi in his Roman IRS office, collecting taxes on a typical workday. Jesus spots him and says, "Follow me," which Levi does. Huh?

Levi was excited, so he naturally held a feast for Jesus at his home. Some from Levi's circle, Jesus, and His disciples were there. Religious leaders spotted them—were they stalking Jesus? —asking His disciples why they ate with the riffraff (tax collectors and sinners). Jesus overhears.

The religious, repentance-based lens through which Jesus' response is viewed leads to a conclusion. We may be members in good standing, live "a good Christian life," and strive for "Christlikeness" in that worldview dictated by our theological lens, in which we place our faith. But this lens requires us to be unaware that having correct theology about Jesus isn't the same as trusting Him.

Jesus turns theology upside down. If we give Jesus the courtesy of being human, including a sense of irony, humor, and wit, we might slap our thighs in laughter in just a moment rather than sharpen our theology. If we assume that scripture testifies to Jesus as He actually is,¹⁹³ then we read it as revelation of a Person, rather than theology.

¹⁹² Luke 7:27-32

¹⁹³ John 5:37-40

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“Why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners?” Pharisees directed the question to Jesus’ students. But Jesus stepped in. The theologians were messing with His people!

“The healthy don’t need a physician, just those who are sick,” He says, and continues: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” If the religious lens is used, this fits the sin-based system. Through the repentance lens, Jesus instituted a God-ordained doctrine: Jesus’ mission is to lead sinners to “repentance of sin.” This matches the “repentance gospel,” and the Pharisees should embrace His noble mission. Right?

Aligning this passage with Jesus’ announcement of God’s arrival,¹⁹⁴ nothing is more clearly debunked than the idea that “repent” means “repent for sin” and is an invalid translation of *metanoëó*. The invalid interpretation of “repentant from sin” as a synonym for *metanoëó* must be falsely assumed before reading Levi’s dinner party for the doctrine of “repentance for salvation” to apply.

More subtly, since Jesus had dined with Pharisees several times,¹⁹⁵ what does that say about their own sinful status? Jesus had condemned the Pharisee conversion model, calling them sons of Hell, who reproduced sons of Hell.¹⁹⁶ More likely, Jesus rocked their worldview rather than endorsed it. Since Jesus never called anybody a sinner, He was using the Pharisees’ own accusation to answer them, since they also dined with Jesus. Can you imagine Jesus calling His fellow dinner guests sinners in front of them? Rude is not considered “Christlike.”

If this verse stands as a theological foundation directly from Jesus’ mouth, then where is the theology for the righteous who don’t know Him? Just who are the righteous,

¹⁹⁴ Mark 1:15-16

¹⁹⁵ Luke 7:36-50, Luke 11:37-54, Luke 14:1-24

¹⁹⁶ Matt 23:15

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healthy people that Jesus was talking about who don't need Him? Wouldn't they be the ones for Jesus to build on and give the keys to the Kingdom? If Jesus were stating *the* foundation of Christian doctrine, why does only half of the sentence apply?

Once again, theologians tried to trap Him, but Jesus shut them up, leaving them without a response. What if Jesus actually loved Levi and was celebrating with him and his friends like normal people do when great things happen?

Jesus puts the Pharisees in the same boat with His fellow guests, and what are they going to say:

What are the theologians going to say?

1. Oh, huh, we're sinners, too! Why aren't you having dinner with us?
2. We don't need any more righteous converts. There's not enough room in the synagogue anyway! Why aren't you shunning them as we do?
3. Tax collectors, prostitutes, and fishermen! How can they be made righteous? Impossible? Some things just can't be redeemed! *It would take an act of God...*
4. You can't eat with them; they're unclean. They have to be made clean first. No, we don't want to tell them how. They might start coming to synagogue!

If they were genuinely worried about their well-being, why weren't they inviting tax collectors and sinners to dinner? The accusers were left with nothing but their theology, and they had no answer, just like the prodigal son's big brother.¹⁹⁷ Jesus had silenced them again. I bet Peter got it. Leaning back and sipping his wine, he hears Jesus say with a straight face, "I haven't come to call the righteous..." This is priceless on so many levels. Can't you see Peter spraying that Mogen David all over Levi's nice white tablecloth?

¹⁹⁷ Luke 15:11-32

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Jesus had been publicly exposing the theologians as vipers, sons of hell, hypocrites, and outsiders to God's kingdom, who also kept others out.¹⁹⁸ I doubt that He has now reversed Himself to join the Pharisees to call Levi's guests nasty names at dinner.

I don't think they got the joke, which is now in our statements of faith, our liturgy, and our theology.

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¹⁹⁸ Matt 23

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The Original Continues

Jesus doesn't orchestrate a coup or join Temple leadership—because there is nothing human to attend or rule after rising from the dead. Jesus didn't visit the Temple or synagogue once after resurrection—He skipped the Sabbath for the rest of His Life, above and outside human institution. He revealed His desires in prayer with His Father:

All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them... that they may be one, even as we are one... that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.¹⁹⁹

Jesus didn't say, "May they 'repent' from sin and attend services together."

Before Judas betrays Jesus, He connects His relationship to His Father and His people over 100 times without a single reference to "church", its offices, its authority, or attendance.²⁰⁰ His only connection to religion after the Last Supper was to receive a death sentence. He doesn't say "repent" or "salvation," let alone "repent" from sin to get saved. He mentions one sin: the sin of not believing in Him, because Jesus was concerned about one thing—our abiding in Him and Him in us, so that the world may believe that you [God] have sent me [Jesus]. Religion's forgery featuring sin management cannot compare.

Jesus now lives in His people, the Hope of glory,²⁰¹ His only Temple.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ John 17:10-21 (selected pieces quoted)

²⁰⁰ John 14-17

²⁰¹ Col 1:27

²⁰² John 2:19-21, 1 Cor 3:16-17, 1 Cor 6:19, 2 Cor 6:16 et al.

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Chapter 11—Jesus' Original: A Spiritual Potluck

Discovering that religion imitates Life in Jesus is agonizing, but nothing compares to the agony of losing Jesus Himself when we lose Life in Him by attending “church” services. Like Mary weeping at the empty tomb, what do we do now? He’s not where we thought He was. It is an enormous and powerful revelation to disarm “offices of the church” for the sake of restoring fellowship in Jesus, but what does Life in Him actually look like? It’s good news—it’s a Spiritual Potluck!

Ekklesia: The Believers’ Potluck

There’s nothing like potluck! Everyone brings a favorite dish to share, and all eat to their heart’s content. Visitors who don’t bring anything get seconds. So much glorious food for everybody!

Potluckers cook enough for themselves, their family, and others. Leftovers overflow—for very full people! Big potlucks, two-family potlucks, neighborhood potlucks, and random potlucks. Joe tries a little of everything! Susan loves the bread; many sample their favorites, and some eat things they’ve never tried before—there’s something for everyone. Some only eat dessert.

When someone forgets it’s potluck day or is overwhelmed by life... guess what? They come anyway, knowing they are wanted and will have food to share next time!

So many people attend the potluck that they soon run out of room, and a few break off to start their own. Both potlucks continue to grow and spin off, and the town is soon filled with potlucks every breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Friendship flourishes, and the community thrives.

All thrive, except the local burger franchise; it suffers from anemic attendance, and the jealous owner launches his own “potluck,” featuring low-cost, no-cooking.

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It turns out that there's a market for fast food 'potluck.' He sets aside a section of his restaurant during non-peak times, trades free burgers for kitchen volunteers, but he passes the hat to everyone else to cover overhead and tight margins.

Menu items are limited for large feedings; that's the tradeoff of an affordable, efficient substitute. The potluck forgery catches on, and the young and hurried professionals bring their kids—who've never attended the real potlucks—until the substitute becomes part of the community's subculture.

Eventually, the meaning of potluck blurs because both potluck and 'potluck' use the same terminology, so non-potluckers on the outside don't know the difference based on terminology for food, organization, fellowship, and purpose. The contrast between them is the difference between home cooking and fast food—a friend's dining room versus a Naugahyde booth. Remodeling the booths doesn't change the substance.

To differentiate itself, the "potluck" runs specials appealing to broader demographics and grows so large that its kitchens can't handle the volume. So it substitutes the limited menu with a single, popular, pre-made snack to meet the needs of busy attenders. Guest speakers add relevant topics that streamline the weekly event and focus on universally felt needs. Booths and tables are replaced with conference seating, and there is only time for coffee with so many people. Eventually, a larger building was needed, and two sessions a day were needed to service the popular 'potluck.'

Potluck and "potluck" continue to thrive in their respective circles, and the Chamber of Commerce lists the forgery as a community feature. They claim the same heritage—though only one potluck actually is... a potluck. The town is proud of the 'potluck' institution, which is the foundation of its unique culture.

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Jesus' *Ekklesia*: A Spiritual Feast

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...

- 1 Cor 12:4-11

Through the “church” lens, spiritual gifts become theological topics subject to its authority and “pastoral” oversight. Gifts in this world are topics of theological debate, igniting “church” splits and spawning denominations along the spectrum from extreme focus to extreme denial. “Church” leadership, authority, discipline, and services in any denomination are the mechanism that excludes Jesus personal leadership from its gatherings by denying and/or ‘controlling’ spiritual gifts. This forgery explicitly precludes a gathering from being Jesus’.

In Jesus' *ekklesia*, spiritual gifts manifest among gathered believers as His breath in His people. Jesus' Life speaks in these gifts to build up His people. Either limiting or emphasizing such gifts is a human attempt to control Jesus, when we should seek His control. Facing forward—focusing on a “church” leader—is the mechanism by which Jesus is actively prevented from living in His people. Spiritual gifts are not sermon topics; they are Jesus' voice. “Church,” by definition, cannot be Jesus' potluck.

When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up...

- 1 Thess 5:11

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An *ekklesia* that Jesus convenes is His spiritual smorgasbord, a gourmet potluck for those proclaiming, “You are the Son of the living God.” The variety of gifts is limited only by Jesus’ own glory.²⁰³ Life in His *ekklesia* happens as believers manifest God’s gifts—it’s *how* a gathering becomes Jesus’ literal body—we are where He Lives. If we gather for another call, we get fast food instead of His potluck, empty calories.

Believers gathered to Jesus build each other up, listening to the same voice that called them together—they hear Him and follow.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Eph 1:22-23

²⁰⁴ John 10:3

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Chapter 12—Fellowship Hall Or Fellowship With Him

Jesus' sheep hear His voice *because* they belong to Him. When gathered in His name, He Lives in and through us. Unless gathered in His Name—Him calling, not us using the phrase—the gathering isn't His. Such gatherings may speak about Him, but they cannot speak for Him.²⁰⁵ Deceived into believing in such gatherings that absorb Jesus' gifts rather than manifest them, we are devastated while believing we are thriving.

When we lose Jesus' *ekklesia* because we think that “church” is what He was talking about, we lose Jesus because “church” is not His gathering. The smoking gun is the direction we face when attending. This reality of missing Life takes a minute to sink in.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.²⁰⁶

This is why Jesus died for us—so that He could be in fellowship with us—and with His Father, our God! This is Life in Him—by His design. He says it again:

²⁰⁵ John 10:3, 14-15, 4, Matth 18:20

²⁰⁶ 1 John 1:1-3

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Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.²⁰⁷

And again:

Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."²⁰⁸

Fellowship with the Father and Son: we are designed to get together to share **HIM** with each other. When in His Name, manifesting Him for each other's sake, we can't help but fellowship *with* Him, too! We lose so much by attending instead of being.

Imagine an extraordinary, even decadent family meal, celebrating one of life's great events: a nice, juicy steak, a delicious red wine, and something chocolatey for dessert. Even dinners like this pale compared to the laughter and shared memories. Nobody wants to go home; it's so much fun, and people bond more deeply. They can hardly wait for the next dinner.

We love this kind of fellowship so much because it is a whisper of fellowship in Jesus. We settle for quick chats before and after the service because "church" doesn't know the difference. Paul called his entire religious background knowledge and education garbage compared to the feast at His table.²⁰⁹ We skip "church" for football games all the time. Would we skip Christmas dinner with Jesus... for anything? If "church" really is literally where Christ's body reveals Himself to each other, why is it so optional?

²⁰⁷ Rev 3:20

²⁰⁸ John 14:23

²⁰⁹ Phil 3:8

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“Church” Fellowship

I always thought that “fellowship” in “church” was what adults call catching up before and after the service. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with getting together with others just to be together. But don’t mistake human fellowship for Jesus’ *ekklesia* or fellowship *in Him*. The fellowship that John is talking about is with the Father and His Son, Jesus.

Just imagine, for a minute, *expecting* to receive gifts directly from Jesus that are exactly what your heart craves—a word from Him that you desire even more than life itself. What a joy to *expect* to give the same to others. Now *that* would be building me up—the point for Jesus’ *ekklesia*—preparing us to tear down the gates of hell.²¹⁰ Fellowship in Him is better than the Super Bowl.

If our fellowship “in church” is essentially the same as the local bar, season tickets with friends, coffee shop buddies, or a book club, then we’re limited to what humans can offer. People outside “church” have this kind of fellowship all the time. “Church” services dramatically reduce the time people spend together.

²¹⁰ Matt 16:18

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Religion Satisfies Human Fellowship

Fellowship with the Father and the Son is imitated by brief fellowship among attenders before and after services, unaware that actual fellowship in Jesus is the indispensable foundation of Jesus' *ekklesia*. It is so easy to be fulfilled by human fellowship when we don't expect overflowing streams of living water.²¹¹

Let me drive this home: the entire point of getting together is to build each other up—according to Scripture.²¹² Jesus is present when He calls us together—two or more—in His name.²¹³ The purpose is to interact with one another in His name, building each other up through the gifts He has given.²¹⁴ If He has not called us together, if He isn't speaking to us and through us when we are, then it's somebody else's *ekklesia*.²¹⁵ We can't be Jesus' *ekklesia* without facing each other.

Religion forsakes fellowship in Jesus and His Father for the fellowship of repenting of sin, Bible study, and “church” activities, yet still uses the term “fellowship.” We're deceived into thinking they're the same thing as fellowship in Him:

*... because religion gives the impression of having Christ, while it inoculates you from experiencing the real thing. **Most wicked.** If you want to destroy an economy, flood the market with counterfeit bills.*²¹⁶

As opposed to the living Jesus present in each person, sharing God and His Kingdom with each other, the most common comment before “church” is “How is the

²¹¹ John 7:38, John 4:13-14

²¹² 1 Cor 14:26

²¹³ Matt 18:20

²¹⁴ 1 Cor 12:7

²¹⁵ Matt 7:22-23

²¹⁶ Eldredge, John. Beautiful Outlaw: Experiencing the Playful, Disruptive, Extravagant Personality of Jesus (p. 9). Hachette Nashville. Kindle Edition

Grand Theft Jesus

family?” and afterward is “What did you think about the sermon?” The phrases “before church” and “after church” refer to the scheduled service and/or Sunday School, a stark contrast to Jesus’ *ekklesia* gathered to fellowship in Him. It can’t be attended.

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Fellowship In Jesus: Missing In Action

“Jesus in me”, “Jesus in you”, and what **He’s** doing do not fit in a “church” service.

The records of Christ are written so you can experience him as they [Jesus’ disciples] did, this intimate connection with the Father and the Son. John says that you can enjoy the same friendship with Jesus that he knew, for this Jesus came. So, if you do not know Jesus as a person, know his remarkable personality — playful, cunning, fierce, impatient with all that is religious, kind, creative, irreverent, and funny — you have been cheated. If you do not experience Jesus intimately, daily, in these very ways, if you do not know the comfort of His actual presence, do not hear His voice speaking to you personally—you have been robbed. If you do not know the power of his indwelling life in you, shaping your personality, healing your brokenness, enabling you to live as he did, you have been plundered.²¹⁷

Plundered of fellowship in Jesus and His Father—the reason John gives for believing in Jesus!²¹⁸ “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”²¹⁹ “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”²²⁰ The entire Jerusalem Council agreed with each other *and* with the Holy Spirit.²²¹ Paul had a direct conversation with Jesus.²²² Jesus—in Person! We are made to be in intimate relationship with Jesus and His Father. Jesus said “*My ekklesia*,” His people, rather than “*kuriakos*,” The Master’s House. Jesus tears down His Father’s House, rebuilding all that it meant in Himself, and never ‘attended’ His Father’s House again. There was no reason to. When we lose Jesus in the words of religion, we lose the Life He offers; we lose everything.

²¹⁷ Beautiful Outlaw, John Eldredge Pg 12

²¹⁸ 1 John 1:1-3

²¹⁹ John 10:27

²²⁰ Matt 16:17

²²¹ Acts 15:1-35

²²² Acts 9:1-19

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PART V

THE

TESTIMONY

Grand Theft Jesus

Chapter 13—Let's Take Scripture At Its Word

Jesus alone is God's Word—His *logos*—and never uses *graphé* (scripture) interchangeably. In fact, Jesus explicitly rejects a link between knowing scripture and having God's "word" in our hearts:

And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word [logos] abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures (graphé) because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life... But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.²²³

When Jesus refers to scripture, he always uses the Greek word *graphé*.²²⁴ Those who search for eternal life through scripture miss the mark:

1. They have never heard His voice.
2. They have never seen His form
3. They do not have His *logos* [His Word] abiding in them
4. They do not believe the one He has sent
5. They refuse to come to Jesus for Life
6. They do not have God's love in their heart

Jesus defines *graphé* and *logos*: one is testimony to Jesus, the other is Jesus. Altered from the beginning by the emperors who created it, *graphé* has served as the foundation for religion. King James altered it again centuries later, and the Westminster

²²³ John 5:37-40,42 [brackets by author]

²²⁴ John 1:1-4

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Confession codifies it as ‘The Supreme Judge... can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture,’ an idea that neither scripture nor Jesus ever said.²²⁵

Kings of the earth defined and ruled their religion via “church” and its provenance, scripture. By altering provenance to suit its needs, controlling its interpretation, enforcing its observance, and elevating itself as a thing to believe in, “church” illustrates that it is void of God’s *logos* according to *graphé*. It is void of Jesus.

The Word was born of a virgin, died on a cross, taking away the world’s sin, rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father. The Word healed the sick, raised the dead, and restored sight to the blind. The Word cast out demons and silenced religion. Scripture did none of these things.

The shift from testifying to Jesus as the Son of the Living God to ascribing scripture as “the word of God, written” isn’t a question of inspiration or the inerrancy of original scripture, but of “church” redefining scripture to align it with its own doctrines and traditions. Treating *ecclesia* as buildings and their meetings, substituting *paenitemini* for *metanoéo*, dictating “church” instead of *ekklesia*, and using God’s gifts to men for “church” staff contradict scripture and Jesus. Yet, these are the principles found in the books on the back of the pew in front of us. Few of us have read God’s inerrant, inspired *graphé*.

“Church” changed scripture’s purpose from testimony to Jesus into:

²²⁵ Westminster Confession, Article 6.010

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Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments...to be the rule of faith and life.²²⁶

“Church” turns scripture from testimony to Jesus, the Son of the Living God, into the ultimate authority for ruling behavior and doctrine. Scripture, being treated as God’s word, emerged under Theodosius, became traditional in the Middle Ages, and was codified during the Reformation by Parliamentary legislation in 1643.

The Westminster Confession retains substituted, transliterated, and mistranslated *graphé*. The Confession elevates scripture to be the Supreme Judge, attempting to ‘correctly’ define Christianity, in contrast to John 5:37-40. Therefore, it produces a scripture-based theology that is not only the opposite of Jesus’ words but also uses altered scripture to do so. It doesn’t even mention scripture’s only point: to give testimony to Jesus, because He is exclusively where Life is found. Believing in “church” and the Westminster premise of scriptural foundation launches a religion that has never seen God’s face, heard His voice, possessed His Word in the hearts of its attendees, or known His love—*according to Jesus, in inerrant, inspired graphé*.

“Church” is founded upon Constantine and Theodosius, and its offspring, the “Church” of England, or its grandchild, the theology of the Westminster Confession. None of them declares that faith in Jesus—“You are the anointed Son of the Living God”—is their foundation. Now, common “church” lingo includes phrases like “standing on the word”, “preaching the word”, and “spending time in the word.” And they don’t mean Jesus.

²²⁶ Westminster Confession Chapter 1, Articles 6.001 and 6.002

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The point is that we should take Jesus at His Word, take scripture at its word, and embrace scripture's purpose to reveal Him, not to manage King James' "church" and other "church" offspring.

I'm often asked, 'What translation do you use?' I say Greek—which is an overstatement—I'm not fluent in Greek. I research one word at a time, and I read articles from those who are. Online Greek translation, both current and historic, is religion's worst nightmare. I research online what Jesus said in Greek and how it was used as far back as Homer.

We don't need a seminary degree to know from scripture that Jesus is the anointed Son of the living God. But we do need one to untangle what "church" has done to it.

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PART VI

THE CHOICE

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Chapter 14—What To Do For “church”?

I’m often asked, ‘So, what do you do for “church”?’ when I talk about this book, revealing the indoctrinated assumption that “church” is central and even required for Christians. I don’t do anything “for church” because it is a forgery of Life in Jesus. I’m not looking for a “church” substitute that fits me better, because I reject “church” or any institutional system that claims to be related to Life in Jesus.

I have determined that Jesus’ *ekklesia* isn’t something that can be attended, reformed, systematized, or believed in, but simply a word meaning a gathering that Jesus calls together when He desires to do so and for His purposes. I no longer believe that “church” is a translation of *ekklesia*, nor is it a synonym, so it cannot be related to what Jesus said or modeled. I have come out of “church”, obeying what Jesus says in scripture.²²⁷

Applying the ideas from this book to “church” will result in dissolving it.

But what *do* I do? I capture my thoughts and bring them to Jesus, renewing my mind in Him.²²⁸ I ask what is on His mind—about what He sees that Father doing today that I can be part of—rather than trying to get Him to focus on what I’m doing. I no longer look at prayer as something that ‘works’ or not, but as an exchange of ideas with a mentor and best friend to get to know Him better and to listen more than I speak. I’m not saying that I have perfected my relationship with Him, or that I need to—His relationship with me is perfect. Jesus doesn’t seem to be concerned about how well I am questing, but loves that I have decided to quest after Him. He brings me together with others when and how He desires. He’s yet to give me a scheduled time to connect with Him.

²²⁷227 Rev 18:4

²²⁸ 1 Cor 10:4-5

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Jesus isn't calling me to solve a spiritual mystery that transforms a corrupted Temple system into a good "church" system, but a calling to Him out of my "fishing boat" and out from under a tree.²²⁹ I know it's not the prescribed path; Nicodemus didn't get it, either. "Church" now follows his lead:

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born from above/again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."²³⁰

Nicodemus had no idea what Jesus was talking about. "How can this be?" he responded. Following Jesus is a quest that cannot be captured in a system. Systematizing is what people attempt to do to Him. It's called religion. It happens in "churches." Life in Jesus is no more a system than the wind.²³¹ I cannot do religion anymore.

Unlike a trip designed to get us somewhere as efficiently as possible, a quest requires us to leave familiar dwelling places for strange lands we cannot yet envision, without knowing when we will return. This journey requires a willingness to say goodbye to life as we know it because our hearts long for something more.²³²

²²⁹ Mark 3:14

²³⁰ John 3:5-7

²³¹ John 3:8

²³² Barton, Ruth Haley; R. Ruth Barton; Willard, Dallas. Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence (Transforming Resources) (pp. 16-17). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition

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Some understand leaving the “church” system and then search for something to replace it, as if there were a better, correct system to follow. Life in Jesus cannot be programmed any more than the wind can be scheduled for an orderly appearance. I must strive daily to pursue Him in the Life He is living right now, with today’s thoughts, and today’s missions.

I now ask a different question: ‘Has going to “church” ever had anything to do with following Jesus?’ “What do I do for church?” if I leave her is like asking a prisoner how he plans to replicate his cell life after release.

Therefore, I have no list of the crucial steps to doing Jesus’ *ekklesia* right. If I gave you such a list, it would rob you of your quest. Hence, Grand Theft Jesus. If Life in Jesus could be programmed, I might as well go to “church.”

I’ve shared what happened as I began to listen to Him in real time, discovering that Life in Him only happens in Person and in real time. To put that into steps:

1. Listen to His voice
2. Join Him in whatever He says

Repeat. These are my steps.

I find that when I seek Him this way with all of my heart, I can’t help but seek Him all of the time. When I seek Him all of the time, my whole heart can’t help but be in the seeking, too.

I have learned to really believe in Him, not just about Him, finding that the words for faith, believe, and trust are the same word in scripture. I have stopped beginning my day with Jesus to help me with my day. Instead, seeking Him continually results in trusting that everything has already been taken care of and being more interested in how He is seeing things rather than how I’d like Him to arrange them. I believe: “You, Lord,

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have already taken care of me” when tempted to worry. He’s not worried. I now fully embrace one simple Truth: “This is the work of God, that we believe in Him whom He has sent.” My circumstances don’t change scripture, and I don’t have to worry about how well I am believing at any point in time, but only that my faith is in Him to be perfect no matter what.

I have come to crave Jesus like my life depends on Him, because it does, listening for whom He wants me to engage with in fellowship, where, and when. I have learned to love Jesus more than I love my own life—every single part of it. It’s an adventure.

A few books have helped me. Many have not. If you read the ones I have, take every thought to Jesus and listen to His voice for you—not mine and not the author’s. Also, a few scriptures are great anchors when read from the point of Jesus being revealed—John 5:37-40, Colossians 1:27, and Ephesians 1:17-18.

I use biblehub.com to learn actual definitions of words, then look up the word on the internet for its original meaning—especially the HELPS word studies. For example, biblehub shares Strong’s definition for *ekklesia*: “church,” assembly, congregation. But in the HELPS word studies: “The English word “church” comes from the Greek word *kyriakos*.”²³³ This footnote is an earthquake under Christianity’s assumptions: Jesus did not say the words attributed to Him.

“Invitation to Solitude and Silence” by Ruth Haley Barton profoundly helped me to learn to listen to the one true God and Jesus, whom He sent.

John Eldredge’s “Beautiful Outlaw” and “Waking the Dead” resonate with me, especially the idea of being and doing something radically different from what I’ve been

²³³ <https://biblehub.com/greek/1577.htm>

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taught. Oswald Chambers's "My Utmost for His Highest" (July 12th) and "They Found the Secret" (Chapter 5) by V. Raymond Edman move me deeply. The point is to pursue Jesus and listen to Him. These books helped me.

It shouldn't have surprised me that Jesus anticipated the scandal of religion and "church"—it wasn't a surprise to God. Scripture records His response: "Come out of her, My people."²³⁴ Not that "church" isn't doing it right, but because "church" is based upon Constantine, Theodosius, James, and the Westminster Confession and has nothing to do with Jesus at all. That some of His people are ensnared inside "church" does not validate it according to Jesus.

The choice is stark, but crystal clear: we remain in religion's institution, its familiar structures, traditions, and belief systems, or we embrace the quest to follow Jesus, the Son of the living God. And Life in Him is the only guarantee.

²³⁴ Rev 18:4

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PART VII

APPENDICES

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Appendix XXX – Possible Ideas for possible future inclusion

If “church” were eliminated, what would be missing

While I was discovering that “church” was both a concept and an organization entirely separate from Jesus’ words and actions, I also found it difficult to internalize that nothing based on Jesus is missing once “church” is eliminated. “Church” is an invalid term, a forgery of Life in Jesus, not a potential way of living Life in Him. By definition, there is no way to do “church” better (reform it), and no other word to label it. In fact, renaming “church” to “*ekklesia*,” or even “assembly,” can’t work because it would either just be a label change, or, by applying *ekklesia*’s principles, every aspect of “church” as we know it would crumble and disappear.

Personal view on the foundations of a forgery.

I love a great “who-done-it” story. The most intriguing crime stories aren’t about stealing ultra-secure fortunes through brute force. We are captured by clever sleight of hand, misdirection, intrigue, and forgeries.

Sometimes the tale is so intricate and ingenious that nobody sees it coming. Forgeries sometimes hang in place of the original for centuries, where everyone assumes they are authentic. Sometimes a diversion steals the guards’ attention for just a second. Sometimes the forgery hangs undisturbed for so long that it never occurs to anybody that they are not looking at the original. Everybody treats these forgeries as originals—sincerely believing they have a real treasure—but they wouldn’t recognize the original if they saw it. If anyone questions the substitute, they risk more than the thieves.

Based on what I have discovered, I now see religion as a forgery.

Jesus’ name is everywhere: liturgy, songs, and Christmas pageants. It’s in culture’s curse words, for heaven’s sake. Jesus Himself—who walked around Galilee with His

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friends—isn't here anymore in that same sense—and we know in our souls that we do not have the same or even a better Life than Mary, Paul, or the twelve experienced. The feeling seems important—but like the elusive word on the tip of our tongues or glimpse out of the corner of our eyes that disappears when we turn our heads—I find it hard to put my finger on it. But we know that if we find the word or turn our heads at the right moment, Life will never be the same again.

A religious forgery robs me of the glory of that word I have been grasping for, that glory just beyond the corner of my eyes:

This is not just a choice about finding the “right church family” that fulfills our needs as we define them; it is a choice between Life in Jesus and our religious preferences.

The religious forgery I now see is centuries older than a millennium. Scripture records Jesus boldly confronting the Jewish religion for the lies that it had perpetrated on His father's people. The forgery of Life in Jesus is a similar religion that first hung in the halls of Roman pagan, imperial, and religious culture—a culture that existed centuries before Jesus was born. Jesus, Judaism, and the Roman religious culture smashed together with aftershocks that we feel deeply today.

When Jesus invaded our world, He confronted Judaism until it colluded with Rome to execute Him. From the time of Jesus' crucifixion onward, Rome persecuted believers for several centuries. At one point, Roman imperial persecution was so brutal that Constantine's easing in 313 AD felt like God's deliverance.

Few recognized, in that moment of easing, that Rome was not embracing Life in Jesus, the son of the living God; Rome was absorbing the movement of Life in Jesus into its government-integrated religious empire. In Rome, religion was enforced, like all other state departments, by the empire's military. An ancient religious-government institution

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impersonates faith in Jesus, is hung on religion's walls, is practiced in buildings we now call "churches", and has been ruled by Emperors, kings, and even Papal armies. This impersonation modified scripture before elevating it to "God's Word, written."

The Roman religious system used terminology similar to Jesus's, modified scripture to conform to imperial rule, and applied definitions from the vantage point of the old Roman institution rather than from the radical new Life in Jesus. The new religion invoked Jesus' name, as scripture foretold, but its authority came from the empire, impersonating Him for the explicit purpose of state 'welfare and security'²³⁵ as opposed to actively trusting in Him alone for Life.²³⁶

Whether we were born into religion, like I was, or entered it later, we have inherited a fully formed system straight from the Roman model—complete with lingo, roles, and rituals we call traditions. We receive Jesus through this lens. When I finally decided to ignore everything that religion teaches about itself and start from scratch with the straightforward scriptural accounts, I came to a different conclusion.

Jesus explicitly refuted that Life from above was a thing to be systematized,²³⁷ but until now, I had never suspected there was an original outside of our religious forgery, which had already been hanging on "church" walls for many centuries before we joined.

It's not a question of whether religion's attenders are sincere and devoted; they clearly are. The question is whether we will settle for a museum of forgeries or go all in for Life in Jesus once we see it. These are not compatible lives—they are mutually exclusive—they originate from different places.

²³⁵ <https://sourcebooks.web.fordham.edu/source/edict-milan.asp>, "Edict of Milan"

²³⁶ Mark 13:5-6

²³⁷ John 3:3-8

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To uncover a forgery, we must compare it with the original to determine authenticity. The comparison process is simple, but it's not easy, especially when we're invested. Patient thought and an honest conversation with our Father are required, and we must become dependent on His voice, not our religion. Even more challenging has been the willingness to hold long-standing assumptions loosely while challenging their basis. I also have had to resist the urge to defend the familiar before listening to Jesus' own opinion.

In the chapters that follow, I strive to constantly return to Jesus' words and actions as the basis to compare them with today's religious systems—not to build a better system.

Ironically, religious hierarchy cannot be reconciled with Peter, the religion's supposed founder, according to Theodosius. Peter directs elders to oversee willingly... not to lord it over the people (2 Peter 5:3). Note that the word for “lord it”, also translated “domineering”, has common roots with the same word that is incorrectly used for “church” (*kyriakón*) instead of Jesus' word, *ekklesia*. Nor would Peter have accepted the title of Father, Pope, or Supreme Governor because Jesus personally told him not to.²³⁸

²³⁸ Matthew 23:9

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Appendix XX1—Regions Historically Operating as Officially Catholic States

(With Approximate Dates of Formal Catholic Affiliation)

A. European Kingdoms and States

a. France

- i. c. 496 (Clovis' baptism) – 1789 (French Revolution)

Restored under various regimes until 1905 (formal separation law)

b. Spain

- i. 589 (Visigothic conversion) – 1978 (new constitution removed state religion)

c. Portugal

- i. 12th century – 1910 (Republic; monarchy ended)

d. Austria

- i. c. 8th century – 1918 (end of Habsburg monarchy)

e. Hungary

- i. 1000 (Coronation of Stephen I) – 1946 (monarchy abolished)

f. Poland

- i. 966 (Baptism of Poland) – 1795 (Partitions); restored Catholic monarchy 1918–1939

g. Lithuania

- i. 1387 (official Christianization) – 1795 (Partition into the Russian Empire)

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h. Ireland

- i. 5th-century Christian kingdom; under a Catholic monarchy until the English Reformation (1534).

Post-independence constitutional preference 1937–1972.

i. Italy

- i. Various Catholic states from late antiquity; unified Italy recognized Catholicism 1929–1984 (Lateran Treaty)

j. Malta

- i. 1530 (Knights Hospitaller) – present (constitutionally Catholic)

k. Monaco

- i. 1297 – present (Catholic state religion)

l. Andorra

- i. 1278 – present (co-prince is Catholic bishop of Urgell)

m. Belgium

- i. 1830 – 20th century (constitutionally Catholic monarchy)

n. Luxembourg

- i. 1815 – 20th century (Catholic constitutional monarchy)

o. Croatia

- i. 925 (King Tomislav) – 1918 (end of the kingdom)

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- p. Slovakia
 - i. Within the Hungarian Crown (1000–1918), a Catholic state, 1939–1945
- q. Czech Republic (Kingdom of Bohemia)
 - i. 10th century – 1620 (Battle of White Mountain; enforced Catholic restoration)
- B. British Isles (Pre-Reformation Catholic Monarchies)
 - a. England
 - i. c. 597 – 1534; restored 1553–1558
 - b. Scotland
 - i. 6th century – 1560
 - c. Wales
 - i. As part of England during the same period
- C. Papal Territorial Rule
 - a. Vatican City
 - i. 1929 – present
 - b. Papal States (central Italy)
 - i. 754 (Donation of Pepin) – 1870
- D. Spanish Colonial Catholic States (Legally Established)
 - a. Mexico
 - i. 1521 – 1857 (liberal reforms)
 - b. Guatemala
 - i. 1524 – 1871
 - c. Honduras
 - i. 1520s – 19th century secular reforms
 - d. El Salvador

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- i. 1520s – 19th century secular reforms
 - e. Nicaragua
 - i. 1520s – 1893 reforms
 - f. Costa Rica
 - i. 1520s – present (official state religion)
 - g. Panama
 - i. 1519 – early 20th century secularization
 - h. Colombia
 - i. 1538 – 1991 (constitutional reform)
 - i. Venezuela
 - i. 1522 – 1864
 - j. Ecuador
 - i. 1534 – 1906 (separation)
 - k. Peru
 - i. 1532 – 1979 (formal secular constitution)
 - l. Bolivia
 - i. 1538 – 2009 (constitution ended official religion)
 - m. Paraguay
 - i. 1537 – 1992 (new constitution)
 - n. Chile
 - i. 1541 – 1925 (separation)
 - o. Argentina
 - i. 1580 – present (state support; no longer official religion)
 - p. Uruguay
 - i. 1680 – 1917 (strong secular reform)
- E. Portuguese Colonial Catholic States

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- a. Brazil
 - i. 1500 – 1891 (Republic Constitution)
- b. Angola
 - i. 1575 – 1975 (independence)
- c. Mozambique
 - i. 16th century – 1975
- d. East Timor
 - i. 16th century – 1975 (Portuguese rule)
- F. Spanish Asia
 - a. Philippines
 - i. 1565 – 1898 (Spanish rule; Catholic state religion)
- G. African Catholic Kingdom
 - a. Kingdom of Kongo
 - i. 1491 (royal conversion) – 17th-century decline

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Appendix XX2—King James Translation Instructions²³⁹

- 1.The ordinary Bible read in the “church”, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the original will permit.
- 2.The names of the prophets and the holy writers, with the other names in the text, to be retained, as near as may be, accordingly as they are vulgarly used.
- 3.The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, as the word “*church*”, not to be translated *congregation*.
- 4.When any word hath divers significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most eminent fathers, being agreeable to the propriety of the place and the analogies of faith.
- 5.The division of chapters to be altered either not at all, or as little as may be, if necessity so require.
- 6.No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words, which cannot, without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed, in the text.
- 7.Such quotations of places to be marginally set down as shall serve for the fit reference of one Scripture to another.
- 8.Every particular man of each company to take the same chapter or chapters; and, having translated or amended them severally by himself where he thinks good, all to meet together to confirm what they have done, and agree for their part what shall stand.

²³⁹ Rules most likely drafted by Archbishop Richard Bancroft—who also presided over the translation and had final editorial decisions—and probably submitted them to King James as Supreme Governor over the Church for approval.

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9. As any one company hath dispatched any one book in this manner, they shall send it to the rest, to be considered of seriously and judiciously; for his Majesty is very careful on this point.
10. If any company, upon the review of the book so sent, shall doubt or differ upon any places, to send them word thereof, to note the places, and therewithal to send their reasons; to which if they consent not, the difference to be compounded at the general meeting, which is to be of the chief persons of each company, at the end of the work.
11. When any place of special obscurity is doubted of, letters to be directed by authority to send to any learned man in the land for his judgment of such a place.
12. Letters to be sent from every bishop to the rest of his clergy, admonishing them of this translation in hand, and to move and charge as many as, being skillful in the tongues, have taken pains in that kind, to send their particular observations to the company, either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford, according as it was directed before in the king's letter to the archbishop.
13. The directors in each company to be the Deans of Westminster and Chester, for Westminster, and the king's professors in Hebrew and Greek in the two universities.
14. These translations to be used, when they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible: Tyndale's, Coverdale's, Matthew's [Rogers'], Whitchurch's [Cranmer's], Geneva.
15. By a later rule, three or four of the most ancient and grave divines, in either of the universities, not employed in translating, to be assigned to be overseers of the translation, for the better observation of the fourth rule.

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Appendix XX3—The Edict of Milan

When we, Constantine Augustus and Licinius Augustus, met so happily at Milan, and considered together all that concerned the interest and security of the State, we decided ... to grant to Christians and to everybody the free power to follow the religion of their choice, in order that all that is divine in the heavens may be favorable and propitious towards all who are placed under our authority.

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Appendix XX4—The Edict of Thessalonica²⁴⁰

EMPERORS GRATIAN, VALENTINIAN AND THEODOSIUS [AUGUSTI](#). EDICT TO THE PEOPLE OF [CONSTANTINOPLE](#).

It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our Clemency and Moderation, should continue to profess that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine [Apostle Peter](#), as it has been preserved by faithful tradition, and which is now professed by the [Pontiff Damasus](#) and by [Peter, Bishop of Alexandria](#), a man of [apostolic](#) holiness. According to the [apostolic teaching](#) and the doctrine of the [Gospel](#), let us believe in the one deity of the [Father](#) and of the [Son](#) and of the [Holy Spirit](#), in equal majesty and in a holy [Trinity](#). ... We order the followers of this law to embrace the name of [Catholic Christians](#); but as for the others, since, in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of [heretics](#), and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of [Heaven](#) we shall decide to inflict.

GIVEN IN THESSALONICA ON THE THIRD DAY FROM THE [CALENDS](#) OF MARCH, DURING THE FIFTH [CONSULATE](#) OF GRATIAN AUGUSTUS AND FIRST OF THEODOSIUS AUGUSTUS

²⁴⁰ Codex Theodosianus XVI.1.2

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Appendix XX5—First Version of Nicene Creed²⁴¹

Nicene Creed (AD 325)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Son of God, begotten of the Father,
only-begotten, that is, from the substance (*ousia*) of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father,
through whom all things came to be,
things in heaven and things on earth;

who for us men and for our salvation
came down and was incarnate
and became man;

he suffered,
and the third day he rose again,
ascended into heaven;

and he will come again to judge
the living and the dead.

²⁴¹ Philip Schaff, ed., *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. 14 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), 3–5.

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And in the Holy Spirit. [NOTE: usual stopping point if this version is recited]

But those who say:

“There was when he was not,” and

“Before being born he was not,” and

“He came into existence out of nothing,”

or who assert that the Son of God is
of a different hypostasis or substance,
or created,

or subject to alteration or change—these the catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

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Appendix XX6—Second Version of Nicene Creed (aka: Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed)

Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)²⁴²

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one substance with the Father,
through whom all things came to be.

For us humans and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became human.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
and suffered and was buried.

And he rose again on the third day
according to the Scriptures,

²⁴² Philip Schaff, ed., *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. 14 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900), 3–4.

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and ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

And he will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead,
whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke through the prophets.

And in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We confess one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the age to come. Amen.

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Appendix XX7—Institutional Words Altered in KJV Translation

Ecclesiastical / Clerical Terminology: Tyndale vs KJV

Tyndale Translation	KJV Translation	KJV Category/Class
congregation	church	Institutional/religious
overseer	bishop	Clerical hierarchy
shepherd	pastor (Eph 4:11)	clergy office
gathering of elders	presbytery	clerical governing body
servant	minister	clerical function
messenger	angel	ecclesiastical authority
shepherd the flock	feed the flock	pastoral duty

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Appendix XX8—Timeline from Emperor Constantine to King James

306–337 — Constantine the Great²⁴³

Roman Emperor who legalized Christianity and began imperial patronage of the church

Key events and documents:

- **313 — Edict of Milan**

Legalized Christianity and restored confiscated Christian property.

- **325 — First Council of Nicaea**

Produced the Nicene Creed (original version).

Included the anathema clause stating that the “catholic and apostolic church anathematizes” certain doctrines.

- **Imperial church-building program**

Constantine commissioned major basilicas described by contemporaries as

ἐκκλησίαι (“churches”):

- “Church” of the Holy Sepulchre (Jerusalem)
- “Church” of the Nativity (Bethlehem)
- Early cathedral of Constantinople (later known as *Megale Ekklesia*, “Great Church”).

379–395 — Theodosius I

Emperor who made Nicene Christianity the official religion of the empire

Key events and documents:

²⁴³ Life of Constantine, by Eusebius of Caesarea

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- **380 — Edict of Thessalonica**

Declared that all Roman subjects should follow the faith held by the bishops of Rome and Alexandria.

It defined the legitimate Christian body as the **catholic church**.

- **381 — First Council of Constantinople**

Revised the Nicene Creed and added the confession:

“We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.”

This became the standard creedal formulation for the imperial church.

382–405 — Jerome

Commissioned to produce the standard Latin Bible

Key developments:

- **382 — Commission by Pope Damasus**

Jerome begins revising Latin biblical texts.

- c. 390–405 — Translation of the Latin Vulgate

Key translation choices:²⁴⁴

- Greek μετάνοεῖτε (metanoeite) → Latin paenitemini / paenitentiam agite
- Greek ἐκκλησία (ekklesia) → Latin ecclesia

²⁴⁴ Biblia Sacra Vulgata, This became the standard Bible of Western Christianity for over 1,000 years.

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1604–1611 — Richard Bancroft

Oversaw the rules governing the King James translation

Key development:

- 1604 — Bancroft's Translation Rules

One rule was particularly influential:

“The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the word **church** not to be translated congregation.”

This rule preserved traditional church institutional and clerical terminology and function over direct translation from Greek.²⁴⁵

1604–1611 — James VI and I

Commissioned the King James Bible

Key events:

- **1604 — Hampton Court Conference**
Authorized a new English translation.
- 1611 — Publication of the King James Bible

Key features:

- Built on the earlier English tradition:
 - Tyndale Bible
 - Geneva Bible
 - Bishops' Bible

²⁴⁵ Adam Nicolson, *God's Secretaries*

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- Maintained ecclesiastical terminology, authorizing Bancroft's rules.

Example:

Greek	Earlier translation	KJV
ekklesia	congregation (Tyndale)	church
poimén	shepherd	pastor (Eph 4:11)

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Summary Timeline

Date	Figure	Event / Document
313	Constantine	Edict of Milan
325	Constantine	Council of Nicaea Nicene Creed
380	Theodosius I	Edict of Thessalonica
381	Theodosius I	Council of Constantinople revised Nicene Creed
382–405	Jerome	Latin Vulgate translation
1604	Bancroft	Rules for KJV translation
1611	King James	King James Bible published

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Appendix XX9—Authors Who Have Identified Church Failing

Dallas Willard

“The greatest issue facing the world today... is whether those who are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners of Jesus Christ—or remain just ‘church members.’”²⁴⁶

“The greatest issue facing the world today... is whether those who are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples...”²⁴⁷

“Non-discipleship is the elephant in the church.”²⁴⁸

J. P. Moreland

“The church has not made disciples but consumers.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Commonly attributed; adapted from themes in *The Great Omission* (2006), esp. 1–5.

²⁴⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (2006), 1.

²⁴⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (2006), xiii.

²⁴⁹ J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind* (1997), 4–5.

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“Many Christians are not living a life that is different from the surrounding culture.”²⁵⁰

Søren Kierkegaard

“Christendom... has done away with Christianity.”²⁵¹

A. W. Tozer

“We are not making disciples... we are making converts.”²⁵²

“The church has accepted the world’s values and methods... and is producing a generation of Christians who are conformed to the world.”²⁵³

²⁵⁰ J. P. Moreland, Kingdom Triangle (2007), 17–20.

²⁵¹ Reference: Søren Kierkegaard, Attack Upon Christendom (1855).

²⁵² Reference: A. W. Tozer, The Root of the Righteous (1955).

²⁵³ A. W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God (1948); The Root of the Righteous (1955).

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Francis Chan

“We’ve created a culture where people show up, sit, and listen... but that’s not what Jesus asked us to do.”²⁵⁴

Neil Cole

“We have made the church into a place where people attend rather than a people who follow Jesus.”²⁵⁵

“We are not called to make members of the church, but disciples of Jesus.”²⁵⁶

Alan Hirsch

“The church has become a vendor of religious goods and services.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Francis Chan, Letters to the Church (2018).

²⁵⁵ Reference: Neil Cole, Organic Church (2005).

²⁵⁶ Neil Cole, Organic Church (2005).

²⁵⁷ Alan Hirsch, The Forgotten Ways (2006).

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David Platt

“We have taken the radical commands of Jesus and reduced them to a comfortable cultural Christianity.”²⁵⁸

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²⁵⁸ David Platt, *Radical* (2010).

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Appendix X10 Conflicts Under “Church” Authorization²⁵⁹

Conflict /	Dates	Connection	Estimated
Conquest			Deaths
Saxon Wars ²⁶⁰	772– 804	Forced Conversion	Tens of thousands
Crusades: Holy Land ²⁶¹	1095– 1291	Papally authorized	1–9 million
Northern/Baltic Crusade ²⁶²	1147– 15th c.	Conversion wars	Hundreds of thousands
Albigensian Crusade ²⁶³	1209– 1229	Crusade Cathars	200,000– 1,000,000
Fourth Crusade ²⁶⁴	1202– 1204	Constantinople	50,000– 100,000
Reconquista ²⁶⁵	8th c.–1492	Reconquest of Iberia	Up to millions

²⁵⁹ Wars waged “in the name of Christ”: Papal Armies or Governments using “Church” Authority

²⁶⁰ General medieval chronicles; estimates vary.

²⁶¹ Thomas Asbridge; A. Holt, *The Crusades*.

²⁶² Britannica, 'Northern Crusades'.

²⁶³ Britannica, 'Albigensian Crusade'.

²⁶⁴ Britannica, 'Fourth Crusade'.

²⁶⁵ Britannica, 'Reconquista'.

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Hussite Wars ²⁶⁶	1419– 1434	Against reformers	Hundred thousands
Spanish Conquest ²⁶⁷	1492– 1600s	Imperial expansion	Millions
Fall of Tenochtitlan ²⁶⁸	1519– 1521	Spanish conquest	100,000– 240,000
French Religious Wars ²⁶⁹	1562– 1598	Catholic - Protestant	2–4 million
Thirty Years' War ²⁷⁰	1618– 1648	Catholic– Protestant	4.5–8 million
English Civil Wars ²⁷¹	1639– 1651	Religious political	~200,000

²⁶⁶ 7. Wikipedia / general historical syntheses on Hussite Wars.

²⁶⁷ Demographic studies of Indigenous population collapse - Americas (e.g., DHR VT sources).

²⁶⁸ Fall of Tenochtitlan historical estimates.

²⁶⁹ French Wars of Religion estimates (various historians).

²⁷⁰ Britannica, 'Thirty Years' War'.

²⁷¹ Britannica, 'English Civil Wars'.

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Appendix x11—Bancroft Changes to KJV Translations

Sunday, November 20, 2022— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever* Lesson 186 The AV 1611: Bancroft's 14 Changes & The Question of Authorization

Introduction

- The last time we met, in [Lesson 185](#), we considered the following points:
 - Bancroft, Bilson, Smith & The Finishing Touches
 - Publisher: Robert Barker, The King's Printer
- In this Lesson, I would like to cover the following points regarding the publication of the King James Bible.
 - Bancroft's 14 Changes
 - The Question of Authorization

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Bancroft's 14 Changes

- One of topics discussed in Lesson 185 was the long-standing rumor regarding Archbishop Richard Bancroft having altered fourteen readings before the text went to print. My friend and fellow research partner Christopher Yetzer commented on last week's video on YouTube and directed me to look at *King James His Bible And Its Translators* by Laurence M. Vance. Vance references a document held by Lambeth Palace Library that extends the charge of textual tampering on the part of high church Bishops beyond Bancroft.
 - "A manuscript about the translators in the Lambeth Palace Library, apparently written about 1650, record that Richard Brett (1567-1637), a translator on the Oxford Old Testament company, reported that "the Bps. altered very many places that the translators had agreed upon: He had a note of the places. Bishop Bancroft, the "chief overseer," is said to have made fourteen changes. He died on November 2, 1610, never seeing the translation published that he had overseen." (Vance, 52)
- Dr. B.F. Westcott reproduces this Lambeth Palace MS in Appendix XII (see pages 343-350) of his book *A General View of the History of the English Bible*. The name of the MS is *Gibson Papers, Vol. 5, No. 41*. Moreover, Charles C. Butterworth mentions this in his 1941 book *The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible, 1340-1611*:

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- “It remains to add that a series of memoranda concerning the translators, set down about 1640, in speaking of Richard Brett, who worked with the first Oxford companies, contains this comment: “Dr. Bret reported that the Bps. [Bishops] altered very many places that the translators had agreed upon: He had a note of the places. According to another report, Archbishop Bancroft himself insisted upon certain changes being made in a few places.” (Butterworth, 213)
- Thanks to the fine work of Timothy Berg, I have been able to view an image of the MS in the Lambeth Palace library that mentions Dr. Brett and his report regarding the bishops altering “many places”. Due to copyright limitations, I am not at liberty to share the image publicly at this time. Internal evidence suggests that the MS was written in about 1651, as it mentions the late wife of translator John Harding, who died in 1650. Friend and fellow researcher Christopher Yetzer has also pointed out that this document testifies to the fact that, as early as 1650, several people were already trying to gather histories on the translators.
- In a sermon dated [April 3, 1648](#), Dr. Thomas Hill, Master of Trinity College in Cambridge delivered a sermon in which he mentions fourteen changes to the translation that had been made by “prelates” of the “Church of England.”
 - “I have it from certain hands, such as lived in those times, that when the Bible had been Translated by the Translators appointed, the New

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Testament was looked over by some of the great Prelates, (men I could name some of their persons) to bring it to speak Prelatical Language, and they did alter (as I am informed by the means of one that was a great observer in those times, and lived them) fourteen places in the New Testament, to make them speak the Language of the Church of England, that was so cryed up: and I'll tell you some of them.” (Hill)

- Hill then goes on to identify half a dozen or so of the changes made by Anglican Bishops to the text after the translation work had been completed.
 - “First,* In the first of the Acts, speaking of Judas, Let another man take his Bishoprick; it is forc'd, it signifies Charge or Inspection: but that you may believe that the Bishops are the Apostles Successors, let another man take his Bishoprick.
 - Again, In the second of the Acts, it is Not suffer my Soul to lie in Hell; this is clear,
 - Former Translations have it, not suffer my Soul to lie in the Grave; But it was learned Bilsons Opinion, and thrust into the Thirty nine Articles, that Christ did Locally descend into hell; and to make that Translation agree with the Articles, they must change Grave into Hell.

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- Also the Fourteenth of the Acts,*They ordained them Elders, they loved to cry up
- Consecration of Churches, and Dedication, and such kinde of things, and Episcopal Ordination too (for these all advanced the power of the Priests and the Bishops, which brought in Transubstantiation amongst Papists) and therefore in the Geneva Translation,* that was render'd, chosen by suffrages, by lifting up of hands, the word Primarily imports that, it may be in some of the Fathers it includes both, they will tell you, because afterwards having chosen Elders by Suffrages or Voyces, they did Ordain them.
- Next, I come to the first of the Corinthians, 12.28. An abominable violence offered to the Original, God hath set in the Church, Apostles, Teachers, Helps, Governments, and you shall finde here a great imposture, it may be now altered, appearing so gross, but I have seen it, and read it in some Translations, Helps in Government;* which is a most horrible prodigious violence to the Greek words, for they are both the Accusative case, Helps; there are Elders, Government, there are Deacons; now to obscure these, you must put it, helps in Government.
- I had it related since the delivery of this plain Sermon, by one who most confidently affirmed it,* That the learned man to whom it belonged to Translate the first Book of Samuel, having rendered that which Samuel from God spake concerning Saul, 1 Sam. 8.

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- 11. This shall be the maner of the King that shall reign over you, He will take your sons, &c. He was sent for to Lambeth, and there perswaded to make the words Will take your sons, &c. Shall take; which he conscienciously refused, well knowing it was not spoken by Samuel to Saul, by way of direction for duty what he should do, but Prophetically and Eventually what he would do.” (Hill)
- Hill’s sermon also contains discussion of the word “Easter” in the late translation. These comments are nebulous, and no specific scripture reference is cited. While Hill’s list is helpful for identifying a handful of readings that were influenced by Anglican Bishops, he does not name names with the exception of Bilson. According to Brother Berg, it is in a 1671 biography of Henry Jessy that the charges of textual tampering are ascribed to Bancroft. Finding the notes of Dr. Brett, one of the translators, would prove to be a massive find and go a long way toward clearing up the confusion.
- Suffice it to say that from very early in its printed history, while many of the translators were still alive, complaints had arisen among the translators themselves that Bishops of the Anglican Church, up to and including Archbishop Richard Bancroft had altered the text without the consent of the other translators. For the time being, this must remain one of the unsolved mysteries related to the publication of the King James Bible.

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Appendix X12—William Tyndale

William Tyndale published the first English translation of scripture based on the *Textus Receptus* in 1526. He was forced to do his work in Worms, Germany, because the Catholic Bishops in England refused to permit him to translate scripture into English. He smuggled English Bibles into England. A staunch critic of Henry VIII, Tyndale stayed in Europe even after England broke ties with the Roman Church in 1534. However, the Roman “church” caught up with him in Belgium, convicted him of heresy, and turned him over to government authorities for execution in 1536. Much of the work on the other 5 pre-KJV Bibles is largely based on Tyndale’s work.

Ironically, so is the King James Version. About 83% of the KJV New Testament and about 76% of the KJV Old Testament portions are derived from Tyndale’s work.²⁷² It’s the other 17% to 24% that King James himself dictated to enforce the ecclesiastical structure he preferred, conceptually aligning with the Douay-Rheims Bible. “Church” is one of the 17% of altered words. “Pastor” and “repent” are two others.

²⁷² **John Nielson & Royal Skousen**, *How Much of the King James Bible Is William Tyndale’s?* Reformation 3 (1998)

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Appendix x13: Plots to Kill Jesus When He Attended Temple

1. While in Jerusalem for one of the Jewish feasts, Jesus healed a man lame from birth, and:
 - a. ‘Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him’—John 5:18
2. [Jesus] Why do you seek to kill me—John 7:19
3. [The crowd at a Temple Festival] Is this not He, whom they seek to kill?—John 7:25
4. Jesus taught in the Temple Treasury [inside the Temple]
 - a. They took up stones to throw at Him—John 8:59 [to kill by stoning]
5. Jesus taught in Solomon’s Colonnade [inside the Temple]
 - a. Again, the Jews picked up stones to stone Him—John 10:31
6. Jesus drives the merchants out of the Temple
 - a. ‘The chief priests [the top Temple leadership] and scribes sought how they might destroy him.’
7. Jesus teaches in the Temple and:
 - a. [the Chief Priests] ‘consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him’—Matt 26:3-4
8. Judas Joins the Plot
 - a. ‘sought how they might kill him’—Luke 2:6
9. Arrest attempts presumably with the same goal that His ultimate arrest accomplished:
 - a. ‘they sought to take him’—John 7:30
 - b. Officers sent to arrest—John 7:39
10. The Temple Priests eventually captured Jesus and turned Him over to the Roman government for execution. Even Herod only tried to kill Him once. One attempt and plot was made in a synagogue, too. Instead of encouraging

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attendance, Jesus promised the same Temple and synagogue persecution for His followers.²⁷³

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²⁷³ Matt 10 :17, Mark 13 :9, John 16 :2, Luke 21 :12, Matt 10:22, John 15:18-20, Matt 24:9,