

## I. Review

As you know we have been dealing with one of the most incredible places in all of the Bible that really defines just about everything that God has done, getting ready to do, and who He really is. Psalms 19:1 talks about the heavens declaring the glory of God. The Bible says,

*By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Psalm 33:6*

*For he spake, and it was [done]; he commanded, and it stood fast. Psalm 33:9*

We are going to open this up as we go through this in the next couple of weeks. We are just getting to the interesting part as we get into the planets, the sun, the moon and the galaxies. We have been coming through the five areas that God has chosen to bring His glory to man on planet Earth. Five ways throughout the history of man that He has done this.

- 1.) Heavens
- 2.) Nation of Israel
- 3.) Lord Jesus Christ
- 4.) Word of God
- 5.) Church

The last couple of weeks we talked about the word of God in a two-part series. How that the word of God was given to bring salvation to man. Each one of these, including the fifth one which we will cover today. I showed you how the devil attacked each one of these. How he had a plan to stop what God was doing. Today the fifth one will be the local New Testament church.

We have established a number of things by now that I hope you keep with you as you grow and continue to add to your faith. We saw how the devil down through history changes his garments. We talked about his seven garment changes a couple of Thursday nights ago out of the book of Job. We have seen how down through history he changes garments. By that I mean he changes tactics. He does things differently. He tries to camouflage himself and yet he moves to counterfeit everything that God is trying to do. Through that counterfeit his goal is to destroy the plan of God from ever bringing his glory to man on planet Earth. For six thousand years, ever since Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve in the garden and the fall of man. The devil has had a mandate to stop whatever God is trying to do. He wants all the kingdoms that someday are going to become the Lord's. He does his best to try to stop everything that God is doing. Many times, he gets help from God's own people. I hope when we are done with this today that you will see that there is a great illusion in Christianity. The farther we get from the Bible, the closer we get to the Lord coming back, the more we lose the truth of what life is all about. The devil is quick to give everyone **an illusion of what Christianity isn't**. They walk through their Christian life, many of them I believe are saved, but never fully understand what God has for

them and what God wants to accomplish. Unwillingly in some cases, unfortunately they fall right into that illusion.

You know by now that all history will be built around just two simple tactics. God has a plan, and He instituted that plan in Genesis 1:1 when it says, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the Earth.”* That was the beginning of His plan, the beginning of His way. All down through history we have seen God try to establish that through different ways. As I said the nation of Israel, Christ the word of God, and the other tactic is where God moves to do something and the devil moves to counter that. If you have some time you should go through the book of Acts. Start in chapter one and watch how every time God does something, the devil brings somebody up to stop it. That is where you begin to understand how this works.

We know and the Bible tells us that we are to rightly divide the word of truth. You will find that in 2 Timothy 2:15

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15*

## ➤ Two Areas in the Bible – Old Testament & New Testament

I know that there are a number of divisions that we have laid out through dispensation studies and all those things. But fundamentally for the purpose of today, we know that there are two basic key fundamental areas the Bible divides itself into. The Old Testament and the New Testament. We will start with that. In the Old Testament we have already laid out how God used the nation of Israel and the peculiar way that God called these people who He calls His chosen people. The peculiar job that He had for them that through the nation of Israel, they would reach the world. Anybody that wanted to find God had to come through the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Then I showed you how the devil went after them and how they (Israel) began to forsake all that God had for them. The devil stopped them dead in their tracks and today the nation of Israel is in complete total apostasy. They have been since the first coming of Christ and up to this day.

Then we looked at the New Testament. How many times have I tried to get you to understand the book of Acts. In the book of Acts, we see the establishment of God's church. It is called the body of Christ. Through His church He will fulfill His plan to reach man in the second half of God's plan which we know as the New Testament. As we have seen throughout our studies, the devil has now moved to stop the church from being God's instrument to reach the world. He did it in every aspect of God bringing something to this Earth to declare His glory and His glory is Jesus Christ. The devil worked all down through history to stop everything that God was doing. Unfortunately, many times the devil finds God's people to help him. At the end of the day, God's righteousness is going to prevail. The devil is not going to stop anything. In fact, God takes everything the devil does and uses that to His honor and glory. The devil and his crowd whether saved or lost are really the losers in this because they are not going to stop the Lord Jesus Christ and God's plan.

## ➤ The Church Triumphant

We have learned a lot of things. You know the church of Jesus Christ will have two aspects. Two components. We have talked about this and I hope you better understand the term “**the church triumphant**”. That will be the spiritual church. That will be made up of the mystery of godliness, Christ in you and me, the hope of glory.

*To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Colossians 1:27*

It will be Christ in us as the body of believers and us doing what God wants us to do. The word church means, “called out”. We as believers have been called out of the world by a new birth. The Bible says that we are seated in heavenly places. We are ambassadors and our citizenship is in heaven. The devil can never get this church.

Onetime the Roman Catholic church executed one of the great martyrs that was against the Roman Catholic church. The guy pronouncing the sentence said this day I will separate you by death of the church triumphant. That guy looked him in the face and said, “You will never separate me from the church triumphant. You may separate me from the church militant today, but not from the church triumphant.” The devil can never hurt this one. We as believers have been called out of the world by a new birth and the devil can never get to this one. He can’t attack this one because it is in Christ.

## ➤ The Church Militant

But the second aspect of the church which we will focus on today is called **the church militant**. This will be you and me. Men and women who have been born again who have been called out of the world and put into New Testament local churches all around this city. All around this country. They meet every week to do the work of God based on the burden and vision that we saw last week to fulfill God’s plan. You will see this model laid out in the book of Acts and when Paul writes the majority of his books. Paul writes to seven literal militant local churches. He is not writing to the church triumphant. He is writing his letters to the church militant. Local New Testament churches where men and woman have been called out, meet and train. You find them in Acts 11, 13, 20. The ministry of God’s people will only flow through a local New Testament church. You will find the guidelines for this church in Paul’s writings and in the book of Acts. This is the one the devil will go after and has done so. The church militant will not be made of buildings made with hands, but of men and woman who are called Christians. You will find in Acts 11 the word “*Christians*” first pops up in the Bible. They were first called Christians at Antioch.

## ➤ Two Words in History Establish the True Church – Baptist & Christians

We are Baptists and the only two words in history that establish the true church is the word Christians and the word Baptist. I don’t care how messed up Baptist are today. I can’t be responsible for every dingbat out there. You know why they are first called Christians at Antioch? Because the pagan Roman government had 600-800 gods. They had a god for

everything. These new Christians only believed in one God. They were going around telling all these Romans who believed in hundreds and hundreds of gods that there was only one God and His name was Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ lived in them. So, the pagan Roman Empire made fun of that. They were first called Christians in Antioch by the pagan Romans. **Do you know what Christian means?** Little Christ. They were saying “Oh yeah, your God lives inside you and that is Christ. Well then you are just a little Christ. AMEN BROTHER! That is the only doctrine you got right. So, we were called Christians by the enemy that hated Christians and still hates Christianity.

Then the second name came in, Baptist. Historically we got our name from the same Roman Catholic system over the doctrinal stand we took about salvation. They wanted us to believe that baptism was for our salvation. We took our stand and said our salvation only comes through the blood of Christ. Originally, we were called “Ana Pedro Baptist”. Pedro meaning little child because we as a church stood against infant baptism for salvation. Later they dropped the Pedro, and they called us anabaptists up till around 1500-1600. Ana means against because we were against baptism for salvation. Around 1600-1630 they dropped the ana and just called us Baptist. You have a heritage behind you if you are a Bible believing Baptist. If you are a Christian, you got your name from the greatest enemy of Christianity. If you are a Bible believing Baptist this morning, you got your name from the greatest godless pagan satanic organization. And you got it because they were your enemy. No other denomination on the planet can claim that. The fact that pastors today are too stupid to understand that, well that isn't my problem! That is their problem!

### ➤ Future Generations of Our Church

Last week we talked about the future generations of our church. I built it around the verse “*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers*” (1 Timothy 4:12). I laid out how it will be the young folks that God has given us that really will make up the future of our church. How we need to always keep growing not only as individuals but as a church. The church is only going to be as strong as the people that are continuing to grow in it.

I talked about how when we started our church, we did it as a family ministry. I have given you a couple of reasons for that. But the number one was the biblical example of how God wants to reach the world through families ministering together as ministry teams. Now twenty plus years later the blessings here in this church are so many of our families. Many of you have developed your family into ministry teams. You are doing what the model said you should do. You are building your family as a ministry team. You are grasping the vision and the burden for your kids. Older moms and dads in this church are the example to the biblical parenting of the young couples in our church that are just starting their families. You older parents have built your families the right way and it stands as an example. You followed the example and through your last twenty years or however long you have been here you have taken and understood that your kids need to be part of your family ministry. Our church across the board is filled with them today. Maybe now we can better understand building our temple as individuals so we can build our church as a stronghold for God. Ensuring our future generations.

➤ The Books Haggai & Habakkuk Great Examples of How Israel Was to Reach the World Yet Lost the Vision & Burden

You will remember I gave you two Old Testament books, Haggai and Habakkuk. Great examples of how Israel, God's people in the Old Testament were to reach the world and how they lost that vision. They lost that burden. We saw in those books that when they go back in Ezra and Nehemiah, they begin to build just like so many of God's people today. They get saved and they begin to build their body which is God's temple. But for sixteen years the building of the temple stopped. Nobody had the burden anymore. Nobody had the vision anymore. In sixteen short years they lost the purpose of why they were even God's people. If you dig a little deeper in those two books you would find not only did they stop building, but they are taking all the building material that was dedicated to God's temple, and they are building their own homes with it (Haggai 1:4). What a picture of the church today! God's people taking everything that God has provided for us. Everything that God has given us and has blessed us with and using it for ourselves to build what we want to build in our lives. Instead of building what God wants us to build with it.

Last week was a really good intro to today's message. We talked about how the older Christians will always help the younger ones in building them. You older Christians that have been around for 17-20 years, I don't know if you understand how invaluable you are to this ministry. You have done what is right in your own life. You have done what is right with your kids. I am not saying your kid didn't have any problems or make some mistakes. I am saying you were consistent and here you are today. You are an example to these young couples who are just starting their families. They look at you and your kids and your example of how you have taken them in and made your family ministry families too. I showed you that the future of our church broke down into just **three basic fundamental sections of growth**. Our youth which would include our elementary and our singles and young couples. Then of course the older men and women who bring an example of maturity and stability to this church. You work with people. Your own family is involved in ministry here. Many of your kids are down at that retreat and are going to be the key to a successful camp. It all comes down to you older Christians being an example to your kids first. It is our ability to cover all levels of people's lives. I never want to just focus on one section or group. We have to be able to be successful in reaching and helping people on whatever level they are at no matter how old they are.

A great example of this will be last Saturday. We met at Jaime and Danny's to play pickleball. We must have had sixty young people with eight or nine new kids that had been invited. I watched how some of you older adults showed up because you wanted to be part of this. You guys had an incredible time with those young kids. Some of you played pickle ball and kickball. That is my point. It was a chance for all of us, not just the young kids and singles. For all of us to support those kids and get to know them. Everybody investing on whatever level you are on to the best of your abilities. You set the example of all ages being alike working together. I watched some of our older kids hold the little ones and play with them. I watched how some of you older couples held the babies so the other couples could do some things. Everybody working

together at all spiritual age levels to build unity and a cohesion of being laborers together. That is what this church does. Not everybody can be there every time we do things, I get that. But there is always a group that never misses an opportunity. Any church that is going to be successful and is going to make a difference in people's lives will have to be a team. They will have to work together and have unity on every level. Not segregating levels but intermingling the levels that we can get the vision and the plan of God to others. Today in the New Testament, just like the Old Testament this is where the devil is going to attack. Here is where he will go to work to destroy God's people by getting them to forsake the church of Jesus Christ, the church militant, because they actually think they get a better deal.

## II. The Local New Testament Church (#5)

Today I want to talk to you about the last one (#5) that was part of God's plan, and then the attack of the devil on it. The attack on the church militant. The idea and the mindset to take the local New Testament church out of God's people's lives. Hear me out on this. I have heard this from people all my Christian life. "Well Bob, you know you don't have to go to church to be a Christian." Yes, that is true. But I must tell you that kind of thinking and making a statement like that really defines you as someone who really has rejected Christ and His vision and burden. It shows that you really have no relationship with God. You have taken the devil's illusion that you really have a relationship with God. You have fallen into that vast vat of Christians who want to pick and choose out of the Bible what they do. We will pick the things that we like, but we will not pick the things that we don't like. Today I am telling you there is an illusion within Christianity.

In your Bible any relationship with Christ will be built around the seven things that Christ loves. If you have been saved five years or more and in a church being disciplined, growing, having a Bible, getting what you need; what are those seven things that he loves? There is an illusion within Christianity. You think you can love Christ without knowing what He loves. Spiritual growth will be nothing more than putting these seven things into your life that you can love them too.

If you haven't figured this out yet, this is going to be a hard message today! I am not going to go through the seven things that Christ loves. I am just going to give you the one in Ephesians 5:25. It says Jesus loved the church and gave himself for it. That is not the church triumphant, that is the local assembly of called out men and women. **When you got saved it should have made a difference in your life.** Immediately old things pass away, and all things become new.? Some of those new things are the seven things that He loves that you build into your life as you grow. One of them is He loved the church and gave Himself for it. We should love the church and give ourselves to it. I told you early on, years ago that when Christ went back to heaven, He replaced Himself with three things. Only three. **One** was the Holy Spirit of God, the day of Pentecost. **Two**, was the word of God and **three**, was the local church. The militant church, the assembly of God's born-again people. For us the motto will be the book of Acts. God saw how important a New Testament local church is in each one of our lives. I am going to show you why in just a moment. The devil knows that if he wanted to stop Christianity dead in its tracks, just take the

concept out of God's people's mind that going to church on Sunday is not really that important. In the book of Acts there would be no movement of Christianity without the local New Testament church. But God's people today think that can go on without the church being involved.

### ➤ The New Testament Local Church – The Vehicle to fulfill God's Plan

Paul's whole life was built around the seven churches that he wrote to. The church at Antioch, the church at Ephesus. It takes all three of those things, the Holy Spirit, the word of God and the local New Testament church to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sorry that you bought into the illusion and allowed yourself to be deceived. But the Holy Spirit of God will lead and guide you. The Holy Spirit of God guides us. He gave us the word of God that He would reveal through the Holy Spirit of God guiding us the plan that God has for you. But how do we get there? How do we accomplish that? We need a vehicle. So, the third is God gave us a New Testament local church. The vehicle to get you and me through a local assembly established in the book of Acts to the world.

I know I am preaching to the choir this morning. But I am going to tell you right now there are people on YouTube this morning out of this city who ought to be in church. So, I am preaching to you! You say, "Well I am really upset!" Well, what are you going to do, quit coming to church? Let me speak to you who won't go to church and yet you claim to be saved. I am not saying you are not. It is really so simple. Did you ever notice this in the New Testament book of Acts? There is nobody like you! Everybody in the book of Acts when they got saved they did three things. They got saved, they got baptized and they joined a New Testament local church. You can go all through the book of Acts, all through Paul's writings and you cannot find a Christian like you. A Christian who will take God's salvation. Oh, I will take the Bible, but when it comes to the New Testament local church, uh-uh! Nowhere can you find a person like you! In the book of Acts, it meant something to get saved. They saw the burden and they never bought the illusion. They followed Hebrews 10:25.

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Hebrews 10:25*

That is for us. That is not the church triumphant. That is the church militant. I will make it even simpler. Take a piece of paper and in the middle draw a line across it. Do you know there are three parts to that line? It has length and width and if you put a microscope on it you have got depth. Three parts to that line. God replaced Himself with three things. The Holy Spirit of God, the word of God and a local church. If you take any one of those three away from the line, you know what you don't have? A line anymore. In other words, it takes all three points for that line to exist. In your Christian life in the illusion that you are living in you actually think you can take the first two and leave one of them out and still have a relationship with Christ. You take any one of them out of your life and you are just a clown looking for a circus. Someone who has bought the illusion. Someone that the devil has stopped you in your tracks from everything God wanted you to do. The devil has deceived you and taken not only any relationship with Christ that you might want to have; but robbed you even more importantly of any millennial inheritance

that He had for you. Christianity today is filled with people who claim to be saved, who have forsaken what Christ loves and gave Himself for, the church militant. They are in the illusion of New Testament Christianity. The church militant is the only structure God has established in the New Testament for His people. Having said that, let's be honest today. The bottom line of why men and women, saved people won't be part of a New Testament local church is a simple one-word answer. It is the word **accountability**. Oh, they will take salvation, they will even get the right King James Bible. But when it comes to structure in their lives, in a form of accountability, through God's program they will never submit to it. Fundamentally they have an authority issue. I don't care who they are, or where they are at this morning. These kinds of people all have three basic fundamental characteristics. **One**, they have never won a soul to Christ. **Two**, they don't know anything in their Bible past a few little things. **Three**, they have no work for God. They haven't done one thing for God since they have been saved. Oh, let me throw in a **fourth** one, just look at their kids. They have deceived themselves into thinking that they can really have a relationship with God without being part of what He loves and what He gave Himself for. The church militant.

➤ The Local New Testament Church Provides Accountability & Structure for Our Lives

I hope that you all understand what I am about to say, and you will all say amen. So, you can keep the illusion going. All of us, every child of God, we need accountability and structure in our lives. The job of the church is not to be task masters. We are not to be a lord over God's people. But we are to provide the training and help people establish themselves in the word of God. Because it is through the New Testament local church and you getting trained in the word of God that structure comes into your life. Because the Bible makes it very clear as you study the church that it was the structure that God gave to man because man needed a structure. Your rejection of the New Testament church is your rejection of that structure and His authority in your life to keep you between the white lines.

If I may, this morning, show you how hypocritical you really are. I don't think you are a bad person. You just drank the Kool-Aid. You bought the illusion. God saved you for a purpose. God has a plan for you. He has a reason for your existence after you get saved. But you only find that out through a New Testament local church as you put that structure in your life. You have forsaken that structure. You have bought into the illusion. But let me show you how hypocritical you are. I love you but you are a hypocrite. Who doesn't understand Romans 13? It is about how we are to obey the powers over us, our government. He tells us in Romans 13 that the powers that be are ordained of God. That is hard to believe sometimes when you see a country like America or China or Russia where they have no care about the word of God. But He is not talking about that. He is talking about in this life of human beings, homo sapiens, God knew that everybody saved and unsaved has to have a govern in their life to provide structure.

In 1776 we established America. It took them 13-14 years to come up with the paper that they all agreed upon called the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In those documents they set down the fundamental structure by which this country was going to run. You obey it. When stealing is against the law you don't steal. We set down laws and you obey them. When it



says pay your taxes, you may gripe about it, but you pay them. How about every year when your property tax comes through. Do we gripe about that? We do, but we pay it. We don't like it, but we pay it. You know why? Because the government is a structure that we adhere to. Here is where the hypocrisy comes in. You will submit yourself to the unsaved government structure, but you will reject God's structure for you as a child of God.

I have heard every excuse of why you don't come to church. I know we miss church at times. Deer season, turkey season, take a Sunday and go hunting. I am not one of these kinds of guys who is a dictator that you can't miss a Sunday. I get that. But it is the consistency of things.

I am going to be like a dentist this morning. You have a toothache, and you come into my office. You are not sure which tooth it is, and I don't know either. So, a dentist will put you back in the chair and put those little sunglasses on and take his little tool and say, "well let's find this bad tooth." So he starts sticking it down in the middle of one tooth. You are good. He does four or five teeth that way and you are good. When he hits the bad tooth, you know which one is bothering you. I am going to list about five or six things here and when I hit the right tooth you are going to know what is bothering you.

### III. Excuses We Use to Miss Being Part of a Local New Testament Church

The **first one** is the idea that Bible colleges replace the New Testament local church in training and teaching people in the Bible. The devil has sold the idea that Bible colleges and universities have replaced the New Testament local church in teaching and training of young people. That is right out of the Roman Catholic playbook. Pastors almost to 100% today will fail to see that it is their responsibility to train and equip their people.

In the Old Testament the custodianship of the word of God was with the priest class. Nobody outside the priest class could copy the word of God, teach the word of God, or do anything with the word of God. In the New Testament it is not a literal priest class as it was in the Old Testament, but it is a spiritual priest class. That is the church, not a Bible college. That is the New Testament local church, the church triumphant and the church militant. God never subsidized the training of men and women to any other organization. Whether you graduated from it or not, whether you like it or not. It doesn't matter. I cannot help the fact that you live in the illusion.

I have known great preachers, and they went to Bible colleges. Years after they graduated 10-20 years and were pastoring churches, they all made fun of the Bible colleges. They all would say and tell the truth that they didn't learn any Bible in Bible college. But that is the reason they went, but that is the illusion. You know what happened to most of them. You get the illusion that you go to Bible college to learn the Bible. But what the devil does is take that Bible from you and then you come out not having one. So instead of learning the Bible, they take it from you. I have seen this happen all the time. They become devoted to whatever school they graduate from. It is like your high school, only worse. If you went to let's say, Lincoln High School but you see that Tipton High School is having a reunion. Are you going to go to it? Why

would you go to a reunion to a place that you don't know anything about? You are going to go where you came from and these guys become more loyal to the school that they graduated from than they do the local New Testament church where they got their salvation from. They go under the false pretense that they are going to learn the Bible. In actuality, the Bible gets taken from them and then these pastors who graduate not knowing the Bible go back and start churches and don't know how to train their people. So, they send their people to Bible college and the satanic connection just keeps rolling through and the illusion keeps moving.

The **second one**. Somebody said this to me once. Where do you go to church? They say Well I don't go to church because I had a bad experience in a church one time. I had a bad experience with a pastor. Things didn't go well. I don't like the way it went and so I don't go to church anymore. I got to be honest with you. Of course, all these fit into this category, but that is about as stupid as you can get. I said, wow, that is quite incredible. That is amazing. Let me ask you a question. You ever been to a restaurant where you had a bad meal? Did you get food poisoning, bad service or food that you paid way too much for? Of course you have. So, I guess you are telling me that because you had a bad experience at a restaurant you never eat out anymore. See the hypocrisy in those things? It has nothing to do with that. If you have a bad experience in one church, find a good church. Understand that church is not an option. So, you had a terrible meal. Okay. So, you are never going to go out and eat again? No, you will fill your gut with all the food out there that you like, but you won't find a church where you can get the spiritual food that you need. You know what the problem is? Deep down you want no accountability. You don't want God's structure in your life. So, you find a reason why you get mad at the structure when it is a stupid reason. There are plenty of other churches out there that will give you everything that you need. You will take salvation; you will take the word of God. You can manipulate the Bible when you are outside the structure. One of the things the church does for you and me is it holds us accountable. It will put you in a solid biblical structure and it will define who you really are.

Here is the **third one**. Four or five years ago we got hit with a pandemic, COVID-19. It was a terrible time. Hundreds of thousands of people died. It was a terrible time, but it showed where God's people were. I look at COVID-19 and as bad as it was, I look back in the 1800's when they had a pandemic of smallpox. I look back when leprosy started. I look back in the 1200's when the black plague, the black death happened. More people were killed in Europe than was left alive. How about in the 1900's with the Asian flu killed how many millions of people around the world? We don't think much about it now, but you know there was a time when measles killed people, smallpox killed people. Yellow fever killed thousand and thousand of people. Scarlet fever killed hundreds of thousands of people. But the true church found a way through it. They found a way through it. They never stopped ministering because they were not going to let something that the devil concocted stop the plan of God. But oh, God's people instead of standing on the rock they hid under the rock. We just look at the one we know and have no idea that down through the history of Christianity there has been pandemic after pandemic. Nobody reacted like God's people did today. I am not saying you don't be careful. I am not saying you don't follow the medical advice. I am saying nothing can stop the church of Jesus Christ! Through the smallpox, the leprosy, the black plague, the flu, the malaria, nothing stopped us. Till we come on the scene. I think in many cases, if I can be honest, it was the

excuse God's people were looking for to not come to church. We wore masks, we separated. We did the whole thing. There were people that quit coming to church because of that too.

You want to see the height of hypocrisy? I had a guy come to me when we all had to wear masks. He says, when are you going to take a stand against this phony government that is making us wear masks? When are you going to take a stand in this church and tell the people they don't have to wear masks? I looked at him and said, "This is a joke, right?" I mean you have to wear a mask where you work, and you will wear one tomorrow. You will wear one the next day because if you don't you will lose your job. You see what a hypocrite you are. You won't stand up to your boss and say I am not wearing it anymore. It defines so many of God's people. You actually want me to believe that you trust God in everything except something like this? When you have a history faced with Albigenians, Waldensians, Huguenots, anabaptists, that faced all of their pandemics and never stopped the work of God. I knew that the people who quit coming during that time would never come back and that was true. They didn't. The reason why they never came back to church is because the church never meant anything to them to begin with. It was a great defining moment.

The **fourth one**. I love this. This is going to be hard for you to believe. We had folks quit coming to church because we didn't allow drinks in the auditorium anymore. Oh yeah and they are probably watching this morning. I can't even wrap my head around that. How shallow and stupid that is. I mean really! You care that little about the church, God's structure, God's ministry, God's people that you would give it up over a Slurpee? Shame on you. Can I be honest with you for a moment? Can you image standing at the judgment seat of Christ with that excuse?

The **fifth one**. I was a youth pastor for several years just like you are Jared. I remember one time we had this family that wanted to join the church. They were a good family, and their kids were all teenagers. The dad said, "well before we join the church, we want to meet with all the pastors." I thought that was a good thing. We all met in the conference room. There must have been 10-12 guys in there plus the family. They were asking all kinds of questions, and they came down to me. He said, "I have four kids that are high school age, and you are the high school pastor. Can you tell me as a youth pastor what is your biggest struggle? What is the biggest problem you deal with?" I didn't wait ten seconds, I said, parents! How many of you think I got called into the big guy's office right after that meeting? Yeah, I did, but I didn't care. **Parenting is everything.** When you get married you are not a family until the baby shows up. You may be a husband and wife, but you are not a father or mother till you have that first child. Parenting is everything. Unfortunately, unsaved kids with unsaved parents we know how that goes. But in Christianity there are some parents who will trade God's church so they can put their kids in an athletic sports program on Sunday morning and Thursday night. I am not against playing sports. My grandkids are world champions. I trained them well. But they understand the importance of Sunday morning and Thursday night. I have had some parents that put their kids in little league or soccer and you told the coach we want to play but we won't be part of a team that takes our child out of Sunday morning or Thursday night. So put us on a team that doesn't interfere with that. I think that is wonderful. Parents will do two things for their kids fundamentally.

You will put them on the road to heaven, or you will put them on the road to hell. I can't tell you how important it is. Laid out in the book of Acts is clearly evident that it needs to be in your life that the New Testament church militant become the center of your lives as a family. Nothing will take its place and the importance of leading your kids to understand that. Nobody understands the importance, or the power of sports more than I do as an outreach. I have done it for fifty plus years. Years ago, we had basketball leagues, we had softball and volleyball. Everything that we do here is all as an outreach. They can be used to reach people, especially young kids. But I am going to tell you mom and dad, teaching your kids at 10,12 and 14 that church is number one will pay off when they are 18,19 and 20.

**Number six.** Trading Sunday church for a campsite down at the lake. I am not saying there is anything wrong if you want to go to the lake every once in a while. I have no problem with that. We all need breaks. But this more importantly deals with worldly possessions that go along with that. The making of money. Never denying yourself anything yet denying God of everything. Life simply for many people will come down to one word. Where the church came down to one word, accountability. The Christian life will come down to one word, priorities. What is really important to us? I have seen saved people put every material possession in their life and never do one thing in God's church. They make incredible investments in bad things. Here is where Israel in Haggai 1:4 got so far from God, lost the vision and the burden of God. Cared nothing about their future anymore that they were actually taking all the material that God gave them to build the temple and used them to build their own homes.

*[Is it] time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house [lie] waste? Haggai 1:4*

It is God's people today not recognizing everything that God's given them. Not understanding why God saved them. Not seeing God's burden or His vision and then taking all that God has given us for ourselves.

Solomon is one of the greatest kings Israel ever had but he also was the beginning of the downfall of Israel's captivity. I have heard many preachers talk about the wisdom of Solomon, the greatness of Solomon. But they all usually miss the downfall of Solomon because it is our downfall, and we don't want to see it. In the first six chapters of the book of 1 Kings in the Old Testament you have the dedication and the building of the temple. Yes, you can take all of that and put it into your building of your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit of God, for sure. The Bible says in 1 Kings 6:38 that it was seven years in the building of God's temple. Same time it took to get your King James Bible.

*And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which [is] the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. **So was he seven years in building it.** 1Kings 6:38*

But in the very next chapter 1 Kings 7 it says that Solomon built God's house for seven years, but when it came down to his own house he spent thirteen years building it. There was the beginning of the downfall of the nation of Israel in the leadership. Spending more time building your stuff than God's stuff.

You are going to find with God's people that life is all about them, never about God. They are never satisfied. They want bigger homes, more money, newer cars, whatever somebody else has. They have to get something better. When you talk to them all you hear comes out of their mouth is what they have and what they don't have. What they are going to buy and how much money they are going to make. They always want something new. In the Bible God gives us seven new things. Seven new things in the Bible and we want so many new things that the world has to offer but could care nothing about the seven new things that God has for us. I am not fighting it. I think if you have got young kids you get them to do this or get them to do that, and it takes a Sunday, I am not talking about that. I am talking about the overall concept. You want to go to the lake, go fishing. I think that is good. Get a break you work for a living. It is the overall concept.

An old-time preacher came out of the Southern Baptist, and I heard him preach years ago. He is gone now, but his name was R.G. Lee. He preached a lot of good sermons, but he was famous for one sermon that he preached all over the country. I heard him preach it twice. The name of the sermon was Payday Someday. There is a payday coming someday. At the end of the day if you are not under the authority and accountability of God's structure you are wasting your time. You are wasting your time pretending you are something that you are not. You are part of the overall demonic illusion that has descended on Christianity. You can sling all the mud and excuses at preachers and pastors that you want. You got an issue with the church or a pastor, okay. Then find a good one. Quit using the mistakes or what you don't like to justify your own self. That doesn't change the fact that the New Testament church is God's program for this day. At the bottom of the pile of your excuses will lie the real issue. You just don't want to submit to God's structure or any authority in your life. You want to do your own thing.

I know guys that claim they have ministries that they go in and help pastors in their churches. Yet they don't go to church themselves. They are going to tell everybody else in the church to be part of the church, but don't want to be part of one themselves. You have an authority problem. You will submit yourself to government authority, Romans 13, but you will never submit yourself to God's authority, the book of Acts.

## IV. Summary

So, the devil attacks the church just like he did Israel. They lost all that God had for them because they rejected the structure of the Old Testament system that God had establish for them to keep them accountable. The law, the priesthood, the temple and the prophets. Just like the church today, God's people have rejected the structure of New Testament Christianity. The church militant and in both cases, they are defined very clearly in 2 Timothy 3:5 as having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. You take that line and put it across the board. Three parts. You take one off you lose the line. God gave you the Holy Spirit, the word of God and the church. You take one of them away and you are done. There has never been a greater time in all of the church history when God's people have been more deceived. The reason is we lost the Bible. The farther we get from the Bible and the closer we get to the Lord's return, the worse it is going to get. The tragedy is they deceive themselves. They want to be deceived. We

find millions of people who claim to be saved but nowhere in the New Testament can you find anybody like them. It is like the verse I gave you a couple of weeks ago. Luke 6:46

*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Luke 6:46*

This is the Laodicean church of Revelation 3:14-16 where he says

*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Revelation 3:14-16*

These are the Christians that makes God sick. **Lukewarm!** They are neither cold nor hot. You are not in total apostasy, but you are not on fire for God. You are just worthless. You never do anything, never win anybody to Christ, never part of any ministry. You are just lukewarm. I can hear it now. Well, I am offended. That message today, brother Bob really offended me. Well so I can stave off all your goofy little emails this afternoon, this is the great blessing of the delete button. So, you are offended. Here is my advice to you. If you are offended or if I have offended anybody here today, here is my advice to you, Psalms 119:165

*Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. Psalms 119:165*

I suggest you get in the Book and love it a little more. We get to the point where we take offense to the word of God because we don't have any peace. Great peace have they that love thy law. We don't have the peace that passes all understanding that keeps our hearts and minds. You don't need to be offended but you do need to be broken. You ought to be falling on your knees this morning asking God to forgive you. Find a church that preaches the Bible and teaches the Bible and then begin a life to fulfill what God saved you for. Get into a church that gives you the vision and the burden. Submit yourself to the accountability and the structure. So yes, you can be a Christian and not go to church, but you will never be what God wants you to be. In time you will be everything the devil wants you to be, because you are going to take the very structure out of your life. Imagine a child of God saved 5-10 years or more and today you have no idea the seven things that God loves. Much less making those the things that you love. Unfortunately, you will be found in 1 Corinthians 3:15 at the judgment seat of Christ, saved, yet so as by fire.

*If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 1 Corinthians 3:15*

The fire taking everything that God gave you except your salvation. As I said a couple of weeks ago, that old song in our hymnal, "Must I go in empty handed?" Yeah, you will!