

CHURCH

THE BODY OF CHRIST

„I will build My Church. And the gates of death will not overcome it.”
(Matthew 16:18)

„He is the Head of the body, of the Church.” (Colossians 1:18)

„You are Christ’s body, and each one of you
is an individual part of it.”
(1 Corinthians 12:27)

„And to make all men see the work of this mystery, which
for ages has been hid in God, who created all things; so that
the dominions and powers in the heavenly places **may get
to know today, through the Church,**
the manifold wisdom of God.” (Ephesians 3:9-10)

The Church of Christ

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The Church Today

More and more people are disappointed with the progress of Christianity and the churches today most being integrated into the worldly system. Thus, we find ourselves unable to be part of a church that is truly the Body of Christ.

Saddened by this situation, many would leave, but are not convinced that they can find an uncompromising church/assembly. The more courageous ones retire and choose to live the Christian life on their own.

Thus, we can encounter two attitudes:

– *the first one*, being the acceptance of compromise, an attitude that does not consider the Scripture's exhortations, which tells us with whom not to unite. (*People will be self-lovers... holding a form of godliness, but denying its true power. Turn away from these people. 2 Timothy 3:1-5*) Read Ezra 4:1-5!

– *and the second one*, that of retreat and loneliness, without seeking to be part of the Body of Christ, an attitude that thwarts God's plan for their spiritual growth. (*God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired; God has formed the body; you are the body of Christ, and individually each one his members. 1 Corinthians 12:18, 24, 27*)

Both attitudes are very dangerous, as they are in fact a rejection of Christ's work in growing/building the limbs of the Church/ His Body. (*As Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that it might be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25; In him the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Ephesians 2:21.*)

For many of us, the Church we belong to no longer has its God-given purpose. Many people see the Church as just a place where we can find some peace of mind that is otherwise lost during the week, due to a crowded lifestyle.

We have been taught to believe that what is generically called *the Church* is a place where people with common religious preoccupations gather. It is a place where they sing, pray, listen to a sermon, and socialize a little after the program, after which everyone goes back to their personal matters and interests.

A very small number of members have the job of carrying out *this program*. The vast majority of members are in the position of being spectators to these religious programs, their job consisting of being present/sitting on the bench and participating with a certain amount of money for the needs of the congregation.

Thus, in these gatherings, the ordinary member is just *a simple consumer*, nothing is expected of him, the participation/presence in *the congregation* being

his only task.

Reality shows us that quite a few members do not even come to these religious programs anymore, the buildings being rather empty for certain worship services. In many cases, its members only know each other by sight.

Perhaps until today you did not have, like many others, any involvement in the Church that you are a member of, and you were not aware that each member is put by God in the body for the use of other members. (*And to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of others. 1 Corinthians 12:7*)

It might seem normal to you that only a small group of brothers are involved in the Church. Perhaps you find it natural that many who do not attend the meetings for months or even years, still remain on the list as members.

Today more than ever, in order not to be deceived, it is necessary that we *carefully examine* what the Word of God tells us about our place in the Church of Christ.

The Church of Christ - His Body

The Church of Christ is one of God's great mysteries. (*This mystery is great - I am talking about Christ and the Church. Ephesians 5:32*)

This plan/project, the Church of Christ, was conceived in eternity. Even the dominions and principalities of the heavenly places look upon the Church and are amazed at its way of functioning. (*So that the dominions and powers in the heavenly places may get to know today, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. Ephesians 3:10-11*)

To understand God's eternal plan for Christ and His Church, we will need to carefully investigate what the Scriptures tell us about it.

In order to have a clear understanding, we will highlight a few verses from the Holy Word.

1. "I will build My Church..."(Matthew 16:18)
2. "He is the Head of the Body, of the Church". (Colossians 1:18)
3. "You are the body of Christ, and each one of you are its members". (1 Corinthians 12:27)
4. "For no one ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body". (Ephesians 5:29)
5. "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake... for the sake of His body, that is, the Church". (Colossians 1:24)

The Church is identified as the body of Christ. He is the Head of the body and the people born of the seed of God are its organs/members. (*He is the Head of the body, of*

Christ is the Head of the body, of the Church.
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the Church. Colossians 1:18; You are the body of Christ, and each one his members. 1 Corinthians 12:27)

God's plan for the newborn is to raise him, to perfect him, to make him like Himself. He does this through His Word, the Holy Spirit, and the members of the Body of Christ. This project was conceived in eternity in Christ Jesus. (According to the eternal plan, which was made in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Ephesians 3:11)

God formed the Body of Christ, its mode/manner of functioning being very similar to that of the human body. (God made the body. 1 Corinthians 12:24) In the Body of Christ, He only puts members who have life from above/are born again. (Every day the Lord added to their number those who were saved. Acts 2:47)

He begins His work with us, and if we remain obedient to His Word, He will finish His project with us. (I am confident that He who has begun this good work in you will finish it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6)

An infant cannot choose where to grow on his own, so the One who gave birth to him takes care and puts him in His family, respectively in the Body of Christ. See God's work with Cornelius the centurion in Acts 10.

He promised to be with us every single day, He promised to never leave us. He will take us by our hand and accompany us until the end. (And behold, I am always with you, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:20; For He said: I will not leave you; I will not abandon you. Hebrews 13:5)

He does not abandon his newborns and will not let them grow without His help. (And He gave some... for the perfecting of the saints... for the building up of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-12)

God places the members in the Body of Christ just as He placed the organs/limbs in the human body; the heart in its place, the pancreas in its place, the nail in its place, each with its respective function. (I will build My Church... Matthew 16:18)

God does not place any organ to grow outside the body, because being separated from the body, it cannot have life or growth. The pancreas cannot sustain life outside the body. It is placed in the body and is closely connected with the other organs, from where he is receiving and then giving further on.

The Scriptures show us the relationship that is required to be had between the members of the Church of Christ/His Body:

– They are closely bound together. (Through Him all the body, closely bound and joined together, receives its growth through the work of each respective member according to their own capacity; and is built up in love. Ephesians 4:16)

In the Body of Christ, we are closely linked to one another.
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– Do not live for themselves. (No one lives for himself. Romans 14:7)

– Are members of one another. (So, we, though many, are one body in Christ, and

individually members one of another. Romans 12:5)

– *Each one seeks the benefit of the other. (To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of others. 1 Corinthians 12:7; Let no one seek his own good, but the good of the other. 1 Corinthians 10:24)*

– *They take care of one another. (God has so composed the body... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:24-25)*

– *They bear each other's burdens. (Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2)*

– *They are subject/submitted to one another. (Obey one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:21)*

– *In humility, each one counts the others as more significant than themselves. (In humility count others more significant than yourselves. Philippians 2:3)*

– *The greatest/most mature are the servants of all. (The greatest among you shall be your servant. Matthew 23:11)*

– *They watch over one another. (Let us watch over one another. Hebrews 10:24)*

– *They watch so that no one is worldly/evil is not tolerated. (See that there be no worldly people or fornicators (sexually immoral) among you. Hebrews 12:16)*

– *They love one another in Christ's way/model. (Love one another as I have loved you. John 15:12) Only within the Church can we experience these relationships, which are essential for our growth, until we all reach the state of a mature man, to the stature of Christ's fullness. (Ephesians 4:13)*

Questions:

– Do we belong to a well bound and tightly joined body? (*Ephesians 4:16*)

Comment: _____

– Are we in the Body for the benefit of the other members? (*1 Corinthians 10:24*)

Comment: _____

– Who are we tied to, whose burdens/tasks do we carry? (*Galatians 6:2*)

Comment: _____

– Are we subject to Christ and to other members? (*Ephesians 5:21*)

Comment: _____

– Do we watch over one other so that no one among us is worldly? (*Hebrews 12:16*)

The Role of the Members in the Body of Christ

The body of man, as well as the body of Christ, has been designed in such a way that every part of the body serves the other. No member/organ lives for itself. *(As we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we... are individually members one of another. Romans 12: 4-5 For none of us live for themselves. Romans 14:7).*

The Church of Christ is structured as a Family, with infants, children and parents. We live for each other and grow to become like the Lord, to have the same heart as His. *(I write to you, parents, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 1 John 2:13)*

Christ is the head of the Family/Church and cares for it with love. *(For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body. Ephesians 5:29)*

The organs of the Body of Christ take care of each other, each living for the benefit of the other. *(God made the body... That there should be no division in it; but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer together with it. 1 Corinthians 12: 24-26)*

In the Body of Christ, we are closely connected with the members beside us, which in turn are closely connected with other organs, which are also closely connected with other limbs, and so the whole body is tightly bound and joined together. *(From Him, the body, tightly bound and joined together, by what each joint gives, receives its growth, according to the work of each part in its own measure. Ephesians 4:16)*

In the Body of Christ,
the members take care
of one another.

A very important aspect is that God, who designed the body, puts the limbs in it as He wills. We do not choose where to be in the body. He knows everyone's needs and what everyone can give. He will place each of us in such a way that we receive all that is necessary for our growth and perfection. *(But now God set the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He desired. 1 Corinthians 12:18)*

If we are infants (*in faith*), He will not put us next to other infants, but He will put us next to older brothers/spiritual parents through whom we will be counseled and helped to get rid of lying, theft, anger, gossip, the use of useless words... *(Brothers, I myself am confident that you are full of goodness, full of all knowledge, and so **are able to counsel one another**. Romans 15:14)*

In this body, with every member being closely linked to other members, we learn to put on patience, kindness... to walk in holiness, to learn to forgive, to love. We start walking in the new things from above, which are the things of the Spirit.

1. For this, the Lord places **spiritual parents** in His Family, to whom He entrusts His children to be raised and guarded by them against **predatory wolves**. (*Be therefore on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to shepherd the Church of God. Acts 20:28*)

They are made to be the servants of the infants and children. They must take care of all the members of the Church with an attitude of service to the needs of each. None can be left out. (*The greatest of you shall be your servant. Matthew 23:11*)

Just as the natural parents take care of all the needs of their children, so the spiritual parents/elders will take care of all the spiritual needs of the children entrusted to them. (*Like a nurse lovingly raising her children. 1 Thessalonians 2:7*)

2. The spiritual parents will enroll them into the school of Christ, in which they teach them Christ's commandments. (*And teach them to keep all that I have commanded you. Matthew 28:20*) They will also watch/be careful that they grow healthily. (*Let us watch over one another. Hebrews 10:24*)

3. They will give them work to help put the teachings of the Lord into practice in their daily lives and to distinguish good from evil. (*Those whose judgment has been taught to distinguish between good and evil. Hebrews 5:14*) In the Family/Church, children will learn to put off lying, cunningness, anger... to give up the old things, namely the things of the world. (*Colossians 3: 8-15*)

Following/imitating the example of the parents that overcome trials, the children will also learn to go overcome the tests of faith. (*Be fellow imitators of me, brothers, and consider those walking this way, even as you have us for a pattern. Philippians 3:17*) In the Family they will learn goodness, kindness, mercy... participating together with their parents in various works, by looking into the troubles of orphans and widows, by caring for the elderly sisters and brothers that are in need. This can range from small things, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, to bed care. (*I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you came to Me. Matthew 25:36*)

Obedience

As in a natural family, to have a healthy growth, the children must be subject to their parents in all things. (*Likewise, young ones, submit yourselves unto the elder. 1 Peter 5:5*)

The pattern of obedience we must follow is given to us by Lord Jesus. He did nothing out of His own will. He was always obedient to the Father. (*I can do nothing of myself. John 5:30; he that remains in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1 John 2:6*)

The Scripture describes obedience as a complete compliance to the Word of God, without turning right or left from it. (*According to the terms of the law which they teach you... you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left. Deuteronomy 17:11*) This is the only way to reach perfection, to reach the stature of Christ. Only if we obey our elders in all things will we be able to grow. (*Obey your leaders and **submit to them**, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Hebrews 13:17; He gave some as... pastors and teachers; for perfecting the saints. Ephesians 4:11-12*)

The parents are those who correct and use the care for the children that make mistakes. (*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, scold, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2*)

To understand how serious disobedience is, we will highlight its consequences. In ancient times, the punishment for disobedience/insubordination to those considered worthy of leading was physical death. (*And the man who acts with pride so as not to listen to the priest who is standing to serve Jehovah your God there, or to the judge, even that man shall die; and you shall put away evil from Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:12-13; see the rebellion of Korah and his people.)*)

In the Church of Christ things are very similar. If a member of the body will disobey and rebel against those appointed by God as authority in the Church, he/she will have to bear the consequence of being removed from the body of Christ. (*If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as **a pagan and a tax collector**. Matthew 18:17*)

Regarding the relationship that we can have with a pagan, it is highlighted by the Scripture in the words spoken by the apostle Peter in the house of Cornelius the centurion. (*...it is not lawful for a Jew to be with **a foreigner**. Acts 10:28*)

By the statement, "*Let him be to you as a pagan,*" Lord Jesus commands us to break all ties and isolate from the one who disregarded God's ordained authority, in order to avoid contaminating the other members with the sin of rebellion and disobedience. (*For they would turn your sons away from Me... Deuteronomy 7:4*)

Judging by what we see today around us, we can notice that Satan has worked hard and succeeded in abolishing the parental institution ordained by God, and replaced it with schools and preaching halls, giving man only institutionalized education, leading him to believe that he does not need spiritual parents for his spiritual growth. First, Satan worked to replace the spiritual parents/shepherds who are in charge of raising the spiritual children with preachers, servants dedicated only during the worshipping programs, that are in charge of institutionalized education and keeping the flock scattered, by no means helping the spiritual children grow. (*The wolf kidnaps and then scatters them. John 10:12*)

In this way, the church became only a center of religious education, thus losing its purpose of being the place intended for the growth of the saints.

Therefore, whoever wills to be obedient as the Lord commanded will find himself/herself in the ridiculous situation of not having who to obey; this is because in most congregations today, there is a complete lack of spiritual parents.

We need to understand that we will not be able to grow towards perfection if we do not have spiritual parents to follow! (*For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:15-16*)

It is good to understand the difference between education and parenting. Through preaching, we only receive the teaching, but no parental upbringing. We can see this difference if we compare the upbringing of an orphan child and one with parents. Both receive the education, but in addition to education, the child who has parents will have them be with him to build his character, to encourage him in good things, and to correct him in what is wrong. Instead, for the orphaned child, there will be no one next to him to correct him if he does something wrong.

We must, therefore, desire and practice obedience with all our hearts, since it is strictly necessary in the process of growth, to reach the stature of a mature man, the stature of the fullness of Christ. (*Ephesians 4:13*)

Let us not want to be in an institutionalized assembly, alone, like an orphan. Let us not avoid brotherly obedience, let us not run away from it. Let us flee from the assembly that does not practice obedience; the place that has no spiritual parents!

Questions:

- Do we have spiritual parents to take care of us? Or are we just an ordinary member/an orphan?

Comment: _____

- If we have spiritual parents, do they teach us not to oppose the one who hurts us, not to love the world, not to work illegally, to pay our taxes...?

Comment: _____

- Does he check us if we put them into practice, are we scolded if we do not?

Comment: _____

- Do they watch over us so that something bad does not happen to us, so that we do not fall into sin? (*1 Peter 5:1*)

Comment: _____

–Do we give double honor to the spiritual parents? (1 Timothy 5:17)

Comment: _____

The Purity of the Body of Christ

Both in the past and today, God's camp/the Body of Christ must be clean, because that is where the Lord dwells. (*He/Satan has nothing in Me. John 14:30; Your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you; therefore, your camp **must be holy**; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you. Deuteronomy 23:14 Take them out, otherwise they will defile **the camp wherein I dwell.** Numbers 5:3)*

God, who is the architect and builder of the Body/Church, has made the laws of the body to function in such a way as to keep it undefiled. Christ takes good care of this body because it is His Body! (*No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, so does Christ with the Church; for we are the members of his body, the flesh of his flesh, and the bone of his bones. Ephesians 5:29-30*)

If a member of the Body of Christ becomes ill/defiled through neglect and temptation, Lord Jesus cares/participates with the members of His Body for the healing of the sick member. If the diseased organ does not agree to be cared for, it must eventually be removed. One of the reasons for the removal is that the sick member will contaminate and negatively influence others through his life. He will urge others to live in the same way as he does. (*See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled. Hebrews 12:15; **They will turn your sons away from following Me...** Deuteronomy 7:4*)

Jesus does not allow sin to dwell in His Body, so He commands His members to watch to not find any worldly person among them. The sin/infection of a limb also infects the limbs to which it is closely related to. (*See that there is no fornicator or worldly person among you. Hebrews 12:16; Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole dough? Sweep away the old yeast. 1 Corinthians 5: 6-7*)

For this reason, when we observe a sin, we are called to go to our brother and raise him with the spirit of gentleness to correct him; and if he does not listen, he must be handed over to the Church. (*If your brother has sinned against you, go and rebuke him between you and him alone. And if he does not listen to the Church either, treat him as a pagan and a tax collector. Matthew 18:15*)

Many will perhaps say: how can someone sitting on the same bench contaminate us, when he has almost nothing to do with us, when we do not know anything about his life outside the church walls? However, if we ask

ourselves this question, it means that we are not connected to the members in the church. It is then clear that we belong to a scattered herd, a place where everyone does what they want, where talking about obedience, rebuke, correction is not possible...it is a place where one cannot speak of the Body of Christ, which was designed to have its members closely connected to one another.

Before God, every single soul is responsible for the penetration and tolerance of evil in the Body of Christ. If each member is closely related to another member, then it is easy to understand that when one becomes ill, it will affect the other one it is attached to. If a limb becomes ill with slander and is not detected and disciplined, it will contaminate those to whom it is closely connected to. *(Make no mistake: "Evil companionship spoils good habits." 1 Corinthians 15:33)*

If through negligence, the limbs of Christ's body come to tolerate sin, the Church will eventually end up being separated from Christ. *(I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot; so, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Revelation 3:15; I will destroy her children to death. Revelation 2:23)*

When the commandment in Matthew 18:15 is ignored, sin multiplies, the body becomes sick, and if no healing is done, it will eventually die. *(Because the judgment against bad deeds is not carried out quickly, the heart of the sons of men is full of the desire to do evil. Ecclesiastes 8:11)*

The Church at Thyatira

At the time this Church was investigated, it found itself in a situation where sin had entered the congregation and was tolerated. The Church allowed a "**woman who called herself a prophetess**" to teach heresies and to deceive the Lord's servants. *(But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies. 2 Peter 2: 1-2)* One can notice the Lord's care for the limbs of His body; firstly, with Jezebel, who was given time to repent. *(I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to repent of her immorality! Revelation 2:21)*

Even though the Church had been praised for many things, the Lord rebukes it for this sin of carelessness, of tolerating sin. *(I know what you've been doing—your love, faithfulness, service, and endurance—and that your last actions are greater than the first. But I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and who teaches and leads my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. Revelation 2:19-20)*

The Church was guilty of disregarding the Lord's teaching, which tells us that women are not allowed to teach others, and of the commandment that tells us to watch over, so that not to be related to anyone who practices disobedience towards God's Word... *(See that there is no fornicator or worldly person among you. Hebrews 12:15-16; Women are not allowed to teach others, nor to rise above men, but to be*

silent. 1 Timothy 2:12) This “yeast” of sin, which was tolerated in the Church, was to leaven all the dough, that is, the death of the flock. (*Do you not know that a little yeast... Cor. 5:6*)

If the Church, for the most part, gets to allow sin, what do you have to do with the few who still want to remain faithful to the Lord? May they still remain in this Church, and live according to the law of the Body of Christ, where every single joint brings its own input? Does the Lord teach them to stay with those who live in sin?

If we pay close attention to the written Word, and do not go over it, it provides us with answers to these questions. When sin is tolerated, Lord Jesus has commandments for the members who want to remain in obedience to Him. As such, in order to remain clean and uncontaminated by the disease of sin, the Lord separates them from uncleanness by commanding them to come out of their midst. (*Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,*” says the Lord, “*And do not touch what is unclean*”. 2 Corinthians 6:17; *For men will be lovers of self, with no self-restraint, slanderous, holding only a form of godliness, but denying its power. **Depart from these people.*** 2 Timothy 3:2)

We warn those who decide to remain in congregations where sin is tolerated, we warn them not to deceive themselves, perhaps by taking the example of the five Churches of the Revelation, by which we might get the impression that injustice can dwell together with righteousness and purity. However, the Lord tells us that Satan has nothing in Him. The Lord cannot allow sin in His body, but in His mercy, before removing/cutting off from the vine, He first tries to heal the sick limb.

We will highlight a few sins which, if tolerated, will bring the death of the assembly: Disregarding the authorities by violating its laws through undeclared work, disobedience to traffic laws, loving and tolerating the things of the world...

Defamation/slander, a sin so prevalent in many congregations today, is as serious in the eyes of the Lord as fornication and drunkenness. The Lord asks us not to have anything to do with those who practice it, even if they call themselves brothers. (*I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is... a slanderer or drunkard. Do not even eat with such a person.* 1 Corinthians 5:11)

Another sin which nowadays is ignored, but is just as serious, for which we must turn away from self-proclaimed brothers, is **self-love**; these are the brothers who do not live for the benefit of other members. (*Know that in the last days there will be hard times. For men will be lovers of themselves... They will hold to an outward form of godliness but deny its power. Stay away from such people.* 2 Timothy 3: 1-5)

Questions:

– How much time per day/week do you spend for yourself? How much time do

you spend for the spiritual benefit of others? 5%, 10% ... Have I learned to live for the benefit of others?

Comment: _____

– Can God be with me if I do not turn away from those who practice slander/evil speech, and from those who promote self-love?

Comment: _____

The Scattered Flock

The Builder of the Body is Lord Jesus. (*I will build My Church, and the gates of death will not overcome it. Matthew 16:18*)

The Lord has created laws of operation in His body to keep it clean, **tightly bound, and well connected**. There are laws specific to the body, according to which the limbs relate to each other. (*That there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25; Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*)

Satan's activity is to use trickeries by which to keep these laws from not being put into practice, which will cause the flock to be scattered. (*...the wolf kidnaps and scatters them. John 10:12*)

Satan knows that alone, the limb/child cannot survive if it is not closely connected to the Body/Family. (*So, they were scattered, because they had no shepherd; they became the prey of all the beasts of the field. Ezekiel 34:5*) His greatest target is to keep the limbs from being closely connected to each other; this can eventually result in the death of the limb. The purpose of our enemy is to keep the members scattered, each with his own issues. The devil works in various ways so that people reach only a form of godliness, a form that gives them the impression that they have life from above. (*For people will be self-loving... having only a form of godliness. 2 Timothy 3:2*)

Lord Jesus tells us that predatory wolves will sneak into the flock, and they will not spare the flock. Their objective is to divide and scatter the flock. (*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Acts 20:29; ...the wolf kidnaps and scatters them. John 10:12*)

Through them, the devil seeks to destroy the purpose of the Body. We are warned to guard against them, as they are very dangerous, since they are dressed in sheep's clothing. (*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Matthew 7:15*)

We can find them everywhere, they are the leaders of religious cults, the

heads of great churches, preachers, teachers of theology... who work to maintain a certain system of organization, which solely consists of worshipping programs, and which is the foundation for **the scattered flock**; a system that focuses on worship and not caring for the sheep. (*You do not heal the sick, do not bind the wounded; ... do not seek the lost. Ezekiel 34:4*) This system of organization, with religious schools/ institutions, prepares and authorizes ministers and professionals in **worshipping/ preaching**. As a result, due to their specialization on the profile of worship and due to the position that they occupy, they are forced to give teachings that maintain this type of system. The effect is – the scattered flock. (*I have not sent them... they're falsely prophesying in My name, so I will drive both you and the prophets who prophesy to you out of the land. Jeremiah 27:15*) By implementing this system, the work of caring and pastoring a flock got replaced with worship programs. The involvement of the Spirit in the work of caring for the sheep is blocked. (*Watch... the flock over which the Holy Spirit has placed you bishops, that you may shepherd the Church. Acts 20:28*) In many of today's congregations, brothers like ap. **Peter the fisherman**, who meet the criteria in **Titus 1**, but without any theological studies, would no longer be suitable for this task. Through this model of organization, Satan impedes the functioning of the Body, as designed by God, in which the members live according to the law of Christ. (*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*)

If some questions regarding our ministry in the Church may appear (perhaps due to the urges of our conscience), and if we will seek an answer to them, these specialists/teachers of scattered flocks will invite us to participate in all kinds of **projects/imitations of service (ministry)**, which at a first glance may seem good, but they will however never call us to take care of each other and carry out the burdens of one another. These activities falsify the type of care we are called to, namely the only way to keep the body tightly bound. (*That there should be no division in the body; but that all members should have the same care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25*)

In this way Satan prevents us from understanding that we must have a life in a spiritual family, like that of the natural family, where we all must participate concretely and decisively in the care of the members of the Family/Body.

The purpose of these projects led by the false prophets is not to be closely linked to each other, not to see the disease of sin that we are affected by (*e.g., a worldly way of life, the dirt of the internet...*). These false prophets do not care about spiritual health. The devil does everything possible to keep us divided. He deceives many by giving an impression of connectedness at a superficial level, so that we won't get to know each other's problems. In this way, the practice of **the laws regarding the connected Body of Christ**, such as **watchfulness, rebuke, discipline, obedience...** are reduced to almost zero.

We must understand that any attempt on our part to replace the real life of

the Body with various other activities, such as: worship programs, socializing, youth meetings, organizing picnics, choirs... will only give us a form of godliness. (*People will be self-loving ... having only a form of godliness. 2 Timothy 3:2-5*)

If we look around us, we can see that the evil one has done his job well. In most churches, people are scattered. They come only for the religious program. Everyone lives for themselves, and are concerned only with their personal problems, having no interest in living for the benefit of others. It cannot be said today that the Church is closely linked and firmly bound together. If a member suffers from a spiritual disease, no one is interested in knowing his illness and does not suffer/care for him.

Through this model of organization and worship, Satan has dealt a deadly blow to many churches, both past and present. This way of organization consisting of pure worship programs 2-3 times a week, has been carefully designed in such a way that no one will consider that the members must have a real involvement in the life of the Body, by carrying out the tasks and burdens of others.

It is easy to see that where this model of worship programs is implemented, there are crowds of souls/members who are pure consumers of these programs, no one cares about these souls, and no one demands accountability.

Having this background in the model of scattered flocks, many have come to misunderstand the importance of the Body of Christ, allowing themselves to be absent from the congregation for months or years at a time, many of whom have gone to various parts of the world in search of the things of this earth. However, they remain on the members list, without being searched for or asked for their whereabouts. (*...they are scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth, and none cares for them, neither seeks them! Ezekiel 34:6*)

This is the case because most of us disregard the Word of God, which requires us to watch over one another and not leave the Body of Christ. (*Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not leaving our own assembling together, as is the habit of some. Hebrews 10:24-25*)

Another trickery by which the foundation of the scattered flock is set occurs through the promotion of the teaching which says that within the Body of Christ/the Church, the weeds/tares live together with the wheat, the light together with the darkness; a teaching that is nowadays widespread, which has caught on with crowds of people. The fruit of this teaching is the tolerance of sin; the yeast that makes all the dough leaven, causing the death of the flock. (*Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole dough? 1 Corinthians 5:6*) By accepting this teaching, brotherly obedience, rebuke, and discipline become meaningless.

Through this teaching, the destructive heresy is sneaked in, disregarding the teaching of the Scripture which tells us to watch so that there will be no worldly person in the Church. (*Watch so that there are no worldly people among you. Hebrews*

Questions:

– Can we belong to God if we are members of a scattered congregation, where the law of Christ is neglected/disregarded? (*Carry each other's burdens... Galatians 6:2*)

Comment: _____

– If we miss the meetings for a month or two... does anyone notice that we are missing, is anyone looking for us? Or does no one pay attention? (*...they are scattered abroad throughout all the land, and no one cares for them. Ezekiel 34:6*)

Comment: _____

Consequences of disregarding Christ's teachings

Nowadays, in order not to be deceived by any wind of teaching, it is more than ever necessary to examine the signs by which we can distinguish a living Church, which is the Body of Christ, from a dead one, which is without Christ.

It is crucial to know where we are because our salvation will depend on it. If we accept the compromise, God will not receive us. (*Come out from among them and be separate from them... do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. 2 Corinthians 6:17; ...a little yeast leavens the whole dough. 1 Corinthians 5:6*)

The Scripture warns us of the danger we are in and tells us to guard against people/congregations who claim to be with God but, are not. (*Beware of false teachers. They come to you clothed in sheep's clothing. Matthew 7:15*) We must carefully examine whether the congregation to which we belong has the characteristics of the Body of Christ.

As for the human body, it is quite simple to find out; we know that when a human being is dead, all the limbs of the body are also dead, they stop functioning. It is the same with the spiritual body. The Church/Body has no life unless Christ commands that body. When the brain stops giving signals to the body, it is dead. It is not possible to have living limbs in a dead body. (*Anyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. 2 John 1:9*) "Anyone" may be a person or a congregation. He/it cannot have life, because life comes only from Christ. (*The Son gives life to whom He wills. John 5:21*)

Warning! Even if there is only one dead limb in your Church, and that limb is not removed in time, it will kill the whole Church/Body! (*See the case of the Church at Thyatira on p. 11*)

Doctrine

One of the signs by which we can verify whether the Church really belongs to Christ is the doctrine/teaching that it accepts and practices.

When a Church does not have the teaching of Christ, it practically disregards and neglects Christ, refusing His will. (*He that does not love me does not keep my commandments. John 14:24; The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:4*) It is therefore extremely important to check whether the teachings of Lord Jesus are fully accepted and practiced.

One example are the teachings of the Lord concerning non-resistance. (*But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat as well. Matthew 5:39-44; Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Luke 6:30*)

These teachings are meant to contribute towards the restoration of the image of God in us, so that we can live for eternity with the saints, with those who are alike the image of His Son, people of the house of God. (*Ephesians 2:19*)

The Holy Spirit uses these commandments and works with us to transform us in the image of the Lord. (*We are changed in His image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18*)

Only by keeping these words, which teach us not to resist the one who hurts us will build God's patience and kindness in us. (*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in patience. Psalm 145:8*) The purpose of these commandments is to reach God's love. (*The goal of the commandment is love. 1 Timothy 1:5*)

It can be easily seen that churches that disregard Christ by not remaining in His doctrine will give their consent to the enrollment of its members in institutions that practice resistance and oath (*eg. army, police, gendarmerie, security and protection, etc.*) as well as in obtaining rights through the use of means provided by the secular world. (*eg. obtaining rights through courts for various claims, such as: properties, land, litigations, etc.*)

Reality shows us that nowadays, many congregations belonging to various religious movements are/or have been engaged in lawsuits for their properties or rights, they have members in institutions that promote and practice resistance, thus disregarding the teachings of the Lord regarding non-resistance. Through these actions, they consent that their members should do the same when they have something to solve with their fellow men, thereby encouraging them to neglect the teachings of the Lord, which were given the image of Christ to take form in us.

The Body of Christ

Another sign by which we can note if the Church has Christ as its head are the teachings and practices of the body of Christ.

1. The Scattered Flock The congregation that disregards and does not practice the teaching of a tightly bound body, in which each member must have his God-given role for the spiritual benefit of others, is an assembly that has no head in Christ. (*Through Him the body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:16*)

In such congregations, God was set aside and was not allowed to form the body and put the limbs in it as He willed. (*Now, therefore, God put the members into the body, every single one according to His will. 1 Corinthians 12:18*)

In these congregations/gatherings, the phenomenon of the scattered flock is manifested, where there are many souls that no one cares about, to whom no one demands accountability, where obedience, rebuke and discipline are not practiced.

Thus, we can check: If the Church does not have a head in Christ, it will not watch, neither check if each member seeks the benefit of the other members, nor if they seek each other's benefit. (*Let no man seek his own, but every man another's benefit. 1 Corinthians 10:24*)

If the Church is alive, the members take care of each other. (*So that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another; and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. 1 Corinthians 12: 24*)

You can make a test in your church: If a limb suffers from a spiritual or physical disease, how many members will care for them? Nobody, one or two, or all the limbs?

If a member suffers, all members suffer with it.

A congregation without Christ as its head is structured and organized in such a way that it will require its members to only be present at worship 2-3 times a week. Thus, the vast majority of members only have the sole responsibility of consuming the religious programs.

Through this type of organization, members are not required to participate in the life of the body/family, namely *benefiting other members*, thus promoting self-love, where everyone is preoccupied with their personal concerns and interests.

2. Brotherly Obedience Another sign by which we can check whether the Church has Christ as its head is the acceptance and practice of the teachings regarding brotherly obedience. (*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Hebrews 13:17; Likewise, younger ones, be subject to the elders. 1 Peter 5:5*)

We can verify: If the Church belongs to Christ, the members live in obedience to Christ and to their spiritual parents. (*Obey one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:21*)

If the Church is of Christ, it will practice the punishment of those who out of pride do not submit to the elders. (*Matthew 18*) It is easy to note that where the phenomenon of scattered flocks is manifested, those in authority do not demand any obedience. (*Since obedience would have no purpose, it cannot be practiced*).

3. The Purity of the Church Another sign by which we can verify whether the Church has Christ as head are the teachings regarding the purity of the Church. The assembly that disregards and does not keep the teaching that says to watch that no person is worldly, will practically disregard Christ and His body. (*See that there is no fornicator or worldly person among you... Take care that no one deviates from the grace of God. Hebrews 12:16*) It can also be verified whether the command to rebuke and discipline are disregarded and if they are not put into practice. (*If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him... and if he will not listen to the Church, let him be as a pagan to you. Matthew 18:15*) Check if the Church you belong to promotes the teaching that says that in Christ's Church/Body there are both sons of light/wheat and sons of darkness/weeds.

Through this, the teaching of the Lord is disregarded. The teaching says that the sons of light cannot stand with the sons of darkness, and the very clear teaching which states that the weeds are sown on the field, which is in no way referring to the Church! (*For what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; The field is the world. Matthew 13:38*)

The fruit of this teaching is the tolerance of sin, the yeast that leavens the whole dough, causing the death of the entire flock. (*Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole lump of dough? 1 Corinthians 5:6*)

Questions:

If we belong to an assembly where the vast majority of members have the sole responsibility of consuming religious programs, let us ask ourselves:

– Is that how God ordained it to be? Did God ordained the Church to be just a settlement where members gather, where most are just consumers and have no active role or task?

Comment: _____

– Can we say we are born again/have life from above while being in a Church where the limbs are not tightly bound together? Can we have life in a congregation where brothers do not care/bear the burdens for each one another, thus not fulfilling the law of Christ? (*Galatians 6:2*)

Comment: _____

– Is God in any way involved in a place where His teachings are neglected and disregarded?

Comment: _____

– Can the body be alive if it does not receive commands from Christ?

Comment: _____

– If the assembly does not submit to Christ, can there be living limbs in that body?

Comment: _____

– Perhaps many of us will say that God has children of His in congregations that disregard Christ. Biblically, can such a statement be made?

Comment: _____

In order to check if your Church neglects and does not put into practice the teachings of the Lord, we will list some of them:

1. Do not resist the one who harms you... (*Matthew 5:39*)

2. Anyone that wants to sue you for your coat... (*Matthew 5:40*)

3. Carry each other's burdens. (*Galatians 6:2*)

4. Watch so that **no person among you is...** worldly. (*Hebrews 12:16*)

5. Beware **not to slander...** (*Matthew 18:10*) Have no connection with so-called brothers that... **slander.** (*1 Corinthians 5:11*)

6. The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. (*1 Corinthians 14:34-35*) I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. (*1 Timothy 2:12*)

7. But give to Caesar what is Caesar's. (*Luke 20:25*) By this commandment, verify whether undeclared work, software piracy, bribery, are allowed...

If you belong to a scattered flock that disregards God's teachings and tolerates the worldly, we urge you to examine yourself in the most serious way before God. (*Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise. Ephes. 5:15*)

Step 1. Check your life and start obeying everything God says, to not lose your soul (*To Him you shall listen in everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not listen to Him shall be utterly destroyed.* Acts 3:22-23)

Step 2. Pay attention to what God says and do not cling to those who ignore His teachings and who disregard the teachings of Christ. (*Anyone who goes forwards and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching to you, do not receive him into*

*your house and do not say to him "Welcome!"; for the one who tells him "Welcome!" **partakes in his evil acts.** 2 John 1:9-11.)*

Put your trust in God, who tells you that light cannot stand with darkness. *(Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or **what fellowship has light with darkness?** 2 Corinthians 6:14)*

Pay attention to God's warning and obey what He says: *„Come out from their midst and be separate, and **do not touch what is unclean, and I will welcome you,** and I will be a father to you, and **you shall be** sons and daughters of **Mine**”.* (2 Cor. 6:17)

Stop building with those who serve other gods as well! (Ezra 4:1-5)

Step 3. Fulfil the commandment: *„Flee from youthful lusts and **pursue** righteousness, faith, love and peace, **with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.**”* (2 Timothy 2:22) Look for people with a pure heart and God will get them in your way! *(He who asks, gets; he who seeks finds. Matthew 7:8; **Those who seek Me with all their heart will find Me.** Proverbs 8:17) The Lord is faithful and will do His part. (By no means will I leave you, neither will I abandon you. Hebrews 13:5)*

Flee from the scattered flock, do not seek gatherings with special programs, but seek the Body of Christ, which is tightly bound and joined together; where He is Lord and where His teachings are kept. Only in His Body can we pursue a healthy growth; here you are guarded by predatory wolves. *(From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies... Ephesians 4:16)*

By the same

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Perhaps until today you did not have, like many others, any involvement in the Church that you are a member of, and you were not aware that each member is put by God in the body for the use of others. (And to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of others. 1 Corinthians 12:7)

It probably seemed normal that only a small group of brothers are involved in the Church. Perhaps you found it natural that many who do not attend the services/meetings for months or even years, still remain on the list as members.

Today more than ever, in order not to be deceived, it is necessary that we carefully examine what the Word of God tells us about the place we must have in the Church of Christ.