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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at johnny@stoneharborchurch.org.

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,
Johnny

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

Date: Mar 14, 2010
 Series: The Church of God's Intention
 Part: Part 1 – What God Intends the Church to Be
 Section: The Church of Christ
 Topic: The Church
 Message Title: **The Church is the Church of Christ**
 Short Title: The Church of Christ
 Text: Various
 Key Words:

Message Outline

Series Setting
 The Church of God's Intention
 Part 1 What God Intends the Church to Be

The Church is the Church of Christ

- I. The Church is the **Result** of Christ's **Activity**
- II. The Church **Belongs** to Christ
- III. We are **Members** of the Church only in our **Relation** to Christ

Related Scripture

1. 1 Peter 2:1-9
2. 1 Cor 16:19-20
3. Romans 11
4. Mat 16
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. In what sense can it be said that our church is formed by the activity of Christ?
2. In what sense does our local church belong to Jesus?
3. In what ways are you related to Christ?
4. How does your relation to Christ impact your relationships with other members of our church?

Memory and Meditation Verse

...Jesus ... was asking His disciples, "**Who do people say that the Son of Man is? ...**" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus said to him, "**Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**" ¹⁸"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." From Mat 16:13-18 (NASB)

B. God Intends the Church to Be the Church of Christ

We have spent the last several weeks exploring how the church is the New People of God (NPOG) – that favored group of people at the time of Jesus who God first worked with and then through. We have seen that God has always had such a people – “the people of God” (POG). We have not done an exhaustive examination by any means but we have looked at some easy to see examples of the POG.

- First with Adam & Eve we saw the potentiality for the POG. Had Adam & Eve been the people of God's design and obedient to His mandate they would have born the POG who would have inhabited and extended the original garden-sanctuary of Eden filling the earth with people living in communion with God.
- Then with Noah we saw how God saved the POG associated with him through the flood and restarted His purposes with them.
- Then we looked at Abraham and saw that God unabashedly promised Him blessing and to bring blessing through his descendants even to all the families of the earth.
- Then we looked at those descendants as they came to be named Israel, the POG delivered by the hand of God using Moses as His point man. They would be His people and He would be their God. They would be to Him a nation of priests and kings. At least this is who God covenanted with them to be; a covenant which they broke, time and time again.
- King David stood out as the high point in Israel's history and Israel was most clearly Israel – Israel was most clearly the POG -- during David's reign as king of Israel.

At each point in history God has had a POG with one person serving as His chosen leader of that people. Jesus was that one man in His day. But He did not receive the torch and then stumble and fall as every torch bearer had done before. Jesus received the torch and ran the race victoriously. With Jesus as the point man of the POG we have a **new** thing going. For Jesus is not just another fallen man, He is the unique God-Man, i.e., unlike any other He is both God and man. He lived out in front of us what it means to be both God and man. He is perfect and without the sin that each of us has inherited from Adam. So when He takes the torch as the leader of the POG in His day we have an entirely **new** and improved POG. All the other leaders of the Old Testament (OT) POG in the past bore the torch of God's promises and ran their preliminary legs of the race with the limp of sin. Jesus received the torch and ran the final leg, without sin's limp, and into the grand arena to light the flame of judgment and salvation that still burns today.

They bore the torch of God's promise of restoration; He was the restoration itself. He is God Himself. He is in Himself the perfect expression of communion between God and man; and He established a **new** covenant between God and man. He gave each of us **new** life as **new** creations in Him. He is the groom to the bride of the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2) Thus we call the POG of Jesus day the **New** POG (NPOG). All those who are joined to Jesus by faith and by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit are members of this NPOG. This is the church of Christ that we are so very fortunate to be a part of. Because of the uniqueness and finality of Jesus, this is not another in the line of many expressions of the POG after which still another will come; rather it is the final expression because He is the final Lord and Christ. What sets the NPOG as distinct from the OT POG is their association with Jesus Christ. The church as the NPOG is so unique, final and special compared to all the other expressions of the POG because Jesus is so unique, final and special. He is not just another prophet, priest or King; He is THE final prophet priest

and King. He is God Himself and the church is the His Church – the church is the church of Christ. And the church is the church of Christ in every sense. First ...

2. The Church is the Result of Christ's Activity

The church is the church of Christ in the sense that it is the result of His creational, redemptive, gathering, serving, atoning, building, ruling... activity.

Just as we would say that the carved marble statue of David that still stands in Italy is the work of Michael Angelo; so we can say that the church is the work of Christ. No Michael Angelo, no masterful statue of David. No Christ. No church as we know it. It can be said of both Michael Angelo and Jesus Christ that they were the sources of, the points of origin of, the determiners of and the formers of their respective works.

Thus we begin our look at the church as the church of Christ in this sense.

Christ said to Peter, "...I will build My Church..." Mat 16:18b

Referring to Jesus as "the Word" in John 1:3, John says, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." This is expressly true of the original creation with Adam and his descendents; and it is also true of the new creation with Jesus and His church. The church is the church of Christ's building activity.

What did Christ do that resulted in the church of which all believers in Him are members?

a) In Regards to Individual Church Members

(6) Christ Redeemed Us from our Bondage to Sin

(a) Deliverance from Judgment

(i) As God delivered Israel...
by the Passover Lamb

(ii) So God delivered the church
by "...the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world..." (John 1:29)

(iii) But even more so...

The sacrifice of Jesus did not excuse the people of Israel from only one act of God's judgment leading to a physical deliverance from physical bondage but from God's final judgment leading to spiritual and eternal deliverance "once for all" from the bondage of sin and death. (Rom 6:10)

(7) Christ Reconciled Us to God

He did not just cut the rope of sin that bound us to death; he delivered us into the embrace of God – He reconciled us to God.

(a) “sons in the Son”

Kit has called Christians, “sons in the Son.” (Rom 6:11, 23; 1 Cor 15:22; **Gal 3:26**). We are ‘family’ to God.

(b) Bride of Christ

Increasing the intimate nature of the relationship Christ secured between God and His people even further, Paul pictures the church as the bride of Christ (Eph 5).

Jesus uses the same bride/groom imagery regarding Himself in relation to His church in the parable of Ten Virgins (Mat 25).

(c) Christ reconciled us to God

See Romans 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18; Col 1:22

(8) Christ's Spirit Has Regenerated Us**Paul regards the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Christ”**

[Romans 8:9](#) – “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you But if anyone does not have the **Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Him.” (see also Philip 1:19; Gal 4:6)

We see that the Holy Spirit/the Spirit of Christ is the agent of our regeneration (John 3:1-8; Rom 8:11; Titus 3:5).

Joined to Christ we are new creations. “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Cor 5:17).

We are indwelt by His Holy Spirit – [1 Corinthians 3:16](#) – “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (See also Rom 8:9, 11; 2 Tim 1:4; James 4:5)

(9) Christ's Spirit Transforms Us

[2 Corinthians 3:18](#) – “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

As we have noted several times in the past, God transforms those who are ‘in Christ’ via His Word and His Spirit. (See also John 17:17)

b) In Regards to the Corporate Church as Kingdom of God (KOG)

I have up until recently focused more on the individual aspect of each of our lives as Christians than on our corporate identity and what Christ has formed regarding the whole body of the redeemed. It is true that Christ has formed His church both individually and collectively. The church is called the body of Christ and Paul explains it in terms of the many parts of the human body. You can read his explanation of the church along those lines in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. We saw last week how we can see the church collectively as the temple of God with the individual stones being built alongside the apostles and the prophets to form the household of God (Eph 2).

Today I'd like us to see further in regards to the collective body that the Bible speaks of the church in **kingdom** language.

Somehow the church as the kingdom of God (KOG) has flown under the radar of my active thinking and has avoided creating much of a stir in how I regard God and my life with Him and His people. That is to say I have thought about my Christian life primarily outside of my thinking about the KOG.

But now as we are studying the church, the KOG keeps popping up saying, "If you want to understand the church, you've got to understand me (the KOG)." What I'm coming to see is that the church (the body of believers – those redeemed and regenerated and filled and transformed by His Spirit) can rightly be thought of as the kingdom of God. The church is the church of Christ, formed by His activity, but the church Christ formed takes the shape of the KOG.

Christ redeemed, reconciled, regenerated, filled and is transforming us by the power of His Spirit using the Word... **that we might live as subjects of His** and even those to whom He has delegated responsibility to rule with Him on behalf of God. We rightly call Him Lord in the highest sense of that word, acknowledging Him as our King.

Thinking of the church as the kingdom of God stretches me out of how I normally consider the church; but it only does so because I have been sloppy in my understanding of this important Biblical concept. It is becoming increasingly clear that the KOG is a concept that God has purposed from the beginning. Let's spend a little time understanding the **KOG** that we might better understand the church of Christ.

(6) The KOG

God, as Creator, is rightly regarded as the ultimate King. The creation account of Genesis 1-2 is clearly the account of His demonstrated power and authority as the sovereign king. He created man and delegated to Him the responsibility to rule over His creation.

"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Gen 1:28.

That divine mandate speaks to delegated dominion – the authority God gave man to rule on His behalf. Hence many people have used this term “vice-regent” to describe man’s position as ruler under God’s overarching and final authority.

This honored position was one, as you know, that mankind did NOT exercise according to God’s mandate and instead of ruling over everything according to the will of God, Adam and Eve effectively allowed Satan to rule advancing his rebellion against God by listening and following his lead instead of God’s (Gen 3). The result of this distortion of God’s mandate was that the status of man as vice-regents of God was damaged – sort of like a lame-duck president who has lost the confidence of the American people by violating the privilege of his office.

Adam and Eve did not exercise their delegated rule but rather abdicated it to Satan. Resultantly, the human office of vice-regency would need to be redeemed along with its intended holder should God restore what was damaged in the Fall.

Fortunately, restoration is exactly what God has brought about in Christ. He has redeemed not only us but He is also redeemed our office as His vice-regents. This, of course, is not because we are so good, but because He is so good and His purposes are so good and His ability to bring about His purposes is so perfect and unlimited and will not be thwarted. Because of God’s nature (all powerful) He brings about His purposes and His promises in spite of any lack. He brought forth the world out of nothing and He brings about His promises in spite of the failures of man.

We are somewhat like a man raised in a family of limited means who stumbles upon some family records indicating that he is actually heir to the throne of his country. Because of his find and his new awareness he starts seeing all around the house evidence of his royal lineage that he had never interpreted as that before. That design on the family silverware is actually the royal crest. Those initials on the cornerstone of the family house are the king’s initials. That old man with the beard in the family pictures who you never knew who it was – that is the king’s grandfather. I’m an heir to the kingdom! And the man who sits on the throne is not.

(7) Jesus as King

Let’s come out of my illustration back to Biblical reality and see how Jesus is the “former”/builder of the church which is one in the same as saying He is the “inaugurator” of the KOG.

- Jesus was born into the ROYAL line of King David who Himself had been promised by God that one of His descendants would sit on his throne forever (2 Sam 7)

- John the Baptist, Jesus' herald, preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mat 3:2
- Jesus began His preaching ministry with, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" (Mat 4:17)
 - The Gospel of Mark records Jesus saying, "...**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.**" Mark 1:15
- Jesus (the Last Adam) clearly demonstrated His kingly authority over the very same Satan who the first Adam had not ruled over but submitted to. How did Jesus demonstrate His kingly authority?
 - By effectively resisting Satan's direct challenge via his temptations in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13)
 - And by effectively commanding Satan's unclean spirits (Mark 1:23-27; 3:30; 5:2, 8; 7:24-30; 9:17-29) and demons (Mat 12:28; Mark 1:32-34, 39; 3:14-15, 22-27; 5:1-18; 6:13*; 9:38) out of those they had possessed.
 - * Jesus' disciples who He sent out had this same delegated authority.
 - And by standing against Satan's influence over the Jewish religious leaders who did not recognize Him as King. See Mark 10; John 8:44. The three time testing of Jesus by the religious leaders is seen by Alexander as echoing Satan's three temptations in Mark 1: Mark 8:11; 10:2; 12:15.
 - And by standing against Satan's influence that he exerted even over Jesus' own disciples. Remember when Peter pushed back against Jesus when He disclosed that His plan included His suffering and death. Jesus responded sternly to Peter: "**Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.**"
- D.G. McCartney: "When Jesus as man, empowered by the Spirit, exercises authority over the demons, the proper vice regency of man under God is restored. Jesus did what Adam should have done; he cast the serpent out of the garden." (As cited by Alexander on pp. 112-113)

Lest we think that Jesus is not currently reigning, let us remember where He is and who He has sent.

- He has ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. (Acts 1; 1 Peter 3:22)
- He has sent His Holy Spirit clearly indicating His authority to delegate the very power of God. (Acts 2; John 15:26; cf. 14:26)

The KOG is an everywhere present concept in the Bible and Jesus is seen as the reigning King. What does that say of you and me, everyday church members?

(8) Christians as Vice-Regents Under the King**(a) God intended mankind to be His vice-regents**

See above. Remember: God purposed and created mankind in His image and likeness that He might dwell with them in intimate communion and that they might rule over the rest of creation (Gen 1:28) on His behalf bringing Him glory as they make Him known.

(b) But mankind lost that office in the Fall

See Genesis 3

(c) BUT Jesus has taken it back and become the King of the KOG

(i) God had promised the reversal of the curse associated with the Fall (Gen 3:15) and told us we could expect that restoration to come through the seed of the woman.

(ii) God had promised Abraham that through one of His descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3)

(iii) God had promised King David, himself a son of Abraham, that one of his royal descendants would sit on the throne of his kingdom forever! (2 Sam 7)

(iv) Scriptures clearly announce Jesus to be this Seed of the woman, Son of Abraham, and royal Son of David.

(v) Jesus the King has engaged Satan in conflict and has dealt him a fatal blow!

- Battle of Desert Temptations – Victory for Jesus!
- Battles of Jesus Ministry – Victory for Jesus!
- Battle of the Cross – Apparent victory for Satan. But what actually happened there? Atonement was accomplished for all God would call His own. What is atonement but the reestablishment of the life of man as God had intended him to enjoy it. God allowed the death of Jesus to restore our brokenness and bring us out of the bondage of death into true life – life according to God. The cost of the battle was terribly high, but even here the victory goes to Christ for He ransomed the POG.
- Battle of the Grave – Victory Jesus!

- What is Christ's Ascension but the enthronement of God's Vice-Regent!
- What is Pentecost but the extension of that vice-regency to the subjects of the KOG, those who comprise Christ's Church.

(d) As new creations in Christ we are restored in our persons and in our office

As we are joined to Jesus by faith and His indwelling Spirit and given new life (2 Cor 5:17) in Him not only are we redeemed, reconciled, regenerated personally for the value added to us of our own salvation but we are **so that** we would be God's vice-regents according to God's original plan.

Heb 2:5ff

Kit has called those who are in Christ, "sons in the Son;" I think we could rightly similarly see ourselves as, "kings in the King?"

What is our kingly function? It was expressed in Gen 1:28 in the mandate from the King of Kings (God) to be fruitful and multiply and fill and subdue and rule... It is implicit in God's promise to Abraham (from whom kings would come) to mediate God's blessing to all the families of the earth. Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests. Peter called the members of the church a "royal priesthood." Jesus called the church to be His witnesses. So our kingly function involves bringing the knowledge of God to all of creation. We are not bearers of sterile facts about our God; rather we speak words of introduction that people might know for themselves the God who has come to us in Christ Jesus.

More, we are bearers of His image and His Spirit that as we love in His name we bring Christ Himself to those we love.

As we bring our transformed selves living out what He has worked into us we bring His light and His life to the illumine and enliven those who are apart from Christ rightly seen as dead men walking in darkness.

I stand convinced that the blessing God has for us and the global community of the redeemed in Christ is the blessing of knowing and being known by Him, i.e., being in communion with Him according to His original purposes for us. That is the blessing we are to bring to the world as sons of Abraham and kings in the King.

If we are to understand and then be the church of God's intentions we must see it as the church of Christ. And particularly in line of our discussion today we must see it as the

Church He has formed according to His Father's design – and that is the Kingdom of God.

God the Father is the ultimate king of the KOG. Jesus is His Vice-Regent. And redeemed by Him and joined to Him and regenerated and empowered by His Spirit we, as members of His church, are vice-regents with Him – we are kings in the King.

That this is true does not assure that we are living out this reality in our lives. In fact, as I have shared, this kingdom reality has been more of an interesting sidebar than a major part of my reality even as a long time believer. If we are to integrate this as a practical part of our lives we will need to own it as true and then wrestle with the truth until it shows us what impact it should have in our lives.

Personally as I've wrestled with this kingdom truth I've gotten a peak at a few points of application.

1. The first I call **the boss/assistant reality**. I have both been and had an assistant in the course of my ministry career. And this I know about that. For an assistant to be a good assistant to the boss he or she must know the boss very well. An assistant can represent the boss only as well as they know the boss. Further an assistant will represent the boss only as much as they submit their will to the boss's will. Likewise we must know our God very well if we are to represent Him as His vice-regents properly to the world. You don't get to know someone without working with that person over a period of years. We don't really get to know God until we have walked with Him for several years and when the boss is God the assistant will never get to the end of their understanding. This calls for that action of life-long careful learning of God in His Word. And further it calls for daily submission to His will. The hurdles to get over are ignorance of our God and our inclination to ignore Him in our preoccupation with ourselves.
2. The second I just call **being who Christ has redeemed and formed us to be**. If He has redeemed us to be vice-regents with Him in the KOG then that is what we must be. This ruling of creation has got to call us to more than just not kicking our dog and watering our garden. God's foremost concern is for the men and women who He is still calling/gathering into His church, into His kingdom. If we are to be the vice-regents He has redeemed us to be we will be representing Him to the people who do not know Him! They are all around us: in our families, on our job sites, those we recreate with, and those from whom we buy the goods and service that keep us going. **Cultivate genuine care for them**. The "procedure of the king" would have us exercise our vice-regency for our good looking at each of the people in our spheres of influence as people who can add value to our lives. We must get over the hurdle of our own selfishness and develop the Christ-like servant mindset that sees the lost and weeps wanting for them the intimate communion we have and even more than the mindset the faith that acts in sacrificial love that those in darkness may see the light of this gospel of Christ. We can't pass them by on the road; we must stop and muck up our day so that we can make their day and God's as well. My hope is that having been equipped here we would genuinely care there.

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