



I Have No Plan B!

A beautiful old legend tells of how Jesus, after his Ascension into Heaven, was surrounded by the Holy Angels who began to inquire about His work on earth. Jesus told them about His birth, life, preaching, death and resurrection, and how He had accomplished the salvation of the world.

Then, the angel Gabriel spoke:

"Master, you suffered terribly down there. Do they know and appreciate the extent of your sacrifice?"

"No," said Jesus. "Not yet. Right now only a handful of people in Palestine know."

"Then what have you done to let everyone else know?" asked Gabriel.

"I've asked Peter, James, and John, and a few others to spread the news. They will tell others who will tell others until the message spreads to the ends of the earth."

Gabriel was astonished, "But what if they forget what you taught them, or they are afraid or even tired, what is Plan B? You have made other arrangements, right?"

"I have no Plan B," replied Christ. "There is no alternative strategy. I'm counting on them."

Twenty centuries later, He still has no other plan. He's counting on you and me, on His followers, on His Church! The proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ relies upon His Church.

How do you feel knowing that God is counting on you to finish the work of proclaiming the Good News about Jesus Christ? Take this moment to share your feelings with those around you!

2' Countdown

The proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ relies upon His Church. It may be seen as a scary, frightening plan through Gabriel's eyes or even through our own eyes. However, Jesus is sure of the triumph of His Plan, of His Church. He said:

"I can guarantee that on this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not overpower it." Matthew 16:18 GW.

The church is the property of God and she will accomplish her task of sharing the Gospel Message. Jesus has made a very important promise. He has promised us that when the Good News reaches the four corners of the earth, then we are going to our eternal home!

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14 NASB

I want to cross the finishing line as soon as possible! I don't want to deal with bad news anymore. I'm sick and tired of tears, pain and death! I want, right now, my eternal home, my spot in the place that Jesus has prepared for me in the New Jerusalem! As I was preparing this message, I was mourning the passing of my grandfather, less than one week ago. Every time I have to say goodbye to someone that I love, the desire grows in me to see the Good News about Jesus Christ reaching the whole world.

It's time for the Church of God to embrace her mission more than ever before. It's time to accomplish the task. It's time to put aside anything that is holding us back and move forward to our final destination! It's time to go home! It's time for the church to be the church!

For this reason, for this coming year, we have decided to embrace, to study, to learn, to explore, to live out what it means to be the Church, the Church that God had in mind. When He designed the Salvation Plan, He decided to involve human beings in the proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ.

Our main goal for this year is to Be the Church, to Be the Church that God has dreamed of, to Be the Church, loving and serving God, loving and serving the people around us.

Our starting point is with the understanding about what church is. Let me ask you, what is the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word Church? Share your answer with those around you!

1' Countdown

So, what is the Church? In his book, Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Times, the Canadian educator Laurence J. Peter wrote, "If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else" (p. 125). If we don't know exactly what the church is, we may end up with something else. So, what is the Church?

In our first building block of the year "Be the Church", our goal for the next few weeks is to define what church is. With all due respect, the definition of church that I'm looking for is NOT based on your ideas or thoughts, or even on mine, but based on God's blueprint for the Church.

The work of defining words and concepts is not an easy job. What I can tell you is that as we try to define something, we are saying what it is - and what it is not. "Description implies differentiation. The concepts we use require contrast. Nothing, except God, can exist without a context. To define, to "split," necessitates a negation; saying what the object is not in order to say what it is. To define we must distinguish; we must divide the object from its context, indicating what it is by what it is not."¹

In order to define church, for the next few weeks, we'll study what church is not about in the series "Breakthrough". You may ask, why is a series trying to define what church is called "Breakthrough"? The simple reason is that our vision about what church is may crush before what the Bible has to say about church! I will be bold enough to say that your paradigms about church will fall and shall crack before the light of the Word of God. At least my ideas and thoughts are falling apart before what the Bible has to say about church.

So, let's start! The first concept that must collapse is that church is a building. Many people today understand the church as a building. This is not a biblical understanding of the church. In the New Testament, the Greek word usually translated into English with the word "church" is the word **ἐκκλησία** [ekklēsia]. "The word **ἐκκλησία** [ekklēsia] turns up 114 times in the New Testament and over half of these occur in Paul (sixty-two instances)."² **ἐκκλησία** [ekklēsia] never has reference to a building, as the word "church" so often does in English.³ For instance, let's read 3 Bible verses (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19 and Acts 8:3) where the word **ἐκκλησία** [ekklēsia], "church" appears. Read the bible verses with those who are around you. Keep in mind that every time you see the word church in these bible verses, you have the word **ἐκκλησία** [ekklēsia]. See if you can apply the concept of a building in the places where the word church appears.

3' Countdown

These 3 verses are only a sample of hundreds of verses that present the ekklēsia, the church as other than a building. If the church is not a building, what is church? What is this ekklēsia? Well,

¹ Gusfield J. Burke K. On Symbols and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1989. Introduction.

² Peter T. O'Brien, Colossians, Philemon, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1982), 58.

³ Francis D. Nichol, ed., The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6 (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 760.

the word *ekklēsia* is a compound of two segments: *ek*, a preposition meaning "out of," and a verb, *kaleo*, signifying "to call". The compound verb means "to call out from." In classical Greek *ekklēsia* (**ἐκκλησία**) referred to an assembly of the citizens summoned by the town crier.⁴ Throughout the Greek world and right down to New Testament times (cf. Acts 19:39), *ekklesia* was the designation of the regular assembly of the whole body of citizens in a free city-state, "called out" by the herald for the discussion and decision of public business.⁵ We could say that God's *ecclesia*, it is not a building, but people, the assembly, the congregation, the gathered followers of Jesus Christ who have been called from the world into a relationship with Christ and one another. We Don't Go to Church. We ARE the Church. We Are the Church that God gave His only Son to die for!

The Apostle Paul in his last words to the leaders of the *ekklēsia*, the church in Ephesus said, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church (*ekklēsia*) of God which He purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:28 NASB

Christ did not die for a building. He shed His blood for people. Jesus surrendered His life not for your own ideas or thoughts about church or how church is supposed to look, but the passion of Christ was for building His own Church! So, let's love people! Let's care for our brothers and sisters in Christ. By love, let's call people out of darkness into God's wonderful light. Let's Be The Church - Loving and Serving.

⁴ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 21 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 27.

⁵ Lambert, J. C. 1929. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. James Orr, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 651.