

MEGASHIFT

OR

MEGAHYPE

?

By Shaun Kearney

**GOD MOVED MAN MOVED IN GOD QUIT
HAS THERE EVER BEEN A VISITATION YET
THAT MEN HAVEN'T HIGHJACKED?**

Much “ado” about nothing?

A move away from big gatherings in church buildings to homes has been experiencing exponential growth worldwide. A lot of discussion is going on presently over the airwaves about a “Megashift” that’s taking place in Christianity. Great store is being placed on relocating to homes. If we are to accept the reports coming out of America about the miraculous consequences of this shift, it seems that all we need to do to be “in the swim”, is to lock up the church and throw away the key, and get real. House church movement leaders in America are telling us that our Christianity needs to be “upgraded” from its present unscriptural model to something more biblical. We are being encouraged to “download” the New Testament model where they met in homes, so that we can begin to experience the same miraculous vitality and growth that they enjoyed. It sounds great, and this swing towards gathering in homes is definitely appealing, and I hasten to add that it has much to commend it.

Frank Viola “Pagan Christianity” and Jim Rutz “The Open Church” and “1700 years is too long?” along with others have themselves into the forefront of this new movement via their writings. Jim suggests that Christians need to get off the bench and onto the playing field. It only stands to reason says Jim that we would score more points, if we had more players on the field. His reports about the dead being raised, and multitudes being added to Christ daily certainly gets our attention. A question for those leading the charge to consider would be, was the congregation in apostolic times a cause, or an effect?

It is not the intention of this treatise to offend; there would be no point in that, but rather to get some truth out there; then take courage to have a good look at it; and then decide for yourself. We applaud the move away from present stifling religious systems, but we don’t want to jump out of the frying pan into the fire, do we?

Have we got off on the wrong foot?

Aren’t we getting the cart before the house when we rush ahead and expect Him to bless our efforts, while we fail to do what He has told us to do, which is to *wait* on Him. After all, He is the Lord of the harvest, and if He owns the field; and the seed is His shouldn’t His servants be waiting on Him to **thrust** them into His field? Proverbs 8:34.

For a financial consideration, Jim had a training course for house church planters available on line, (it’s probably gone belly-up by now) with a live-in centre available for those who are more serious about becoming house church “leaders”.

The Master referred to the religious in His day as “blind leaders, leading blind followers”, is it any different today? When dissatisfaction with the underperformance of their attempts to revive the church set in, they quickly give way to another round of solutions. Ambitious optimists abound. There is little doubt that most efforts to stimulate Christianity come from individuals whose motives are questionable. But despite how logical a remedy may appear, does that make it right? Unwise counsel can come from godly people, and for this reason we are warned not to rely upon our rational, or anyone else’s for that matter. Adam and Eve went down that path and look where that has got us. Psalm 1:1.

Abraham Lincoln was right when he said, “we are in grave danger of accepting change for progress, and knowledge for wisdom”.

In recent years we have experienced the Shepherding movement; Toronto blessing; the Pensacola Revival; Rodney Howard Brown; and the seeker friendly people. Added to this we have the coalition of Apostles and Prophets blowing their trumpets. And we shouldn’t forget “The purpose Driven

Christians”. The common denominator is that all promised to fill our churches to overflowing with new converts.

Things to consider before we take the plunge.

John 14:21 “He who *has* my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him”.

To a large measure leaders in the modern church have not taught their people to take God’s commands very seriously. Furthermore a further problem needs to be addressed, “you can’t keep what you haven’t got”. Firstly, you must have His commandments before you can keep them. Herein lies the biggest problem, because the church is being led by spiritual ignoramuses; men that don’t know the living Word. ‘Ignoramus’ is *Latin* for someone lacking for the want of knowledge. In Law he is never taken seriously, therefore he is to be ignored.

The tragedy of the 21st century church life is its easygoing complacency. Too few of its prominent people are deep thinkers with deep convictions. The fashionable, popular approach for most of them is, “go with the flow”. But Christ has called us to a distinct life, one of personal love and loyalty to Him. It calls for sacrifice and service to others. It demands truth in the inward parts. The only possible way in which Christ can ever truly command our attention is for us to have a living encounter with Him day by day in the secret sanctuary of our souls. He has never changed that, over the thousands of years that He has communed with man.

Peter says, “Be sober” for the end of all things is at hand; as apposed to being under the influence. A mark of sobriety is to see things in right perspective; to keep ones feet on the ground and not be swept away by unrestrained enthusiasm. We need to be circumspect as many fads in recent years have seduced the church. 1 Peter 4:7. Many of our efforts have been *reactionary* rather than *revelatory*. The Lord God never reacts, He initiates.

The present leaders of the House Church movement are flat out building carts to bring the Ark back. Uzzah placed his hands upon the Ark to steady it, but leaders nowadays insist on driving it as well? 2 Samuel 6:3-7.

Ecclesiastes 1:9. “That which has been is that which shall be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun”. He speaks of times and seasons, and things done in them, which although long gone will come around again.

BRINGING BACK THE ARK

Let’s take a journey back to the **future** and see what we can learn from an incident in the life of a King who was jealous for God.

1 Corinthians 10:11 People who ignore history eventually find themselves repeating it. The history of Israel after the deaths of Moses and Joshua was a very sordid one indeed. If Israel had continued what Joshua commenced when they first entered the land all would have been well, but flesh can never be trusted, and so the book of Judges is a distressful story of failure. Repeatedly Israel turned their back on Jehovah to worship idols, and just as frequently He delivered them into the hands of their enemies.

The book of Judges not only tells of **repeated** failures but it also records several spiritual revivals in the mercy of God. From time to time men of faith were raised up such as Gideon, but sadly they were very few and far between. Under King David came the greatest revival of all to that point in time. Everything was in ruins when Jehovah took him from the sheepfolds and made him King over His

people. The priesthood was corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. The king of the peoples choice, Saul, had been slain and excellent Jonathan with him.

In David at Mount Zion He gave Israel a new start in grace and favour. At last the Ark was back in Jerusalem among God's people. It was a time of great joy and prosperity. However the effects of this like every other revival in history were only **temporary and purely transient**.

Many religious organizations are haemorrhaging. This has given rise to Mega-Churches driven by leaders that provide spiritual entertainment to draw the disenfranchised into their fold, but nothing of human origin lasts very long. Eventually these new churches will wane as time for them runs out. We are entering into an era of unusual shaking that's undeniable. God is shaking every earthly establishment. The social, political, financial, and spiritual are receiving overdue attention. He is shaking everything that can be shaken, and only those things that cannot be shaken will remain. Every man's work shall be tried to see what sort it is. Whether it's shallow and combustible, like wood, hay or stubble, or whether it is durable, fashioned in God's crucible as is gold and precious stones. His Kingdom is an unshakable one, and so it behoves each of us to press into it, and then live by its principles and not by carnal reasoning. Haggai 2:6; Hebrews 12:22, 25-29.

The account of King David's attempts to bring back the Ark to Jerusalem is found in 1 Chron 15: 22-28. This incident affords us a remarkable opportunity to observe how the priests failed to seek the Lord after the due order, but presumptuously went ahead and did their own thing. Heb 12: 2-29. How prepared are we to lay aside our ways, (which have only produced fruit that quickly dried up, and in true humility sought God that He might teach us His ways, thereby saving us all a lot of embarrassment and money. Or are we going to get more egg on our face.

1 Corinthians 10:11.

“And all these things happened to them as examples, and it is written for our warning on whom the ends of the world have come”.

Let us see what instruction we can receive as we follow the account of this remarkable incident in the lives of God's people long ago.

Israel had lived for **many days** without the Ark of the Lord in their midst. The Philistines had taken it captive years earlier. Eventually, after enduring severe pestilence the Philistines began to wonder if the Ark was responsible for their chastisement. Taking counsel together they decided to return it to Israel. For this purpose they built a new cart and placed the Ark upon it. Then they hitched it to two cows that miraculously left their newborn calves and carried it to Bethshemesh. It remained there until God slew 5,070 men for looking inside it. Immediately they sent the Ark to their brethren in Kirjathjearim where it stayed until David sought to bring it up to Jerusalem.

It had been 70 years (a lifetime) since the enemies of God's people took the Ark captive, and apart from one occasion it had been ignored and neglected by Israel. (1 Samuel 14:18)

Eventually the Ark was found in a most unlikely place, as is often the case. Psalm 132:6. There were good reasons for it being taken captive many years earlier. But it seems amazing that they waited so long, and then when they wanted to bring it back they had to institute a search to find it. King David, a man after God's own heart became so obsessed with the prospect of the Ark being back among his people that he uttered a prayer that he would not rest until he built a habitation that God could take pleasure in. So David arose and prepared a place for the Ark in Jerusalem and then went with a great company comprising of 30,000 chosen men to Kirjathjearim to fetch it.

There was great joy initially as Israel transported the Ark but that was about to change. Israel's decision to copy the penitent Philistines form of transport was unacceptable to God. They could not plead ignorance in regards to these matters. “To whom much is given much is required”. They were in

violation of Divine law and so He judged them accordingly. They ignored the “word” as to how it should be transported, but put it on a new cart while the priests walked beside it instead of carrying it upon their shoulders. For this a good man died. 1 Samuel 6:7. Ignorance is not bliss.

As David and all the house of Israel were dancing and playing before the Lord on instruments of wood, with lyres and harps, tambourines and cymbals, they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, where Uzzah reached out to steady the ark of God because the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah. And God struck him down for this trespass, and he died there by the ark of God.

It **displeased** David greatly that the Lord had broken forth upon Uzzah. And David was **afraid** of the Lord that day and said, “**How shall the ark of the Lord come to me**”? What a pity they hadn't asked that question before they presumptuously went ahead and made **their** plans. Joshua was found guilty of that same sin with disastrous consequences when he went up against Ai after destroying Jericho. Here Judah under David makes the same mistake. They should have **inquired** of the Lord. Now David was not so anxious to bring the ark to Zion, so he carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, where it stayed for three months and while it was there the Lord blessed Obed-edom and his entire household.

It was told to king David that the Lord was blessing Obededom, and all that belonged to him, because of the ark of God. This prompted David to make another attempt to bring up the Ark from the house of Obed-edom into the city of Zion.

David desperately wanted to have the Lord's presence and power back among his people. As with David so it is with us; how all-true hearts long for this. But it will never happen until we take Christ and His commands seriously. And so it was that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, David sacrificed oxen and fatlings. How far Obed-edom's house was from Jerusalem I don't exactly know, but many sacrifices were made on route.

We need to think carefully about what David was about to do. Where are the checks and balances to be found that all of us so desperately need personally and collectively in our gatherings? Changing where and how we meet will accomplish pathetically little, except perhaps to stroke the ego of those who are blowing loudly on their trumpets about it. How can you know what's in the heart of another brother or sister? You can't, it's that simple; you absolutely can't.

Solutions designed by religious Gurus won't suffice. In addition we suffer the “Herd syndrome”, stampeding in before we look. Mary at Cana said, “Whatever He says unto you do that,” (and nothing else). We rely too heavily upon religious mediums, who promote programs for us that we are told will cure our impotence.

Some people on the cutting edge are asking for our money via the Internet even as I write. I replied to an email from a prominent individual, he was soliciting money to publish a new book he had written. I suggested that he does as the word instructs us all to do; “Let your request be made known unto God”. Phil 4:7. Within hours I received a very angry reply.

In a few easy lessons they will teach you how to start a house church, or if you can afford the time and money you can go to a training centre and learn to become a house church leader. Since when was church planting a task we were called to take on board? I thought it was an effect not a cause. Paul preached the Kingdom of God and as a result people were saved and fellowships born.

Let's pick up the story again from 1 Chron 15:1 - 29.

In this account the reasons for Uzzah's death are given. And in detail we can see what David must do if he wants to have the presence of God in their midst once more.

And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said **none** ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them **hath the Lord chosen** to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord unto his place, which he had prepared for it. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites:

“And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, And said unto them, You chiefs of the fathers of the Levites: **sanctify yourselves, both you and your brethren**, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it” 1 Chron 15:11-15.

For **because you did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us**. Yes! That's why Uzzah died. The priests were slack and derelict in their duties. Why those claiming to be leaders continue to fail to seek the Lord remains a great mystery to me. The Psalmist said, Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord, let us lift up our hearts with our hands?

David laid the blame for this calamity squarely upon the religious leaders. They had failed twice, they had not resorted to the Law of Moses; they had **not** sanctified themselves, the last the most serious of all. Now David **demand**ed that they **sanctify themselves** to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. So the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord.

And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music psalteries harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. Vs 17-24.

After this manner they went to bring the Ark to Zion. Vs 25-29. So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obededom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, **that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams**.

WE CANNOT IGNORE THE ALTAR

“We have an altar where those who served in the tabernacle have no right to eat.” Hebrews 13:4-7 we **have** an Altar; not we should have one, but that we do. This proclamation is so suggestive and meaningful that it demands our full attention.

Do we who live under the new covenant have an altar that we are required to come to? The answer is “Yes”. If that is the case, where is this altar and what is required of us as we approach it? To better understand what Paul was saying we don't need to look very far to see what happens when someone neglects his personal altar.

The leader of a Christian Political party in the news recently appeared in court charged with sexual offences. In the dock he collapsed in a flood of tears. For 13 years he fronted as a morally conservative Christian. He was also a prosecutor for the police in abuse cases. His sinful behaviour was a terrible

tragedy for all concerned. For the victims it is incalculable; something that will haunt them to their graves. For the family of the offender the humiliation and damage is almost irreparable. For the perpetrator of the crime, the shame and condemnation must be unbearable. Then there is the witness of Christianity, because open sin gives great opportunity for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

Sadly this kind of behaviour is not an isolated case but has been repeated with regularity for years, and it is probably only the tip of the iceberg. If so many leaders are failing, where can those in their pews go to find help?

A major reason for these catastrophes is the absence of checks and balances. We should come to His Table often, but if we approach it contrary to the manner Paul instructed, we run the risk of chastisement. It is a meal with consequences. It is not possible to know with absolute certainty the heart of another with whom we fellowship, only God and that individual knows that. Even in apparently successful marriages one partner can be deceiving the other, and so the apostolic rule applies to all. "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat".

A personal question please. "Do you have an Altar"? You may think, "I'm not sure that I understand what you mean". I'm talking about the most important aspect of our lives, our relationships.

The altar speaks of repentance and faith. It points to the great benefits that have come to us by way of Christ's sacrifice.

Psalm 103: "Forget not all his benefits, bless the Lord Oh my soul". Every benefit I have ever received and now, enjoy came to me by way of the Altar.

Every benefit we can ever hope to profit by will come by way of the Altar. If it comes by another way it will eventually harm us.

When Israel lived around the Altar they were times of peace and prosperity. Sadly these blessed times were few and far between because they failed so miserably in this regard. When the Altars were neglected or fell into disrepair, the Lord raised enemies up to chastise them severely, and rule over them with cruelty.

THE ALTAR, THE SACRIFICE AND THE TABLE

God has left us in no doubt as to what the nature of our relationship with Him is about when He said in Psalm 50:1, "gather my people together, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Sacrifice is central to everything we have and all we do. We approach God through the sacrifice of His Son; all business with God is transacted around this holy theme. This is the only method of approach that's acceptable to God.

Every offering pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The lives of the patriarchs of Israel revolved around the altar of sacrifice. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, and David, all these men, raised up Altars under varying circumstances. They turned times of tragic sorrow, or great joy; of victory or defeat into opportunities for raising an altar. When they sinned or had been overcome they always returned to the altar. These men were always raising altars. And we should do likewise, for we too have an altar. Some offerings were **compulsory** (sin and trespass). Others were **voluntary**, (peace and burnt) Heb 13:15-16. "With the latter God is well pleased, for gratitude is the most unfelt of **all** human emotions.

Hebrews 13:10

“We have an altar, where they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle.” An altar stood for the benefits of the sacrifices. In Christianity, as well as being a place to meet with God it stands for the benefits of the death of Christ. Paul also goes on to compare the sacrifice of animals to that of Christ. The animals being burnt without the camp, typifies Christ being crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem. From Moses time careful instructions were given for the raising of private altars. It was not just ceremonial; it was **central** to everything.

The whole nation camped around the tabernacle where the Brazen Altar at the gate and the Altar of incense before the veil guarded progress to the presence of Jehovah. Today the Mosaic ritual has been superseded, that is except for that which the altar symbolizes. The essential element the altar represented has remained.

When they built an altar what did it mean?

At the altar they “got back (returned) to God.” Isaiah 30: As they watched fire devour the sacrifice “they thought about what they were doing”- and why they *had* to do it! They were slaying the sacrifice for the readjustment of spiritual things in their lives; to make a new beginning; to be reconciled because of their iniquity; to worship Him for making reconciliation possible. It was made of common old earth and stones. Just bread and wine is all it takes. But the symbolism is mightily powerful.

It speaks of the availability of God to whomever, wherever, whenever.

Neither race nor creed nor station in life could deny any man. What the altar speaks of, points to the covenant memorial feast of the Lord’s Supper.

It is a meeting place between God and man.

It expresses our unshakable belief in God.

It is an admission of our daily need for God.

It is a place where God listens and answers the human heart in its great need. You don’t have to come. You can chose to make your own decision about that, but one thing you cannot do, is chose the consequences of your decision.

It shows when we come to Him of our desire for Him.

It demonstrates our submission to God.

It is where we find Him from whom we draw our strength.

They were sustained as long as they ate of the offering. It typified the atonement through Jesus Christ and the remembrance feast that He instituted with two elements, bread and wine John 6:53-58. In every case where the altar was restored there was advancement. And everywhere that there was advancement and progress the presence of an altar was found. One of the first signs of revival was the repairing of altars and erecting new ones. When the altars were used they were times of prosperity, 1 Corinthians 10:11. Any blessing, any prosperity even though it comes from God and was intended for me, (and God most certainly does want to bless us) that does not lead me to erect an altar of acknowledgement and thanksgiving will eventually harm me.

We find no record of Lot ever building an altar, why? Because the altar speaks of submission and sacrifice, and so God separated Abraham from Lot. Just as God gave strict instructions for the building of altars, so too has He given **stern guidelines** in regard to how we must approach ‘this table’ of examination and remembrance. When Adam and Eve sinned God banished them from the Garden. Then, lest they also put forth their hand and take and eat of the tree of life and live forever in their sinful state, He placed Cherubim by a flaming sword to protect the way to the tree of life.

There is a way of approach to the place where we remember with thankful hearts His atoning sacrifice. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, and hath not

lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully”. So also must we approach the Lord’s Table? We come to examine ourselves, to settle accounts with God and with one another. It is here, that by confession and forgiveness we are readjusted, and find grace to help in times of need. It is here our souls are refreshed. The consequences are not just negative, but positively glorious, strengthening and healing, so that we with the psalmist can say, “you have prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies; you have anointed my head with oil; my cup runs over”.

Think of those words, **“in the presence of my enemies.” It’s a table for “me”, where “my” cup runs over.** Every critic has been silenced here, and not only dumbfounded, but defeated also. It’s the place of healing, miracles, and restoration.

GOD’S FOOD

Leviticus 21:6 “Present the offerings made to the Lord by fire, the food of their God.” Here God identified the offerings of the priests as His food, not that God needed actual meat and grain to eat, but it pointed to His claim on the sacrifice. The satisfaction He sought ascended to Him through the obedience of prescribed worship laid down in the Tabernacle sacrifices. He wanted worship. As often as His people expected to eat, God expected His portion of the sacrifice. If this is what He requested under the “Shadow of better things to come”, how much more He desires it from us this side of the cross. Picture if you will the priest taking the sacrifice and slaying it. Then he divides it according to God’s command to Moses. As it burned with fire, ascending as a sweet smelling savour the Lord consumes his portion. The priests’ portion is roasted upon the altar and then consumed. Thus God is satisfied and the priesthood is sustained by the same sacrifice. All the work at the altar pictured God’s work in Christ. The implied message is clear; God wants to be richly rewarded with worship. It is like food to Him. He wants it lovingly prepared; constantly remembered; generously and gratefully offered. Nothing but Christ satisfies Him.

We also must feed on Him.

John 6: 53, 63. “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you, for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. It’s the spirit that comes alive, the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak to you are spirit and life”.

Since the cross no better food than Christ can be found for God’s servants because He is the essential ingredient that makes true worship possible. Those who commune with God know the value of Jesus flesh and blood. Sadly we so often offer Him a plate filled with things He never ordered, such as a sermon and song service where no table is present. Adulterated food will not do for God. What the Father seeks are people that are consumed with loving gratitude for the Son of His love that offered Himself by the Eternal Spirit unto God for our salvation.

1 John 1:3. “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”.

Real fellowship implies much more than sharing our lives with each another. Our fellowship is also with the Father and the Son. ***It must include them in fact.*** How can this become a reality in our lives? It has been made possible through the Father’s unspeakable gift to us, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, memorialised often with bread and wine by grateful saints. Fellowship that does not include the Father and His Son misses the mark. “True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” John 4: 23.

Old Testament saints understood sacrifice was central to worship, and it is wrong to assume that Christian worship is any different. Although our Lord Jesus made one final sacrifice for sins never to be repeated, we are to offer what Peter calls spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ Jesus. We do this when our whole attention is focused upon God's unspeakable gift around the table with two elements, bread and wine, as we are lost in wonder, love and praise. "By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" Heb 13:15.

Back to the Ark 1 Chronicles 16: 1 – 6; 37 - 43.

So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God. And when David had made an end of offering the **burnt offerings** and the **peace offerings**, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord.

Note, they were not offering sin or trespass offerings, why, because the priests had sanctified themselves. Now their hearts were pure and prepared for service and worship.

And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, (hurrah for the sisters) a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel. And all the people departed every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.

Summary

1 John 1: 3-4 that which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message, which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

It's not **where** you meet, so much as **whom** you meet with, and the **purposes** for which you meet that matters. How far I wonder are we prepared to move out from under the warm shelter of the religious creeds we have manufactured in our minds for our ministries?

We have made life within our ghettos very comfortable places in which to dwell. Note that Josiah began by purging Judah of its "high places" (2 Timothy 2:20-21). High places are an expression of **self-will** in the hearts of His servants. Man's basic problem can always be traced back to his steely determination to go his own way.

God has chosen His own centre for worship. He always has and always will. And there the tribes of Israel were to bring their sacrifices and offerings. Shiloh in Ephraim was Jehovah's first dwelling place (Jeremiah 7:12). Later He chose Zion (Psalm 78: 60-68). During the years of confusion after the Ark fell into the hands of the Philistines even pious people worshipped at "high places." Samuel did this (1 Samuel 9:12-25), but such practices became sin after the Temple was built and filled with the cloud of Jehovah's presence. It is difficult to imagine, that after all Solomon had experienced of God, he would lead the way in that great sin when he built high places for Chemosh and for all the gods of his pagan wives 1 Kings 11:1-8.

Turning to ourselves, have we sought God about this 'Megashift', or is it just another good idea we have plucked from the tree of knowledge? That tree is a mixture to be sure, some good, but mostly evil. Paul said; "that which I received of the Lord delivered I unto you". Apart from that we have nothing to say. If any man speaks let him speak as the oracle of God. We are so pathetically ready to fall into line behind some religious piper who wants to lead the parade. Isn't time we all grew up? The

blessings that Christ will afford are unknown by people who choose such a course. We seem to have become nothing more than a bunch of camp followers.

In response to Peter's injunction on the day of Pentecost to "save ourselves" It is quite clear that the early church met together for doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Do we have the right to tamper with that? And can we find a better place to do it than where they met; namely in homes?

Has He left us to our own devices in matters so important? He, who was so precise even down to the smallest details of service and worship connected with His earthly people, is not indifferent in His dealings with His heavenly saints! Are we willing in the spirit of humility to carefully search the inspired record and ask Him for grace to obey what's written regardless of the cost?

Our answer can be found in a profound yet simple conversation that took place at a well between the Lord and a Samaritan woman in John 4:21-24. His pointed words should make us all feel the seriousness about having to do with God. She wanted to learn from Him where God could be found, for there was much controversy concerning this subject.

Her fathers for centuries worshipped on Mt Gerizim, but the Jews argued that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship.

Here standing before her was one who would answer her truthfully. "Women believe me." Oh that we would be willing to believe every word that comes from His gracious lips. We are so ready to accept direction from people we know so little about and blindly follow them. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father."

The day for religious material centres is past.

Those who point to one and speak of it as the "house of God" are two thousand years behind the times in their thinking. God now will be satisfied with nothing but worship from the overflowing hearts of those who are in conscious relationship with Him. "Worship in spirit and truth" is what He desires; "the Father seeks such to worship Him."

Choreographed and rehearsed musicals are no substitute for true worship. Expensive décor and ritualistic services are an offence to Him, for they are relics of Paganism and Judaism. Simple humble homes will suffice as meeting places for God's saints during the Christian era. The true rallying centre is indicated in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them".

It is not saying that gatherings must be limited to two or three, but it is saying beware of the "high places" where true koinonia with an open bible, around a simple table, with bread and wine is disregarded. Every place where He has been snubbed and replaced by some contrived religious service, revolving around a personality inside a pulpit, must be shunned.

We may not be called upon to destroy them as Josiah did in his day; but it is our bounden duty to return, and to be obedient the Word of God. I would draw your attention to the purpose of our coming together. "Do this in remembrance of me." Are you doing it? Do you do it "oft"? Will you continue too "until He comes"?

Josiah lived in the twilight of Israel's national history. We too are living in the late evening of the Christian witness. For Israel the time for judgment and destruction and banishment was near. For us likewise today a great shaking is near. He who is pure and Holy will shortly spew out of His mouth the unreal portion that profess to be His and are not (Rev 3:22).

Thou art worthy Oh Lord; to receive glory and honour; and for thy pleasure we are created.

Upgrade your relationships not your smarts.

We don't need an upgrade to enhance our inaptitude; we need a heart to do His will.

I delight to do Thy will Oh Lord,
I delight to do Thy will,
For to walk with thee
Is not grievous unto me,
I delight to do Thy will.

Acts 10:38 God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all those who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with Him. Who are these that are telling us that house church planting is a goal? That was never in the mind of Peter or Paul.

The first word of the gospel is repent, repentance from what? Repentance from dead works that's what! And have faith towards God, not the programs of men.

Our greatest need is an obedient hearts and lives.

David's cry was "How am I going to bring back the Ark of God?"

Jesus said, "If any man will do My will, I will show him what to do".

The servant prayer is, "what will thou have **me** to do?"

THE END

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