

Rebels, Refugees, and a Returning Remnant

by David Bolton

There is a monumental shift taking place in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ worldwide. Multitudes of sincere, faith-filled Christians are leaving the institutional church in search of a simpler, more relational, and interactive experience of church life. According to [George Barna's research](#) more than ten years ago, the numbers then exceeded twenty million [*Revolution* (2005) pg.13]. According to the nature of this growing trend, these numbers have increased exponentially since that time.

For the most part, these believers are not leaving because they have lost their faith, but because they desire to see their faith grow and find a fuller, even more Biblical, expression. Those who are a part of this world-wide “exodus” are often found gathering under the banners of “organic...”, “simple...”, “house...”, “missional...”, and “emergent... church”, or under no banner at all except that of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to this movement, there are also others who are outside of the institutional system for less noble reasons, as we shall see.

In this post I'd like to describe three main types of people who tend to be purposefully and decidedly outside of the institutional church pursuing some form of “organic” expression and experience of church life. It is important that we discern the difference between these groups, for the motivations underlying each of them are quite different, and so is the fruit that they bear.

The first kind of people are ...

I. REBELS

Rebels play by their own rules. They have a hard time submitting to a group, to leadership or to any kind of established structure. They are primarily motivated by their own interests, ambitions and agendas which are often “spiritualized” in their own minds.

Many of these are inside the institutional church, hanging around the fringes to avoid genuine commitment, or calculatedly working the system for their own advantage and advancement. They may also be bouncing from one assembly to another to keep from being accountable to any one. Some of them, however, end up leaving the system altogether, often after being confronted by the established leadership, and seek out the less structured, open, “flatter” nature of organic Christian gathering.

Some of the more agenda-driven of these rebels seek to establish a fellowship around themselves and often do so by bringing others with them from the institutions they were a part of, thus causing division and strife. They are often successful at galvanizing a group by focusing on the negative aspects of what they have come out

of. They pride themselves in their spiritual liberation and even their superior “revelation”, and often make some reactive, secondary matter of teaching their distinctive focus.

These groups are built on a false foundation and are inherently imbalanced. Before long they begin to crumble. Often the rebel leadership that formed and lords over them becomes excessively controlling and legalistic in order to hold the group together. The end result can be disastrous, sometimes with lives, marriages and even whole families wrecked by them.

Other rebels outside of the system are more passive and can be simple “Lone Rangers”. If they do connect with a group, they will do so on their own terms. If they actively participate, it’s because they see an opportunity to promote themselves and to have a platform for their influence. If they remain aloof, it’s to preserve their sense of freedom and “personal sovereignty.” In either case, their independent will remains intact and their personal agenda drives them.

When rebels of either kind join a genuine organic assembly of believers, they can become like “goats” that butt and kick and muddy up the pasture with their “I will ascend” spirit. Worse yet, they can be like “wolves in sheep’s clothing” that wreak havoc and seek to devour the flock, especially the weakest among them. Often Satan uses such ones to do his work of disrupting, derailing and destroying genuine organic fellowships.

Such rebels also work to confirm in the hearts of those still within the institutional system how unspiritual and rebellious the people are who leave the “church”, and how dangerous it is to do so. The system has ingrained within its members the belief that there is only safety within the shelter of its walls and under the covering of its leadership, and so the only perspective they have concerning those outside of it is that they are treacherously rebellious. In some cases, this is absolutely true, but that is only part of the story.

There are still two other groups to consider.

II. REFUGEES

Refugees are those who are *running from* a spiritually oppressive or repressive situation and are looking for a place of safety, healing and new life. Their primary motivation is getting out and away from what they have been involved in.

Many, if not most, look for a place of refuge right back in the system, only in a place that appears to be free of, or embody the opposite of, the negatives that they are running from. Some, however, connect with believers who are gathering outside of the religious system and find a place of refuge with them.

There are many reasons why an organic expression of the church is attractive to them...

If they are running from a controlling or abusive form of leadership, they are likely to be drawn to the non-hierarchical form of [servant-leadership](#) found in an organic expression.

If they are running from a stifling environment where their gifts and callings are repressed and lying dormant, they are likely to be drawn to the open, participatory environment of an organic gathering.

If they are running from the formal, insular nature of the institutional setting, they are likely to be drawn to the more casual, relational nature of an organic fellowship.

If they are running from the sectarian, narrow-mindedness of the denominational system, they are likely to be drawn to the non-sectarian, unity-mindedness of an organic assembly.

If they are running from the routine boredom of the liturgized, programatized “church service”, they are likely to be drawn to the more spontaneous, Spirit-led gathering of the organic ekklesia. (For more on this, see [here](#).)

Refugees are generally sincere believers who have been hurt or disillusioned by the religious system they have been a part of. They have gotten out of it, often through much difficulty, pain and rejection, and are looking for a place where they can connect, be accepted, affirmed, healed and find a place to grow in their faith and function in the Body of Christ. Those who are able to connect with others gathering organically often find exactly what they are seeking for in an organic, relational fellowship of believers.

Due to the vast-ranging prior experiences of refugees within the religious system, however, and their primary motivation being that of running *from* something, they can really present a “mixed bag” of spiritual and personal issues. Many come with jaded attitudes and perceptions, wounded hearts and relational mistrust. Many times their new spiritual convictions are pendulum swung in reaction to their negative experiences, and they can tend to be gun-shy of commitment and submission to any group or form of leadership. (For more on this, see [here](#))

Unless they have personally gone through an extended period in the “wilderness”, they have probably also brought with them a large dose of the “service (serve-us) mentality” of the institutional system. They tend to be motivated by “[spiritual pragmatism](#)“, so that if the end result of participating in an organic fellowship is a positive experience for them, they will seek it out. In doing so, they will look to the group to meet their spiritual and emotional needs and provide what they have been used to or expect from “church.” If these expectations are not sufficiently met there, they may seek to supplement their spiritual experience partially back in the system, so that they have half of their “eggs” in the organic “basket” and half in the institutional “carton.” If their experience in the organic fellowship becomes less than desirable for

them personally, however, even for a short season, they will just as quickly leave. They are not motivated by spiritual conviction as much as by spiritual convenience.

The nature of relational community is vastly different from the often sterile, polished, pre-scheduled, crafted environment of organized religion, though. Although refugees are often drawn to the refreshingly unscripted spiritual life of an organic fellowship, they can quickly run aground when they hit the reality of face-to face relationship within it with other imperfect, fallen, quirky, in-process believers. The demand for spiritual authenticity, transparency, humility, patience, mercy, long-suffering and love is costly and uncomfortable. Although it is exactly what they need in order to come to a true place of healing, and to grow unto spiritual maturity, it can be a rude awakening to discover just how real and even raw it can be at times. Often refugees last but a little while in this type of relational setting and then head back to the more familiar and predictable environment of the institutional church.

Only a few make the adjustment and become a part of the third group.

III. A RETURNING REMNANT

The third main group of people who are purposefully and decidedly outside of the institutional church are what may be called a returning remnant. This may be the smallest of the three groups, and yet is the most significant.

So what distinguishes this group from the others?

This returning remnant is marked by two primary characteristics that make it stand out from the other two groups.

The returning remnant is, first of all...

Governed by a Positive Heavenly Vision

In contrast to the refugees, this remnant is primarily running *to* something, rather than running *from* something. They have had a glimpse of God's transcendent eternal purpose in Christ and it has "ruined" them for anything less. Their deepest convictions are shaped by a positive response to a positive, heavenly reality, rather than a negative response to a negative, earthly reality. Their vision is a double positive one, therefore, rather than a double negative one, as is the case of the refugees. It is heavenly in its origin rather than earthly, and its effect is to bring an "on earth as it is in heaven" expression of the Kingdom of God to this earth in and through the Church.

So what is the content of this vision?

It is of God's eternal purpose in Christ, and of Christ's preeminent place and purpose in it in relation to the Church.

- Christ is seen as the Center of the eternal purpose, and so He is sought as the *center* of the Church in its practical expression. He is the gathering point. He is the focus. He is the source and substance of every aspect of its life and function. He is the end towards which all things are moving. All individual truths, doctrines, emphases, visions, experiences, traditions, practices, ministries, positions, people and gifts bow the knee to the exaltation of Christ alone, as central and supreme in all things. The returning remnant is seeking an expression of the Ekklesia formed around Christ alone as its unrivaled Center.
- Christ is seen as the only Foundation of the Church in the eternal purpose, and so He is sought as the only *foundation* of the Church in its practical expression. He alone establishes the Church unshakable against all carnal, worldly and satanic onslaughts, unifies it as one indivisible building, and defines it as to its inclusive and exclusive "footprint". This Foundation is God-given, heavenly, spiritual, living, unshakable and indivisible in nature. All man-made, earthly, religious, dead, shakable, sectarian foundations utterly fail in fully and rightly establishing, unifying and defining the Church. They are rejected, therefore. The returning remnant is seeking an expression of the Ekklesia established, unified and defined by Christ alone as its only Foundation.
- Christ is seen as the supreme Identity of the Church in the eternal purpose, and so He is sought as the supreme *identity* of the Church in its practical expression. His Name is the identity into which the Church has been baptized; the Name above every name. His Name alone has all authority. His Name alone has all fullness. His Name alone unifies the Church. All man-made, sectarian, religious names, denoms, labels and identities, in effect, diminish and destroy the Church's authority, fullness and unity. They are, therefore, rejected. The returning remnant is seeking an expression of the Church that has Christ Himself, and His consummate Name, as its supreme identity.
- Christ is seen as the Head of the Church in the eternal purpose, and so He is sought as the *head* of the Church in its practical expression. He is the kingly Head of all principalities and powers. He is the corporate Head of His Body. He is the conjugal Head of His Bride and Family. The Church, therefore submits to Christ in His governmental authority, His functional authority and His familial authority.

This brings about an expression of the Church that is a manifestation of His Kingdom, His Body, His Bride and His Family, according to God's eternal The returning remnant is seeking an expression of the church that exalts Christ Himself as the uncontested governing, functional, loving Head of the Ekklesia.

This four-fold revelation of Christ in relation to the practical expression of the Church as unrivaled Center, sole Foundation, consummate Identity and uncontested Head comprises the essence of the returning remnant's heavenly vision that governs them. Everything else that they are and do springs from these core convictions being established in their daily lives, relationships and corporate gatherings.

This also naturally and of necessity moves them beyond an expression of the church that is established on partial, imbalanced emphases, man-made institutional foundations, carnal, sectarian designations and human, hierarchical control. This positive, heavenly vision motivates them to pursue a Christ-centered, Christ-established, Christ-designated, Christ-led, organic expression of the Church that answers more fully to God's eternal purpose. This is what they are pressing towards. This is what they are willing to give their all for.

Being governed by a *positive, heavenly vision*, then, is the first characteristic that marks this returning remnant.

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We now come to the second characteristic that marks the *returning remnant*. In addition to *being governed by a positive, heavenly vision*, this third group is also...

Willing to Take up the Cross in Relation to the Heavenly Vision

This returning remnant is fundamentally different from both the *rebels* and the *refugees* in their primary motivation for pursuing an "outside the camp", organic expression of the Church. Whereas the other two groups are pursuing such an expression primarily for personal, self-oriented reasons, those who are in this group are doing so for a vision and purpose that is far above and beyond themselves. They are ultimately God-centered and not self-centered in their spiritual pursuit. They are more concerned with Christ having *His Church on His terms* than they are with themselves having "*their church*" on *their terms*. This group is motivated by spiritual conviction, not spiritual convenience. They are willing, therefore, to take up the cross in relation to the heavenly vision, that God's eternal purpose may ultimately be realized within a people.

So, what is the nature of this cross that they are willing to take up for the sake of the heavenly vision?

I believe Scripture gives us a wealth of insight and understanding into the costly nature of this call of the returning remnant in the “restoration books” of the Old Testament. Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi in particular deal with the remnant that returned from Babylon to the land of Judah to rebuild Zion. What Paul said concerning the former Israelites who were part of the “exodus” from Egypt under Moses, I believe could equally be said concerning this returning remnant:

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” (1 Cor. 10:11 ESV)

At the end of the Old Testament “age”, God stirred up the hearts of a remnant of His people to come out of captivity in Babylon, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the city which lay in ruins. Now at the end of the Church “age”, God is once again stirring up the hearts of a remnant of His people to come out of captivity in “spiritual Babylon”, to return to “spiritual Jerusalem” and rebuild the living temple and city of God which also lies in “ruins”. The restoration books are a primary source of God’s instruction and wisdom for this end-time remnant.

In these books we see striking parallels of the types of sacrifice and suffering that these two returning remnants were/are willing to embrace and endure in order to see God’s house rebuilt. I will just touch on them briefly.

Displacement - The Jewish remnant was called out of Babylon where they had settled down for over half a century. They had their homes, businesses, synagogues and social lives well established there. They were returning to Jerusalem, a place that lay burned and in ruins for over half a century with only the possessions they could take with them. This willingness to be displaced from what they had known and be relocated to that which was unknown was a significant sacrifice that they embraced for the sake of the vision of Zion being rebuilt. The spiritual returning remnant is likewise called out of that which is familiar and comfortable to that which is unfamiliar and fraught with challenge and difficulty. They are called out of that which is established, to that which lies in ruins. They are called out of that which has abundance to that which is desolate. They are called out of that which is common and popular to that which is abandoned and forsaken. This is the call of faith, and it is a costly way of sacrifice concerning that which they most naturally desire and gravitate towards for that which is foreign and daunting.

Estrangement - This minute Jewish remnant (estimated around 2-5% of the Israelites in Babylon) uprooted and became physically separated and estranged from their extended family, friends, acquaintances and religious community. Lifelong ties were severed, never to be reconnected again. The end-time spiritual remnant will, likewise, suffer a costly degree of estrangement from certain friends, family, acquaintances and spiritual community due to the path that they are called to take. They do not choose to alienate themselves, but the spiritual convictions in their hearts and the choices they make mark them as those who are “marching to the beat of a different drum.” They are thus often treated by others as “outsiders”, or stereo-typed with labels that discredit

and bring estrangement. This is part of the price that a returning remnant has to pay to follow the Lord for the restoration of His House in this last day.

An uncharted, treacherous journey - The remnant that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem traveled some 500 miles over many months through unfamiliar, dangerous territory before they came to Jerusalem to begin the work of rebuilding. This journey worked in them a complete dependence on the Lord and helped to get “Babylon” out of their system before they began to rebuild and restore Zion. The spiritual remnant that is returning from the place of religious *confusion* (symbolic meaning of *Babylon*) to the spiritual *City of Peace* (literal meaning of “*Jerusalem*”) is also on an uncharted, treacherous journey. This is, likewise, working in them a complete dependence on the Lord and is helping to get “religious Babylon” out of their system. Those who are a part of this remnant should not be surprised if they find themselves journeying through “no-man’s-land”, a “wilderness”, that reduces them down to Christ and Christ alone. This is part of God’s preparation for those who will eventually rebuild “Zion”. It may be a long difficult journey, even more than many months, before there is even an arrival at the “site” and actual rebuilding work to be done or joined. This, also, is an integral aspect of the cost of being a part of this returning remnant.

“The day of small things” - When the Jewish remnant were in the land and the foundation of the new temple was laid, many of the older men and women who had seen the former temple were weeping instead of rejoicing. Haggai said,

„Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?” (Hag. 2:3)

The rebuilt temple was considerably smaller than the original temple of Solomon. Both Haggai and Zechariah, however, encouraged the people to keep on building and not despise “*the day of small things.*” (*Zech. 4:10*) They also were given great hope, for Haggai declared,

„‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former’ says the Lord Almighty.” (Hag.2:9)

It was not the size that ultimately mattered, but the glory that would fill it and be displayed out through it. So it will be with the end-time remnant. The living temples that will be built by the Spirit among them will most likely be comparatively “small things”. If God’s word through Haggai is not only prophetic of his time, but also of the last days, then the glory of these end-time “houses” will exceed that of what has gone before. It will require a taking up of the cross by faith, however, not to despise “*the day of small things.*”

Opposition within and without - Rebuilding the temple and wall of Jerusalem was fraught with opposition from within and without. Infiltrating the ranks of the returning remnant were false prophets and counselors, some of whom had been hired by the leaders of the surrounding nations to instill fear, give discouraging counsel, and deceive the leadership (*Ezra 4:5, Neh. 6:10-14*). These nations not only brought

opposition from within, but launched repeated attacks to hinder and halt the building of the temple and wall from without. This intense and constant opposition, filled with taunts, deception, and brute force, is a picture of the intense and constant spiritual warfare that the end-time returning remnant will, likewise, face to hinder and stop them from rebuilding the spiritual house of the Lord. Through direct spiritual attack or through those whom Satan has influenced, the returning remnant will be buffeted and assaulted repeatedly. Like Nehemiah's laborers, they must be willing to work with a "sword" (the Word of God) in one hand for spiritual warfare as they labor with the other to restore and build up "the wall". This is yet another aspect of the cross they must take up in relation to this heavenly vision.

Obstacles within and without - Finally, in addition to internal and external *opposition*, the Jewish remnant also had to overcome numerous *obstacles* within and without. Internally, they faced the persistent obstacles of discouragement, exhaustion, fear, greed, selfishness and moral compromise. Externally, the remnant under Nehemiah was overwhelmed by the immense amount of "rubble" that they encountered while rebuilding the wall (Neh. 4:10). The end-time remnant will likewise face the internal obstacles of the full gamut of negative emotions and moral failures among their ranks. They will also be overwhelmed at times sorting through the enormous amount of "spiritual rubble" that exists as a result of two thousand years of man-made traditions, practices, doctrines, and dogmas cluttering the building site. Taking up the cross in relation to all of these internal and external obstacles will be necessary for them to overcome and ultimately fulfill their calling. Those who have been apprehended by God's heavenly vision of Christ and His Church according to God's eternal purpose will sacrifice and suffer much in the pursuit of it. They will undoubtedly experience the deep working of the cross through the varied testings and trials of displacement, estrangement, treacherous journeying, "small things", opposition and obstacles as they faithfully seek to fulfill their part in God's end-time work of restoration. They will be tempted to give up at times and turn back, but their convictions will keep them pressing on, and the faithfulness of God will sustain them. In the end, the Lord's purpose will be fulfilled and the Lord will have His restored remnant House throughout the nations, the glory of which will exceed that which has gone before. This is the passion and the hope of the end-time returning remnant for which they are willing to take up the cross...until it is fulfilled.

CONCLUSION

Final exhortations to each group

I began this series describing a monumental shift taking place in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ worldwide as multitudes of sincere, faith-filled Christians are leaving the institutional church in search of a simpler, more relational, and interactive experience of church life. My wife and I are in that number, and have been so for the past twenty(plus) years. We were also both involved with an organic home fellowship for five years at the beginning of our walk, so church-life "outside the camp" is not new to us.

As we have observed and experienced, there are three main groups of people who are purposefully and decidedly outside of the institutional church: “rebels”, “refugees” and a “returning remnant”. In this post, I would like to personally address each of these groups with a final word of encouragement and exhortation. I will focus primarily on the last two groups, with just a brief word to the first.

Dear “rebels”,

If you are (admittedly or unadmittedly) in this group, I pray that you will somehow have an ear to hear the things that are in my heart.

The first is the unfathomable love of God for you. This love is displayed for you to behold on the rugged cross where Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, suffered and died for you! This is His supreme statement of what His heart is towards you. He cried *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”* He was looking into your eyes when He said those words! He loves and wants *you!*

Secondly, the cross is also His supreme statement of His hatred and judgment of those things that separate us from His love and purpose. It is because of pride and rebellion that He hung there mutilated, accursed, and abandoned by heaven and earth. There are no other sins more grievous in His sight than these, for they are the primal sins of all others. His only assessment is crucifixion.

If you desire to walk with the Him, you must hate what He hates, and love what He loves. He hates pride and rebellion, and He loves humility and obedience. The choice is yours, and the stakes couldn’t be higher.

God’s Kingdom is being established by broken, humble, servants who have denied themselves, taken up the cross, and are following the Lamb wherever He goes. The call is now for you to come and join them. Will you humble yourself before the Lamb? Will you lay down your selfishness, your ego, your agenda, your sovereignty, your control? Will you humble yourself before the brethren and serve them in love? This is the call, and the grace of God is there to make you a broken, fruitful servant in His Kingdom.

My final word of exhortation and encouragement to you is found in the words of Peter as he was addressing the elders *“among” (not “over”)* the saints:

“All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may exalt you in due time.” (1 Peter 5:5-6)

I pray that you will have ears to hear!

Dear “refugees”,

If you find yourself relating most closely with this group, I have a few things to share with you to help you navigate your way forward and to find God’s highest purpose in your life.

First of all, you are where you are at, most likely, because of past experiences in the institutional church that have left you dissatisfied, let down, burned out, wounded, and/or spiritually or emotionally injured. The disappointments, failures, imbalances, and hurts you have experienced have affected you deeply and are shaping your present understandings, convictions, and spiritual pursuits.

The Lord, however, wants to bring you to a place of healing and restoration, so that your *past experiences* are no longer your primary motivation for where you are and where you are going. He wants to make you one who is *spiritually proactive*, rather than *soulishly reactive*. He desires for your present vision and motivations to be governed by a pure, positive revelation of Himself and His highest purpose in Christ, so that you are running towards something in a full and focused way, rather than running away from something in a jaded and reactionary way. I have written a post that I want to encourage you to read along this line, “[Our Deepest Convictions](#)“. It goes into greater depth and should help you to understand these two differing ways more clearly. If you don’t make this transition from being reactive to proactive, however, you will become like a pendulum in your faith and practice, rather than a plumb line. This will only lead you into further imbalance, error, and future failure and woundedness. To do so, though, you will first need to resolve your past issues concerning what you have come out of.

So, let me ask you...

Are there people you need to forgive from your past situations?

Are there people you need to apologize to and be reconciled with?

Did you leave where you formerly were in a godly, humble and appropriate manner?

Do you need to return and make things right?

There will be no clear way forward unless these past issues and offenses are first resolved. I urge you to make this your first priority.

Secondly, as you work through these past matters, you will need to also have a refocusing and readjusting of your spiritual perceptions and convictions, so that going forward you are governed by a positive, (non-reactive) heavenly vision of Christ and His Church.

I’d like to share with you one step in my own processing in this regard that was especially helpful to me about twenty years ago. It was an exercise that took place internally within my spirit and soul. In my mind, I pictured a large whiteboard, and written on it was everything that I had ever known, learned, and experienced of “CHURCH”... the good, the bad and the ugly...everything! Frankly, it was a

jumbled, tangled mess, and it would have been impossible to erase everything that was not of the Lord from it without also smudging or in some way erasing those things that were of Him. So, in my spirit I erased it all, and then asked the Lord to write very clearly on it, line upon line, only those things that were the clear, unadulterated truths from His Word concerning His Church. I began with God's eternal purpose in Christ for the Church and worked my way down to the practical matters of its earthly life and local expression. This brought great clarity to my spirit and mind, and it became the foundation on which my firmest convictions, deepest understandings, and most passionate pursuits were based and formed. I could then proceed in a positive, non-reactive way with a clear vision of what God ultimately desires.

I would encourage something of the same for you. We have been surrounded by such spiritual imbalances, religious trappings and traditions, "Christian" clutter, pragmatic approaches, worldly concepts, unending fads, formulas, and forms, and the like, that it is hard to find our way out of the jungle of it all. It is an enmeshment and a (Babylonish) confusion that keeps us trapped and deluded. Only when we rise above all of it and see things from God's heavenly perspective, will we have the clarity and wisdom to know how to proceed. This is essential for those who desire to go on in God's highest purpose.

Thirdly, your whole pursuit of your personal faith and your corporate practice needs to transition from being "*me*"-centered, to being *God-centered*. God does not exist for us, but we for Him. Likewise, the Church does not exist for us, but we, collectively, for Him. This requires a denying of self and a taking up of the cross, as described in Part 3. If you are committed to going on in His purpose, you will need to be prepared for all of those aspects of the cross, for they will surely come. You must be prepared, especially, for "the wilderness", for it is an essential part of God's process to reorient you to His centrality in your life and in the Church. As I like to say, "*It is one thing for the person to come out of the system; quite another for the system to come out of the person!*" The wilderness is where you will be purged and pared down to Christ and Christ alone.

Only He can build the Church, and that with Himself as the material. Only as He is formed in you and I will we be fit to be built into this Habitation. Without the structure of the institutional form, Christ, Himself, must become the Structure that founds and frames the Church...and He is sufficient. If it is merely believers seeking and doing their own thing for their own satisfaction and blessing, it will quickly fail. As my wife likes to say concerning the organic expression of the Church, it is not an "*outside-the-gate support group*." It is not for us, first and foremost, but for Him, and only as we lose our (church-) life, for His sake, will we actually find it.

God wants to lead you on from being a "refugee" to become a healed and restored part of His "returning remnant". There is no higher purpose that we can commit to, and His grace is sufficient to fulfill it in and through us! I pray that you will take these three aspects that I have mentioned to heart, and seek the Lord concerning them. May

He bless you with all that you need to go forward from here into His highest purpose and calling.

Dear “returning remnant”,

You know who you are because there is stirring inside of you that is a vision of God and of His House that compels you. You know there is so much more than what generally prevails, and you’ve had glimpses of it that have “ruined” you for anything less. You have come out of the comfortable and the known and are pressing on in a path that is uncharted and overgrown. You have found it to be lonely at times, and you bear the reproach of being misunderstood and misjudged. You are paying a price, and sometimes you wonder how you ever got HERE. You know it would be so much easier if you could just shake off these convictions and just be “normal”, but you find out that *they are holding you more than you are holding them.*

Maybe you are among those blessed ones who have found fellow pilgrims and pioneers on this same journey. You are traveling together, and the fellowship is sweet beyond words. Yet the battle rages around you and sometimes even among you. The opposition is often subtle, and sometimes it is intense. You are taking ground that has long been in ruins, and the enemy’s hordes are terrified.

This is the call of the returning remnant.

As a fellow pilgrim and pioneer, I want to encourage you. The things you are living through and feeling are not strange. They are part of the call and are shared by all who are leaving the comfort and familiarity of “Babylon” and returning to “the Land” to re-erect the Altar, relay the Foundation, rebuild the Temple, restore the Testimony, and reestablish the Kingdom once again. God’s hope is in you. And He is with you.

In all that you are pursuing and seeking to see restored, know that it is not some thing or things that ultimately need restoring, but it is some One. Jesus Christ, Himself, is the Land; He is the Altar; He is the Foundation; He is the Temple; He is the Testimony, and He is the Kingdom. Never be sidetracked by mere things, for all things are in Him. It is Christ, Himself, who must be restored, in all of His supremacy, centrality, fullness, form, features, and function. When you run into perplexing questions of *who?, what?, when?, where?, why? and how?*, know that the answer is supremely and all-sufficiently found in Christ, Himself. Do not look elsewhere. He needs no supplements or supports, and He has no substitutes. Press into Him until He becomes your only *Answer*. He is God’s Way, God’s Truth, and God’s Life...ALL that we need.

This is where the Heart of the Father beats. This is what has been lost. This is what the Spirit is relentlessly drawing you to in your heart. Our God will have an overcoming testimony to His Son in these last days, and He has promised, “*the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.*” (Hag.2:9) So keep pressing on!

My final word of encouragement to you then, is found in the words of Christ to the church of Philadelphia after His resurrection and ascension:

“These are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My Name...

“Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of My God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God; and I will also write on them My new Name.” (Rev. 3:7b-8, 11b-12)

This is our destiny if we will but hold on to what we have. In the end, may He simply find us FAITHFUL!

I trust that this series has been helpful in bringing greater clarity to the present work of God in His Church and in this last day. May all of us diligently press into His highest purpose, for He is consummating and heading up all things in His Son. He is preparing a Bride without spot or wrinkle, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is drawing near. May we be found fully in step with His Spirit in this day!

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(An audio version of this series is also available there through the link.)

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