

Return of the Home Church

Eric Michael Teitelman

Pastor • Teacher • Worship Leader



House of David
MINISTRIES

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

In the book of Acts, we read, *“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2). “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46, NKJV).*ⁱ

For the first three centuries, early Christians did not construct church buildings. They gathered in homes. Many also remained connected with their synagogues and assembled at the Temple in Jerusalem before being destroyed. The oldest archeological discovery of a Christian place of worship is a house (*domus ecclesiae*) excavated in Dura-Europos (modern-day Syria). It is believed to have been founded around A.D. 232.ⁱⁱ

One likely reason the early church met in homes was for convenience, given that extended family members all lived in the same village. But the most probable reason was the need for safety due to persecution, as we read, *“When the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19).*

It was not until the second half of the 3rd century A.D. that the first halls or buildings for Christian worship (*aula ecclesiae*) were constructed. Many of these were destroyed during the Diocletianic persecution in 303 A.D., the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Persecution essentially ended with Constantine’s Edict of Milan in 313 A.D., proclaiming religious tolerance. His reunited Empire spanned most of Europe, Asia Minor, North Africa, and the Middle East allowing for large-scale and more elaborate church construction to begin.

Between the 11th and 14th centuries, numerous smaller parish and cathedral-style churches were constructed. From 1,000 to 1,200 A.D., the Romanesque style became popular, and Gothic architecture emerged around 1,140 A.D. in *Île-de-France*. The reformation in the 15th and 16th centuries simplified the gothic style, leading to the construction of hall churches.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Baroque style was introduced in Italy around 1,575 A.D. From there, it spread throughout the European colonies. Domes and capitals were highly decorated with fresco paintings and sprawling floral ornamentation. This decorative style continued well into the Rococo era of the

1,720s A.D. Protestant churches favored a building design where the parishioner's line of sight was directed towards the pulpit and attendees could be as close as possible to the altar.

As the churches grew in power and affluence, their buildings became monuments to their wealth and political influence. These evolutionary changes were not accidental. They align with Amillennial theology systemized by Saint Augustine in the 4th century A.D. Augustine was originally premillennial but changed his views, claiming the doctrine was carnal.

Amillennialism (*Chillegorism*) rejects the idea of a future millennium in which Christ will physically reign on earth for 1,000 years. Instead, they consider the thousand years in the book of Revelation as allegoric or symbolic. They believe that the Millennium has already begun and is identical to the current church age. They also believe that Christ's present reign is spiritual, and at the end of the church age, Christ will return in the final judgment to establish a permanent Kingdom in a *new* heaven and earth.

Post-Millennialism, like Amillennialism, believes that the Millennium occurs before Yeshua returns, yet they believe in a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ. Postmillennialism was a dominant belief among American Protestants who promoted the reform movements of the 1850s. It has become one of the critical tenets of Christian Reconstructionism, a fundamental Calvinist theology that advocates for the restoration of biblical laws.

How Christians view the relationship between Israel and the church, the relevance of Biblical prophecy to each, and the perceived order of eschatological events will determine their hermeneutical and exegetical opinions about the Millennium.^{iv} Many of these opinions begin with an underlying assumption that the church has replaced historical Israel as the "new Israel."

This viewpoint is called Supersessionism (replacement theology). And because Biblical prophecy speaks so frequently of Israel's physical restoration within the present creation, Amillennialism aligns with Supersessionism, spiritualizing these prophecies and future promises for Israel and applying them to the church and the New Jerusalem.

If Amillennialism or Postmillennialism is correct and the Millennium has begun, it would seem fitting for the church to construct places of worship that glorify God and solidify His Kingdom here on earth, even if only temporary. Since they believe the church has the authority to establish Christ's Kingdom on earth as it is already in heaven, then our places of worship should epitomize God's wealth (economic), His authority (judicial), and His influence (political) over every nation, especially this one.

This unbiblical way of thinking has led to contemporary "prosperity-centered" and "Kingdom now" theologies (Dominionism) and fostered Christian patriotism and nationalism, elevating the United States to on par with Israel. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Christians lack a Biblical understanding of Christ's Kingdom centered around the restoration of Israel and the Jewish people. And since Biblical prophecies concerning the land promised to the descendants of Abraham are carnal, many Christians also overly *spiritualize* the future Kingdom of God.

One sign of the end-times is an apostate church, as we read, *"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition"* (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Yet, Paul said that Christ was returning for a glorious church, one *"not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish"* (Ephesians 5:27).

Holy and unblemished implies that Christ's remnant church is sanctified, set apart from the world, and not actively participating in its sins. Therefore, until the rapture, the wheat and tares will grow together. As we read, *"Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn"* (Matthew 13:30). Gathering the tares into bundles suggests that apostate Christians will join other apostates.

Yeshua warned us, saying, *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you"* (John 15:19). In other words, living a life set apart from the world will bring condemnation and persecution, likely also from apostate Christians. But this persecution will birth a glorious remnant church that will be both holy and unblemished, as we read, *"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God"* (Romans 8:9).

Peter said, *"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin"* (1 Peter 4:1). Once again, we read that sanctification will bring persecution, and persecution will bring God's purification and refinement to a remnant of His people—those who choose to follow the narrow and challenging path.^v As we read, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18).

Per scripture, the last-day church will be severely persecuted. And for the necessity of protection and safety, like the early Christians, I believe this remnant church will return to gathering in homes, not cathedral buildings. A house demonstrates to the world that the church is a family, and the hallmark of a functional family is love. Yeshua said, *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35).

Having said all this, please do not think I wish for persecution to fall on the church. I am simply acknowledging what Christ has already spoken concerning the end of the age.

When the Covid pandemic began, many churches were forced to close their doors or limit assembly. The idea for a home church network (micro church cluster) came to me as I was reminded of a government-sponsored community program that organized citizens to prepare for local emergencies. The idea is simple. During an emergency, your neighbors become your closest family.

If the government can motivate neighbors to prepare for an emergency, why could the church not do the same? And, what if we combined the benefits of emergency preparedness with the

need for a localized church gathering? Would our neighbors suddenly become our closest family? Quite possibly.

One of the challenges with contemporary Christianity is the necessity to convince people to visit a church building to hear the gospel. However, studies reveal that most Christians are uncomfortable doing so. Additionally, many people have an aversion to attending church, which creates additional barriers to introducing them to the gospel. However, meeting with a small group of neighbors in a home is less intimidating and even comforting, and it is informal and conversational—family-like.

Existing churches can quickly establish neighborhood clusters from their member database. They can map their congregants and commission lay pastors and small group leaders, along with co-leaders, to organize neighborhood church meetings. The meetings can be held at one location or rotated to different homes. Home churches should also network to create what I like to call a home church network or micro church cluster.

If a church has a Livestream of their service, the church clusters could meet during that time to listen to the sermon. The groups would be praying for each other and could even lead their worship times. And because the people attending are all neighbors, everyone should know who to turn to if an emergency arises. Our neighbors would suddenly become our closest family.

Per scripture, home churches should allow two or three people to share encouraging God stories and personal testimonies each week. Paul gave us this example:

"Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (1 Corinthians 14:26-31).

We are fortunate that, at present, we are not experiencing severe Christian persecution in this nation. But conditions could change quickly and without warning. Therefore, churches should use Godly wisdom and prepare, even proactively setting up their home church network. Our church buildings and assembly halls remain places for large-scale evangelism, but discipleship most effectively occurs in small, intimate environments. With the proper leadership, home church clusters would be perfect for this.

I know the Lord is drawing the church back to its Biblical foundation with correct theologies and a proper understanding of His Kingdom. And I believe the Lord is returning the home church as in the early days of Christianity. If we take the time to explore church history, we realize that false theologies and ideologies have emerged about church building construction. And yet, the

church is not a building. No, the church is a family, God's family chosen, sanctified, and set apart from every nation.^{vi} And our Kingdom is not of this world.

Therefore, we must focus on the mission that God has given us: to make disciples of every nation that will reign with Christ for eternity and not construct buildings that will rust or decay.^{vii} As we read, *"But now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven. Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:26-29).

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ *The Earliest Christian House Church, With the Most Ancient Christian Paintings*. Historyofinformation.com.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hall church, German Hallenkirche, or Dreischiffige Kirche, church in which the aisles are approximately equal in height to the nave. The interior is typically lit by large aisle windows, instead of a clerestory, and has an open and spacious feeling, as of a columned hall. Encyclopedia Britannica.

^{iv} Bandy, Alan S. *Views of the Millennium*. TGC U.S. Edition.

^v Matthew 7:14.

^{vi} Revelation 5:9, 7:9.

^{vii} Matthew 6:19-21, 28:19.