



# The Vineyard & The Husbandman

## Part 1

### The Condition of the Church

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**W.D. Furioso**

Edited by Frances Furioso

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# Preface

One morning, I awoke reminiscing about a trip my wife and I had taken to South Africa with a young couple in June & July of 2015, wherein we were blessed with the opportunity to revisit many of the people we had befriended during the 13 years we lived and ministered in South Africa. It was a precious gift not always afforded to those who serve the Lord – that is, to be able to see some of the fruit of your labor.

This particular morning the Holy Spirit impressed upon me that type of ministry was finished for me – specifically, the traveling ministry, watering conventional churches, attending “worship” services were, at least for us, a thing of the past.<sup>1</sup>

I then thought about the writing/correspondence ministry as the present ministry, which is replacing the other. As I did, the following scriptures and comments came to mind:

<sup>1</sup> I believe that God does work within the conventional churches and, to some measure, is able to bless His children in those contexts. I am not overtly against all conventional approaches to church ministry. It is rather that I don't have faith in these conventional activities. When I look at the scriptures, and I look back at my experience, they seems foolish.

*“...the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone.”<sup>2</sup>*

It is the ministry of apostles and prophets to lay Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone in the lives of individuals and churches. Often, in order to lay that foundation, false or faulty foundations need to be first uprooted or torn down, before laying and building upon the foundation of Christ.

*“I have put my words in your mouth...to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: ... a time to plant and a time to uproot ... a time to tear down and a time to build....”<sup>4</sup>*

So, there is a time and a place for uprooting and tearing down type messages to serve the purpose of “preparing the way of the Lord”. Forerunners like John the Baptist used words like,

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:20 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 1:9b & 10b NIV

<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2b & 3b NIV

“Even now the axe is laid at the root of the trees.”<sup>5</sup> I’ve often said, I don’t think the prophets would have won many popularity contests. In my own personal ministry, it seems the Lord has wanted to use me for both of these activities - both uprooting and tearing down, as well as, planting and building. The uprooting and tearing down type messages are naturally unpleasant for any minister.

It seems that different ministers have different temperaments, as well as different callings, and therefore, have different perspectives, positive and negative, on the state of the Church. This is to say that some ministers are more like John the Baptist, “a voice in the wilderness” crying repentance; and others are more like Barnabus, the “son of encouragement”.<sup>6</sup>

*“I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.” Revelation 10:10*

<sup>5</sup> Luke 3:9 *ESV*

<sup>6</sup> While I accept as biblical a ministry calling to be a “watchman on the wall” discerning and alerting us regarding the movements of the Adversary; I am hard-pressed to find a scriptural example of a ministry calling to be a “watchdog” which is absolutely silent unless it is “biting and devouring” other ministries.

While I know that both activities are necessary, I would rather be investing my time and energy in a positive way, planting and building on the foundation of Christ rather than being occupied with the business of uprooting and tearing down false and faulty foundations. It seems to me the apostle Paul felt the same way judging from something he wrote to the Corinthians referring to his ministry to them: “... *the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than tearing you down.*”<sup>7</sup>

I have said all that to say this: In Part 1 of this this essay, I will be addressing the pervasive perspective and practice of ministry in the contemporary Western Church, which I understand to be a hindrance, or at least falling short of, the Great Commission to make disciples of Jesus Christ and co-labor with Him as He builds His Church. I don't take pleasure in being critical, in fact, I find it an unpleasant task; and I am certain that the reader will also find it unpleasant. Never-the-less, I hold the firm conviction that the conventional approaches to church

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:8 NIV

ministry practiced in popular Christianity will not produce fruit that will remain and glorify His name.

*Bill Furiuso*

November 6, 2015



# The Condition of the Church

# Introduction

My wife and I lived and ministered in South Africa from 1984 to 1997. In 1990, a pastor friend who decided to leave the work of ministry asked us if we would consider “adopting” his little flock. We had been invited to minister to this church every time we were ministering in their region. We prayed about the pastor’s proposal, and agreed that it seemed to be the Lord’s will; so, we relocated from the Transvaal to the Western Cape province. After an initial season of communicating to them our perspective on “doing church”, it seemed that the next season should be to let everyone decide as to whether they wanted to then pursue what had been communicated or look for another church home. To facilitate this, I thought it might be a good idea to have this small group visit a broad spectrum of the churches in the locality each Sunday for a season – one in the morning and another in the evening. To be honest, I was hoping that maybe certain individuals might find a church they liked and decide to leave our group. Well, no one decided to leave our group – at least not at that time because of being exposed to another church they thought they would like.

But the experiment did prove to be interesting. After visiting each church, we would discuss our impressions. Much to my surprise, most of the impressions were positive. I think I was most surprised by my own perceptions: I felt that at every single church, with the exception of one, we had heard very good messages – scripturally sound and beneficial for living the Christian life. As a mere visitor, I could not comment on the quality of their community life; but regarding the whole of the worship services, while the variety of the different worship services was interesting and somewhat instructive, the overall spiritual quality of the worship and prayer of the churches seemed lackluster. Comparing that with the fairly high quality of the content and delivery of the messages, I could not help but wonder, “Why is this church not more spiritual, or more holy, or more consecrated, or more passionate, than it seems to be?” My conclusion at the time was this: There is teaching; and there is making disciples which involves “teaching them to observe”<sup>8</sup>, that is, not just saying, “Lord, Lord”, but actually “doing the will of My Father who is in heaven”.<sup>9</sup> That requires additional ministry after

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 28:19-20 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 7:21

the preaching and teaching. That's what was missing – true **discipleship**. That was decades ago. I still hold to my conclusion. But I think I have also come to see more and more of the implications of the lack of true discipleship in the Church. This story is one way of introducing what this message is about. Much more recently (six years ago), I watched a number of preachers and teachers on a Christian television network. Occasionally, I find it interesting to watch religious charlatans and try to analyze their “pitch” and the reasons for their appeal and popularity. But this day, I was watching some teachers and preachers for whom I hold some regard. Again, I was impressed by the messages – the quality of the content and the expertise in delivery. I was also “impressed” by the success of their ministries. By that I mean their ability to reach their goals of attracting people, communicating effectively to them, and having their ministries growing from strength to strength. I am impressed with that in the same way I would be impressed with any enterprise having a good product, a good business plan, a good marketing strategy, and the resulting success in sales, market share and overall productivity and growth.

But, as I watched and listened, and as the camera periodically scanned the large audiences who had come to watch and listen, I questioned: “WHAT IS BEING PRODUCED and BUILT by these ministries?” The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and mind using the two analogies of PRODUCING GOOD FRUIT and BUILDING A SPIRITUAL HOUSE. In this essay, I’ll use both of these analogies to point to and assess the end result of ministry – that is, WHAT IS BEING PRODUCED? WHAT IS BEING BUILT?

In Part 1 of this this essay, we will take a look at a parable in the Old Testament – something Isaiah prophesied - known as “The Vineyard of the Lord”; and then consider what Jesus had to say about these things. I see this essay as a more parabolic<sup>10</sup> and prophetic<sup>11</sup> way of emphasizing what was taught in more detail in my booklets entitled, “Christ Is Prerequisite for Church” and “Some Thoughts on Discipleship and the Equipping Ministries”.

<sup>10</sup> By “parabolic” I mean instruction by the comparison of one thing with another. Cf. *Webster’s Dictionary* (1828). Cf. Psalm 78:1-2

<sup>11</sup> By “prophetic” I mean a speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God on a particular matter. Cf. Greek: *prophetikos* (Strong’s # 4397), *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.

# The Vineyard of the Lord

In Isaiah 5:1-6, we find what is called “The Parable of the Vineyard”, which is probably the “source material” of Jesus’ parables about vineyards.<sup>12</sup>

“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. <sup>2</sup> He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so, He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. <sup>3</sup> “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. <sup>4</sup> What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?”

So, here the Lord asks, “What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” We should ask ourselves:

<sup>12</sup> The Parable of the Worker in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-6); The Parable of the Two Sons in the Vineyard (Matthew 21:28-32); The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (Matthew 21:33-41); The parable of the Fig Tree in the Vineyard (Luke 13:6-9).

“What more could we do in His Vineyard that we have not done in it?” The Lord has given His all – Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures – we are complete in Christ.<sup>13</sup> He has also given what is called the “Great Commission”; and by His Spirit, He has enabled us to co-labor with Him as He builds His Church. The answers to these questions are: The Lord could have done no more. The lack is obviously with us. We are not fulfilling **the commission to make disciples of Christ**. And we are “not in sync” with the Spirit of Christ as He builds His Church.

I suppose, many, if not most Christians see the Church as doing wonderfully. Others, and not an insignificant number, see the Church as sorely failing with regards to moving in God’s calling for the Church. I do not want to be misunderstood: In no way do I think that “extra effort” is going to result in accomplishing God’s will. Both the Christian life, and Church life are absolutely impossible without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit gives the life of Christ which builds the Church. But, my understanding is that the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is

<sup>13</sup> Colossians 2:10

available to fulfill those Scriptures. The Spirit of Christ is available to build His Church. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of hosts.”<sup>14</sup> Co-laboring with Him is not a matter of “extra effort” – it is a matter of surrendering our wills and our ways to His, and getting “in sync” with Him. If we will surrender to His lordship and His headship in the Church, we will “Shout grace” – the Spirit of Grace - to “this mountain” of failure “and bring forth the Head Stone” along with the foundation Stone of the Lord’s dwelling place.<sup>15</sup>

In Part 1 of this essay, I will be discussing our condition; and Part 2 will be what I have to offer in response. The Holy Spirit had the Lord’s prophets speak of God’s people through comparisons with a vineyard, which were followed by Jesus’ parables about vineyards<sup>16</sup>. One example, found in Jeremiah 12:10, paints a peculiar Old Testament picture of how New Testament ministers can be “out of sync” with the Spirit of Christ as He builds His

<sup>14</sup> Zechariah 4:6

<sup>15</sup> Zechariah 4:7 Both the Foundation Stone and the Head Stone represent Christ as the Foundation and Head of the Church. The book of Zechariah, written during the time of the restoration of the temple after the Babylonian Captivity, has many wonderful types and lessons regarding the building of the Church!

<sup>16</sup> The Parable of the Worker in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-6); The parable of the Two Sons in the Vineyard (Matthew 21:28-32); The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (Matthew 21:33-41); The parable of the Fig Tree in the Vineyard (Luke 13:6-9).

Church: “Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard; they have trampled down My field; they have made My pleasant field a desolate wilderness.” This pictures shepherds herding in a vineyard – herding sheep in a vineyard instead of cultivating the vines. Why would anyone herd sheep in a vineyard? This is an example of ministers “doing their own thing”, and not co-laboring with Jesus as He builds His Church. The consequence, in spite of a plethora of good ministries of the word, is still a peculiar, but definite, spiritual desolation.

# Popular

"What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15b)

Now, let's look at a passage in Matthew's gospel – the end of the Lord's "Sermon on the Mount". As I said, the intention of this essay is to be more prophetic than expository, so, while being careful to consider the context of a passage, my aim is not to cover every detail, but to focus on that which emphasizes God's heart and mind on the matter.

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Whether in secular society or the Church, what is popular in no way indicates quality in truth and life. As Jesus is indicating here, albeit harsh, the reality is quite the opposite. In our contemporary Western culture popularity and success go together. You may be

thinking that this is so obvious it hardly needed to be stated. But, this wasn't necessarily the case in other periods in our history. And even today in other cultures, popularity and success don't necessarily go together. A biblical example is Luke's record of the Sermon on the Mount which has Jesus saying: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way."<sup>17</sup> In one sense it is uncanny how that which is false is so popular and successful. In another sense, it should not be so strange to us because the Scripture says that the unconverted are "darkened in their understanding ... because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart"<sup>18</sup>; and that even the converted have been conformed to this world, and need to stop being conformed to this world, and have their minds renewed.<sup>19</sup>

The most popular and successful ministers, ministries and churches today have very definite goals and are impressively achieving their goals. I would summarize their goals and successes as being people-centered rather than God-centered.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 6:26

<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 4:18. Also Romans 1:21

<sup>19</sup> Romans 12:1-2 "Conformed" is in the Present passive imperative tense, meaning stop being conformed". (*Robertson's Word Pictures*)

As is obviously the case with Jesus and His apostles, being God-centered ultimately leads to rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom. Whereas, being people-centered is a sure road to popularity and success.

In his classic, “How to Win Friends and Influence People”, two of the techniques offered by Dale Carnegie to make people like you are: 1) Make the people feel important and 2) talk in terms of their interests.<sup>20</sup> People are important; but God is more important. People are naturally interested in “self”; the Church needs to be interested in God. Today’s popular and successful ministries often have logos unabashedly communicating that meeting people’s needs is their desired goal. I believe that fulfilling God’s desires goes far beyond meeting the needs of humanity. Therefore, it seems to me, as “successful” as these ministries are, they are not producing good fruit, that is, they are not making true disciples of Jesus; and they are not co-laboring with Christ as He builds His Church. They are merely succeeding at making “successful” ministries. The assumption held by both the ministers and the public is that, if the ministries are increasing in productivity, they

<sup>20</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How\\_to\\_Win\\_Friends\\_and\\_Influence\\_People](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_to_Win_Friends_and_Influence_People)

must be approved of God and fulfilling God's purposes. But, it is recorded that Jesus will say to many who "prophecy in His name, and in His name cast out demons, and in His name perform many miracles, "I never knew you".<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 7:21-23

# False

## Matthew 7:15-23

15 “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

Matthew 7:15 “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” Here, Jesus is addressing false prophecy – referring to ministers who speak or operate falsely. While prophecy is ultimately intended to edify, exhort and console the people of God,<sup>22</sup> the purpose of prophecy is in no way limited to encouraging human beings. The purpose of true prophecy is to testify of Jesus<sup>23</sup>, Who “declares” the Father”<sup>24</sup> - the One with Whom we have to do”.<sup>25</sup> It is that declaration, even if it is a “hard saying”, which should actually encourage the true people of God.

Just an observation about the biblical concepts of “true” and “false” as it relates to ministers: Along with false Christs, the Scripture also speaks of false brethren, false witnesses, false apostles and false prophets. When we read these terms, we most likely make an almost unconscious assumption that these “false” people are all damned. That may be the case. But it is also possible for these people to repent of that which is false and

<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:3

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 19:10

<sup>24</sup> John 1:18 (NKJV), Greek: *exegeomai* (Strong’s # 1834), to declare, explain, make known, *Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.

<sup>25</sup> Hebrews 4:13

embrace that which is true. In one sense, before conversion, everyone is “false”.

But in a more accurate sense, “false” means hypocritical – pretending to be sent by God, when in reality, God hasn’t sent you; pretending to speak for God, when in reality, God has not given you anything to speak; pretending to be converted, when in reality, you are still self-centered. *That* is the meaning of “false” I would like to investigate further. “False” means not operating in truth. I believe it is entirely possible for one who is a true brother in the Lord to operate as a false apostle or false prophet – both knowingly and unknowingly. Now, we must always pursue sound doctrine and judge false doctrine, for there can be no true unity of the Spirit outside of the Spirit of Truth. But I think there would be more “loving your neighbor as yourself” and less “biting and devouring one another”,<sup>26</sup> if we could look at falsity and hypocrisy in the Church in this way: "This particular minister may be a true brother who, at this time, is mistaken and operating falsely. I am going to distinguish between what is true and what is false in his ministry, and pray that he will come to discern the Spirit of Truth in

<sup>26</sup> Galatians 5:14-15

all things."

A false prophet may knowingly or unknowingly speak that which is not true.<sup>27</sup> But I would like to suggest also that one can speak truth, yet still operate falsely. The falseness, has to do with wrong motivation: There is a "proclaiming Christ out of selfish ambition rather from pure motives".<sup>28</sup> And, "where selfish ambition exists, there is disorder and every evil thing".<sup>29</sup> The falseness can also have to do with **WHAT IS BEING PRODUCED** or **WHAT IS BEING BUILT**: Much too often truth may be ministered, but the result is building a large following of people rather than **producing disciples of Jesus** – building an enterprise rather than **co-laboring with Christ as He builds His Church**. I am very aware that this can happen both knowingly and unknowingly on the part of the minister. I also know that, while I go to great lengths in striving to minister truth, I also have to constantly examine what it is that I am **PRODUCING** or **BUILDING**. Jesus purchased people with His blood, I didn't. Therefore, people belong to Jesus, not me. He is their Lord, not me. People are to serve Him and His kingdom, not

<sup>27</sup> In the case of Matthew 7, I think we could conclude these false prophets whom Jesus referred to as "ravenous wolves" were knowingly speaking falsely for their own gain.

<sup>28</sup> Philippians 1:17

<sup>29</sup> James 3:16

me and my ministry. I am aware that suggesting the idea that a true brother in the Lord can be ministering falsely sounds indefensible. But that is exactly what the apostle Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 3:10b “But each man must be careful how he builds on it (the foundation of Christ). 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. 14 If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”<sup>30</sup>

So, Paul says the minister will be saved, but what he PRODUCED and BUILT falsely – that is, what is not produced by the Spirit of Christ, and that which is not built on the foundation of Christ – will be judged as worthless and burned.

<sup>30</sup> Similar statements are made in other scriptures: Luke 6:46-49 & Hebrew 12:26-27.

## “You will know them by their fruits.”

Matthew 7:16-20 “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

“You will know them by their fruits” – not by their gifts, but by their fruits. We cannot discern a ministry by the gifts of the minister. We cannot discern a ministry solely by what is being communicated in words. Jesus said good trees PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT, and bad trees PRODUCE BAD FRUIT. What is Jesus alluding to with His reference to “trees”? And, what is it that makes a tree “bad”?

When I was a boy, across the street from our house was an apple orchard. This orchard was on a plot of land that bordered the railroad tracks, and was owned by the county. This land was not

well tended to; and, while it was a wonderful place for us to play, the apple trees were wild apple trees, and produced apples which neither looked good, nor tasted good. There was nothing wrong with the original seeds which started that orchard. What caused the bad fruit was the fact that the trees were not tended. Later in life, I worked briefly in a commercial orchard. To produce good fruit, the trees were cultivated – the roots were aerated, the ground was weeded, the trees were watered, and protected from disease. It was my particular job to cut off the “suckers” – the unproductive branches. My point is this: It takes more than speaking truth to produce disciples of Christ – GOOD FRUIT REQUIRES CULTIVATION. And, it takes more than speaking truth to co-labor with Christ as He builds His Church. When ministries produce poor fruit in the Church it is not necessarily because the ministry of the word is “bad”. “The seed is the word” - there is nothing necessarily wrong with the seed. It’s a bad tree. The tree represents the minister and the way he operates his ministry. Ministers and ministries that are not in sync with Jesus as He builds His Church, are building something else – a large following of people and an enterprise. They are extending their influence and building their ministries; but they are not necessarily

producing disciples of Jesus or co-laboring with Christ as He builds His Church.

This lack of “pure and single devotion to Christ”<sup>31</sup> is unfortunately not a description of the modern church only. It started in the first century; and has been with us throughout church history. It was probably about 62 A.D., while imprisoned in Rome, that the apostle Paul wrote these sad words to the Philippians: “I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.”<sup>32</sup>

For ministries to be in sync with Jesus as He builds His Church, the ministers must operate like the apostle Paul: Being “wise master builders, laying the foundation of Christ and building upon that foundation with gold, silver and precious stones”<sup>33</sup> – “so that everyone can be presented complete in Christ”.<sup>34</sup> The desired fruit – the goal – is not meeting people’s needs. It is to “present every disciple complete in Christ” – “the knowledge of the Son of God,

<sup>31</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:3

<sup>32</sup> Philippians 2:20-21

<sup>33</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:10-12; Matthew 7:24-25

<sup>34</sup> Colossians 1:28

to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”<sup>35</sup> “In everything He must be pre-eminent”<sup>36</sup> – it is the revelation of Christ, relationship with Christ and reflection of Christ that is the desired fruit.

Even the idea of producing “devoted disciples” can be man centered. The desired fruit is God-centeredness, not man-centeredness, and certainly not a self-centeredness which is the insidious result of the “meeting people’s needs” approach to ministry. Certainly, God loves people and wants to meet their needs; and certainly, it is part of God’s purpose to “grow” and “build” people spiritually, for the Vineyard of the Lord – The Household of God – is made of people.

But Scripture says:

- “For FROM HIM and THROUGH HIM and TO HIM are all things.”<sup>37</sup>
- “For BY HIM all things were created...all things were created THROUGH HIM and FOR HIM.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ephesians 4:13

<sup>36</sup> Colossians 1:18 *English Standard Version*

<sup>37</sup> Romans 11:36

<sup>38</sup> Colossians 1:16

- “...HIM, FOR WHOM are all things and BY WHOM are all things.”<sup>39</sup>
- “...FROM WHOM are all things, and we exist THROUGH HIM.”<sup>40</sup>

Scripture says God is to be all in all,<sup>41</sup> so that, at the end, Christ hands over the kingdom to the God and Father.<sup>42</sup> We must ask ourselves: What is the nature of that kingdom and the Church that represents the kingdom? Does the kingdom exist primarily to serve Humanity or God? Underlying all the messages, behind all the ministries of the Church, which is the object of worship - the Creator or the creature?<sup>43</sup> The way we answer these questions will determine what is ultimately PRODUCED in people, or better, what kind of people are being PRODUCED. It is not the message (the seed) or the ministry (the tree), it is the FRUIT that ultimately reveals HOW people are being built, and what kind of people are being built – worshippers of God or lovers of self. “You will know them by their fruits.” Not by their gifts, but by their “fruits” – that is,

<sup>39</sup> Hebrews 2:10

<sup>40</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:6

<sup>41</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:28

<sup>42</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:24

<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed discussion of God-Centeredness, see my booklets “God-Centeredness” and “Creation Science & God-Centeredness”.

“You will know them by what they are PRODUCING or BUILDING”.

### **Matthew 7:21-27**

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ 24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

Certainly, we can see in this passage the difference between a false disciple and a true disciple of Christ. A true disciple of Christ is one who knows the Lord and is known by God. A true disciple of Christ is one who has been "taught to observe all that Jesus commanded".<sup>44</sup> To "observe"<sup>45</sup> all that Jesus commanded" is to "hear His words" and "act on them", thus founding and building one's spiritual house on the Rock.

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 28:20 "observe":

<sup>45</sup> Greek: *tereo*, Strong's # 5083.

Bill & Frances Furioso  
~ At Christ's Table ~



Just a little bit about ourselves ...

We have been married for 37 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Being an avid student by nature, I have done formal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology.

We served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years helping to establish churches and train church leaders. Our Bible teaching ministry has also taken us to other countries like Zimbabwe, Brazil, and England, as well as, throughout the United States.

We have pastored several churches, and as an itinerant Bible teacher, I have ministered in hundreds of churches on four continents. As a writer, I've authored many publications which are distributed to church leaders worldwide.

We minister together speaking in churches, leading spiritual formation seminars, personal mentoring, and administrating an international partnership of church leaders, which includes occasional overseas missions.

# ACT publications

*“... combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”*

1 Corinthians 2:13

A teaching ministry from Bill and Frances Furioso

## At Christ's Table

*Disciples of the King and His Kingdom eating and drinking of Jesus*

**THE HEAD**

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of Biblical Christianity

with a view to

**REVELATION** of Christ

**RELATIONSHIP** with Christ

**REFLECTION** of Christ

### **Digital Addresses:**

> YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/billfurioso](http://www.youtube.com/user/billfurioso)

> Facebook: [www.facebook.com/atchriststable](http://www.facebook.com/atchriststable)

> Twitter: [www.twitter.com/atchriststable1](http://www.twitter.com/atchriststable1)

> WordPress: [atchriststable.wordpress.com](http://atchriststable.wordpress.com)

Correspondence: [AtChristsTable@gmail.com](mailto:AtChristsTable@gmail.com)