**The Decline of ancient and modern Christianity**

Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith

Church world-wide, established by Jesus via Acts of the Holy Spirit (Christ in us our hope of glory)

Foundation:

* Word of God (Bible both OT&NT) to be preached to the lost and used to edify the saved
* Holy Spirit, Christ in us leading us, Gifts & Manifestations validate the spoken Word

Spread through the Roman Empire 33AD-3xxAD

**Ways churches are removed or affected by departing from their foundations: Rev 2-3**

* Ephesus, Rev 2:4-5 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent.
* Smyrna, (nothing is mentioned but they will endure harsh persecution)
* Pergamos, Rev 2:14-16 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.
* Thyatira, Rev 2:20-23 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.
* Sardis, Rev 3:1-3 I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.
* Philadelphia, (nothing is mentioned)
* Laodicea, Rev 3:15-19 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say,'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

**10/40 Window churches (upper Africa, near-middle-far East)**

* AD670-AD12xx, driven out, removed mainly by Islam (but why did God allow it? See above)
* 20/21st century reviving but still subdued or persecuted by Islam or Communism

**Western Christianity (Europe/USA/Australia)**

* AD3xx- Today: Splits, Denominations, wars, non-Biblical Doctrines
* Modern Times (20/21st century) Heart, Breaking state of affairs
	+ Mainline Denominations
		- ‘Scholarly’ dilution of the Word (weak translations abound)
		- Denial of the Holy Spirit’s communication/gifts/manifestations
		- Gradual concord with the world (divorce, homosexuality)
	+ Evangelicals (most Baptists, Church of Christ, Non-Denominational, etc.)
		- Word held as sacred, in many cases legalistically
		- Word held verbally as sacred but not really taught much, use of many diluted translations, minimal use of the Word in preaching, pulpit closely held, most teaching focuses on modern evangelical books and scholarship not the Bible, others may teach as long as the established norm is not challenged or overstepped
		- Denial of or restrictions on much or all of Holy Spirit’s communication/gifts/manifestations
	+ Pentecostals
		- Word held as sacred, sometimes legalistically
		- Limitations on the Holy Spirit’s communication/gifts/manifestations
	+ Modernists
		- Diluted Word based on social modernity
		- All are accepted in name of love (no sin except intolerance of the ‘harmless’ deeds of others)
	+ Cults and direct perversions of church
		- Flawed/controlling doctrines (often no Holy Spirit believed in)
	+ Many Charismatic
		- Holy Spirit gifts and manifestations experientially sought for individuals own edification/experience
		- Word often subjugated to ‘experience’ (my Karma ran over my Dogma)
	+ Where are these Believers to be found?
		- Word held sacred, life is not by bread alone
		- God sought out for direction and decisions in life
		- Jesus followed earnestly (regardless of how perfect that turns out)
		- Holy Spirit’s communication/all the gifts and manifestations welcomed in the fullness taught in the Word

**My personal dilemma:**

* By belief I count myself one of the latter, but I find myself collapsing under the current systems
* My home church is Evangelical, it has a definite mission of being a first step for the un-churched and pursues it but does not teach the Word in any depth, rather teaches Christian methods for living, and does not welcome ‘controversial’ gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit
* It has been a good church for my family but they are now grown
* My gifting includes a solid call to preach the Word, teaching from the Word, ministering healing, words of wisdom/knowledge/prophecy, administration, and giving
* Two-three years of Bible teaching in my church did not generate much interest, I currently exercise my gift of administration there and my gift of giving there and externally (called to serve the under-served)
* I have a full plate with work-load at work and family + issues at home, I may not be able to move forward in my full gifting without the support of a Christian community that is like minded
* Not much need for independent preachers unless I work local/foreign missions and/or offer Bible classes external to the Church but then what church would I recommend?
* I am currently discouraged, depressed, disappointed like never before, hard-pressed at work and feeling very unsuccessful in major home life areas. I have had mid-life crisis before but this is different. I think it is all part of God trying to move me forward and I believe eventually He will, I must seek Him.
* My biggest fear is that of wasting my life day after day in un-fruitfulness. I was predestined to be here in this day and age and in this place and the Lord should be getting a pretty good return on His investment by now. I seem to have been able to accomplish some fruit for Him over the years but also I have a string of failures to look back on as well. This has nothing to do with my salvation which is secure thank God through the work of Jesus (likely I will be beaten with the many rods when I get to heaven, but I’m ready for that and can accept it).