

FOUNDATION — BEFORE — PLATFORM

FORMING A LIFE THAT ENDURES

Introduction – The Gospel

Why We Can Live Differently Now



A DISCIPLESHIP & FORMATION COURSE

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A hand holding a wooden staff against a mountain landscape at sunset. The hand is wearing a white sleeve with purple and gold stripes. The background shows a mountain range with a cross on a peak, a forest, and a sunset sky.

Beyond the Dalet

Summoning Christ's Ekklesia
From Where We Are,
to Where We're Called to Be

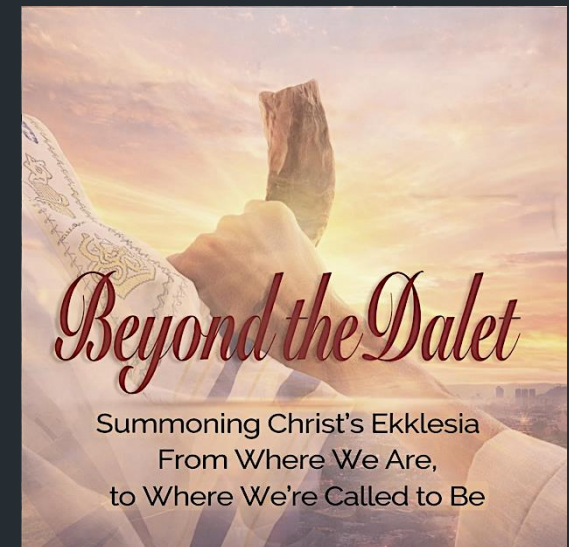


WITH BETTY HALL

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This is not a course designed to make you smaller or hide what God has placed within you. It is a call to ensure that whatever God entrusts to you can be carried without breaking you. **When foundation comes before platform, influence becomes stewardship, not striving.** Leadership becomes service, not self-preservation. Fruit becomes lasting, not impressive.

Foundation Before Platform is a summons to take your time, listen to God, and allow Him to form you. It is an invitation to allow God to do a deep and enduring work—one that holds steady in storms, remains faithful in obscurity, and stands firm when blessing and pressure both arrive. What God builds this way may take longer, but it will endure far longer than anything built for the sake of being seen.



Beyond The Dalet – Summoning Christ's Ekklesia From Where We Are To Where We Are Called To Be.

There is a quiet question the Spirit is asking in this generation—one that cuts beneath our desire to be seen, heard, and effective: “What is your life being built upon?” Not what others see, not what gains traction or influence, but what will remain when the winds rise and the ground is shaken. Scripture is clear that God is far less concerned with how high something stands than with how deeply it is rooted.

We live in a time that rewards personality, presence, and projection. Platforms can be built quickly, and recognition can come suddenly. But the Word of God reminds us that speed is not the same as strength, and visibility is not the same as stability. What is formed in public may impress, but what is formed in secret is what endures. God does His deepest work not on stages, but in hidden places—where motives are purified, hearts are aligned, and obedience is learned without applause.



This course is an invitation to return to the way of formation by the grace of God.

We will look to the wisdom of Scripture that reminds us to build on the rock rather than sand—to allow character to be shaped before calling is released, and foundation to be strengthened before platform is entrusted.

Integrity will anchor us when compromise whispers for attention. Humility will keep us low before God even if influence increases. Courage will sustain obedience when faithfulness costs us something. Patience will teach us to trust God's timing rather than grasp for outcomes. Faithfulness will form fruit that lasts longer than recognition.

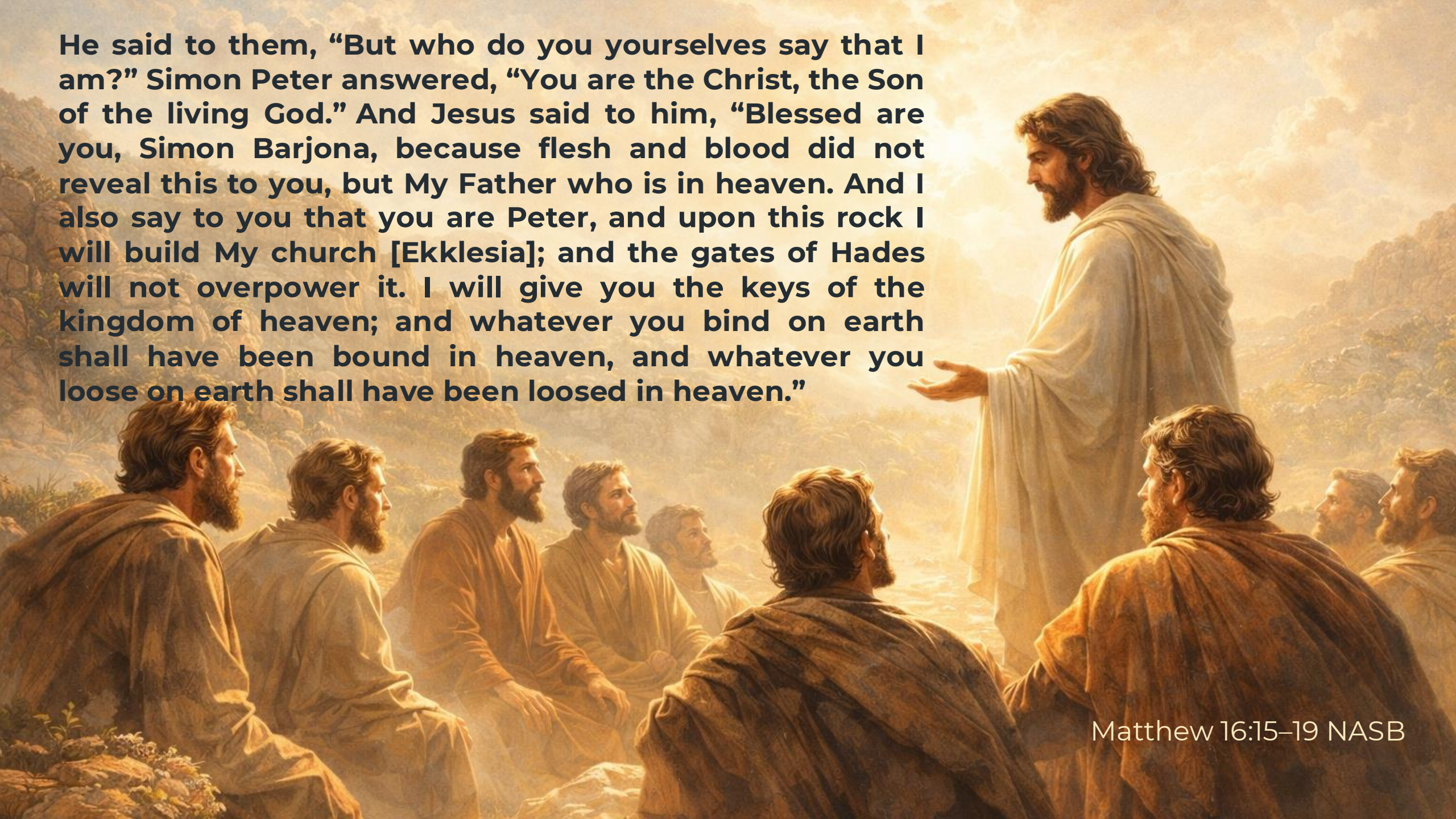


With all that; welcome to today's lesson, where we will explore how the early Church recognized the good news of the gospel and obedience to Christ as the sole authentic basis for a lasting life. This session aims to shift our focus from contemporary performance-oriented faith to a more profound formation-based discipleship, emphasizing our identity as a new creation in Christ.


Through these lessons, our goal is to redirect our attention from a modern, performance-driven approach to faith, which often emphasizes achievements and external accomplishments, to a deeper and more transformative formation-based discipleship. This approach focuses on nurturing our spiritual growth and development, encouraging us to embrace our identity as a new creation in Christ. This identity signifies a profound change in our nature and purpose, aligning our lives so we are living out of what Jesus provided for us, and endeavoring to foster a communities that value inner transformation over superficial success.



He said to them, “But who do you yourselves say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church [Ekklesia]; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”



Matthew 16:15–19 NASB



KINGDOM KEYS COME
WHEN WE HAVE A
REVELATION
OF CHRIST'S IDENTITY

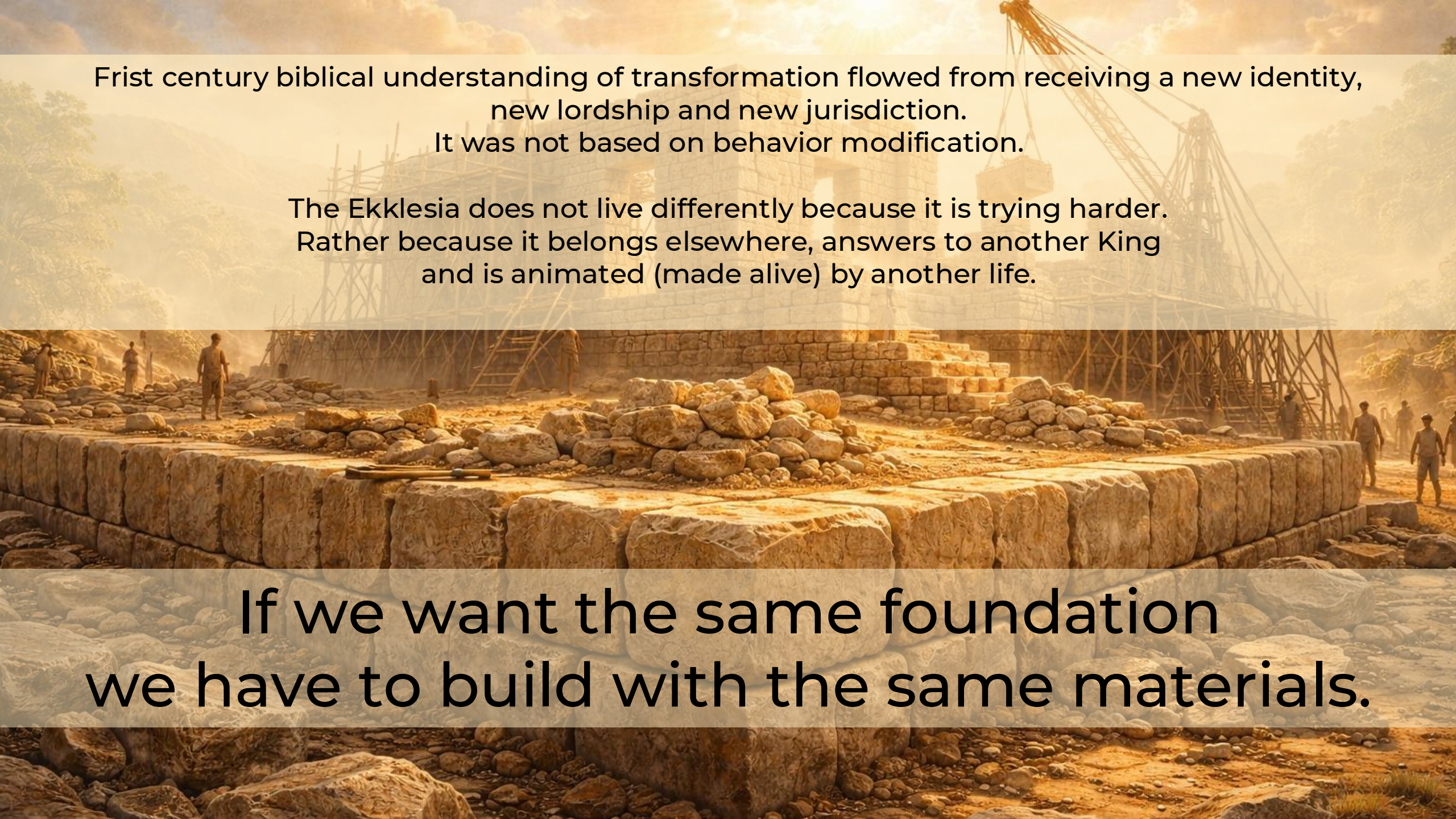
The keys are put
in our hands as we
live out of that
revelation

A photograph of a stone masonry construction site. In the foreground, several large, rectangular, light-brown stone blocks are stacked in a wall. Behind them, a large pile of rough, uncut stones sits on a wooden workbench. A wooden mallet and a square are also visible on the workbench. In the background, more stone blocks are visible, along with a wooden scaffolding structure. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

KINGDOM BUILDING MATERIAL

ISN'T ANCIENT

IT'S ETERNAL



Frist century biblical understanding of transformation flowed from receiving a new identity,
new lordship and new jurisdiction.
It was not based on behavior modification.

The Ekklesia does not live differently because it is trying harder.
Rather because it belongs elsewhere, answers to another King
and is animated (made alive) by another life.

If we want the same foundation
we have to build with the same materials.

Ephesians 2:19–22

So, then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

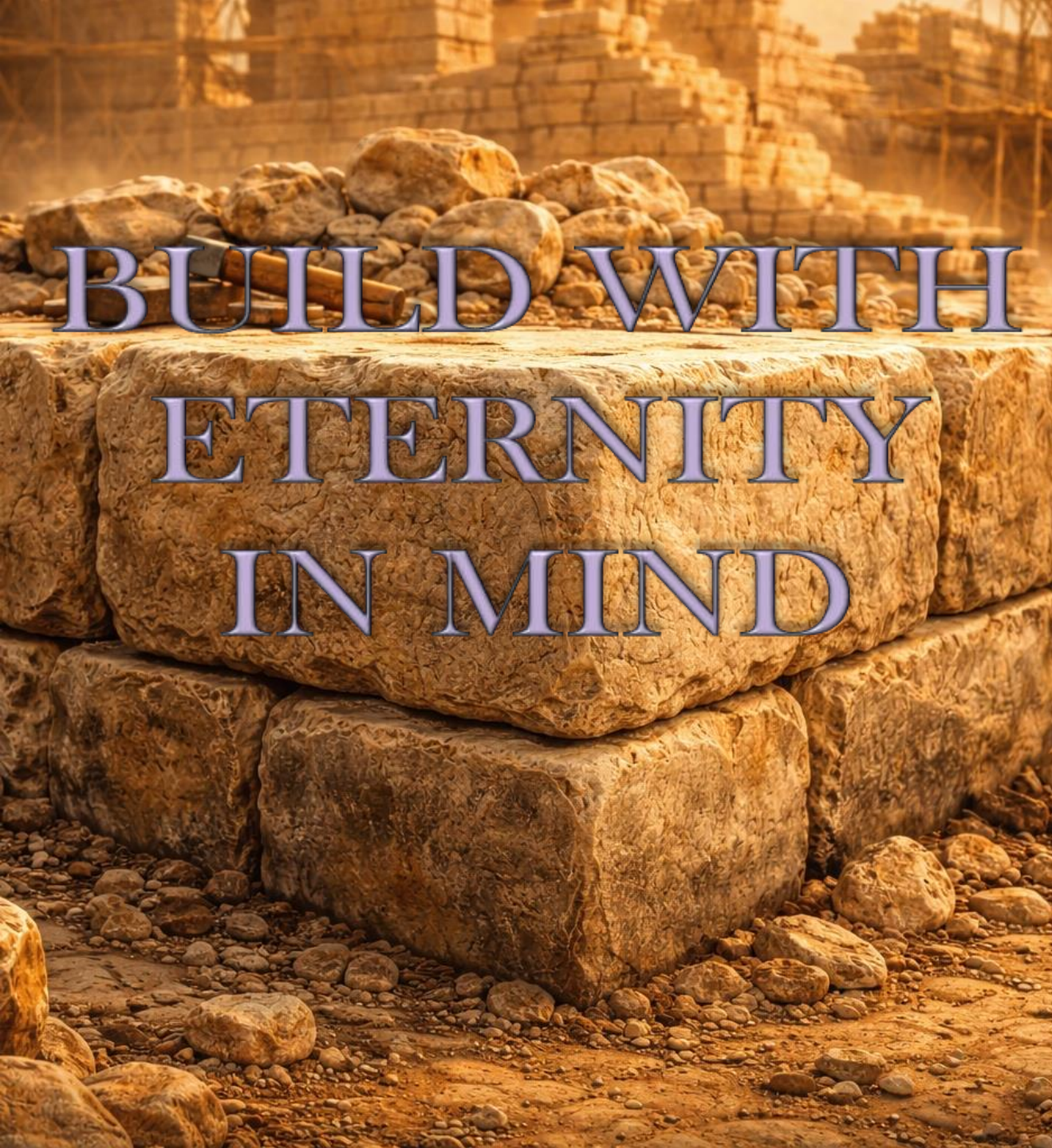
APOSTLES

MESSIAH

YESHUA

PROPHETS

Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

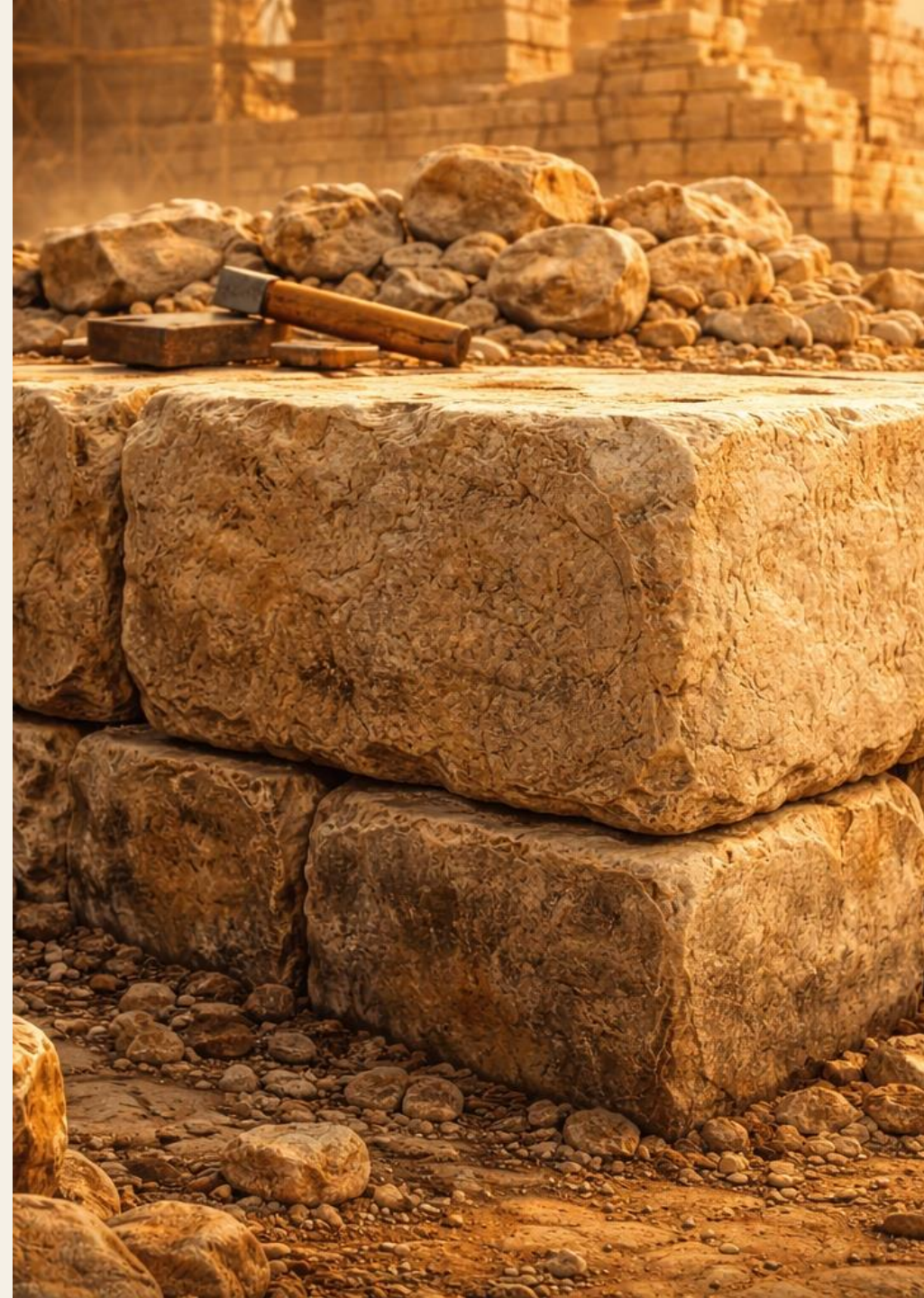


BUILD WITH ETERNITY IN MIND

1 Corinthians 3:10–15 (NASB 2020)

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each person must be careful how he builds on it. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one'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 one's work. If anyone's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet *only* so as through fire.

Our actions
don't establish
the foundation;
they reveal that
the foundation
has already been
laid.



What are we listening to?

Let's face it not everyone who calls themselves Christian is building from this perspective. But there are those who have, like Peter, gotten the revelation and are in possession of the keys of the kingdom

Jesus said, in Matthew 7:21–23 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 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?**’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; LEAVE ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

Seemed like harsh words to those who seemingly are followers of Jesus and doing the work! That's what I thought anyway. Yet this statement is made sandwiched between a caution to beware of false prophets and being a wise builder who builds on the rock rather than the foolish who build on the sand.

What's the difference? The key is in Jesus' statement made in verse 24. “Therefore, **everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts on them,** will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Not just hearing but acting on His words is the bedrock that sustains us. It's the foundation under our feet. And you'll see it develop over this course.

WE LIVE DIFFERENT

Jesus' warning here does not introduce obedience as a condition for life, but as the evidence of a life already grounded in Him. The rock is not about how consistently we obey, but the foundation God has already laid in Christ.

To hear and act is not to secure the foundation, but to build in harmony with a foundation already laid by God.

Where obedience is treated as the means of standing, the gospel quietly becomes law; where our obedience flows from revelation, it remains fruit, not root.

This passage therefore exposes false confidence built on religious activity, not the insufficiency of grace.

The wise builder is not the one who strives harder, but the one who rests upon what God has established and lives accordingly.

WE LIVE DIFFERENT

How we build the foundation of our lives starts with who we are listening to. It is established one Spirit-led step of grace at a time. Listening to Jesus and putting His words into action in our lives is the bedrock that sustains us.

Through these sessions we are going to take a look at the basics. Beginning with what the first century apostles had that seemingly eludes most of us today.

Why were they so passionate? What gave them the tenacity to stand in what seemed like a losing battle. How did they make it through the incredible adversity they faced?

In many ways the modern church is built on the sand. Rather than listening to Jesus and doing what He says, they listen to so called experts. Okay, if I have a plumbing issue in my house, I'm going to call a plumber to do the work. A brain surgeon may be good at what he does but his expertise in this situation doesn't match the work that needs to be done. I need a plumber.

For centuries, the church has been calling in brain surgeons to do the plumbing, in a manner of speaking, the so-called experts. These experts may be experts in their field but not in the ways of the kingdom of God.

Kingdom of God functions differently. Kingdom of God is built with different material. Kingdom of God citizens live different because they are different. We are different because of what Jesus did.

Why We Can Live Differently Now

A First-Century Christian Biblical Perspective

For the earliest followers of Jesus, coming to Christ was not adopting a new belief system or religious ethic. It was a transfer of allegiance, identity, power, and realm. To be “in Christ” meant something had objectively changed in reality, not just subjectively in behavior. They lived differently because they were different.

Being transferred from the kingdom of darkness (the world system) to the kingdom of God meant:

- A Change in Lordship Not Just Lifestyle
- A Transfer Between Kingdoms
- A New Source of Power: Indwelling Spirit
- Death and Resurrection Were Present Realities
- A Reordered Identity which completely shifted their end goal.
- Eternal foundation established by being grounded in Christ

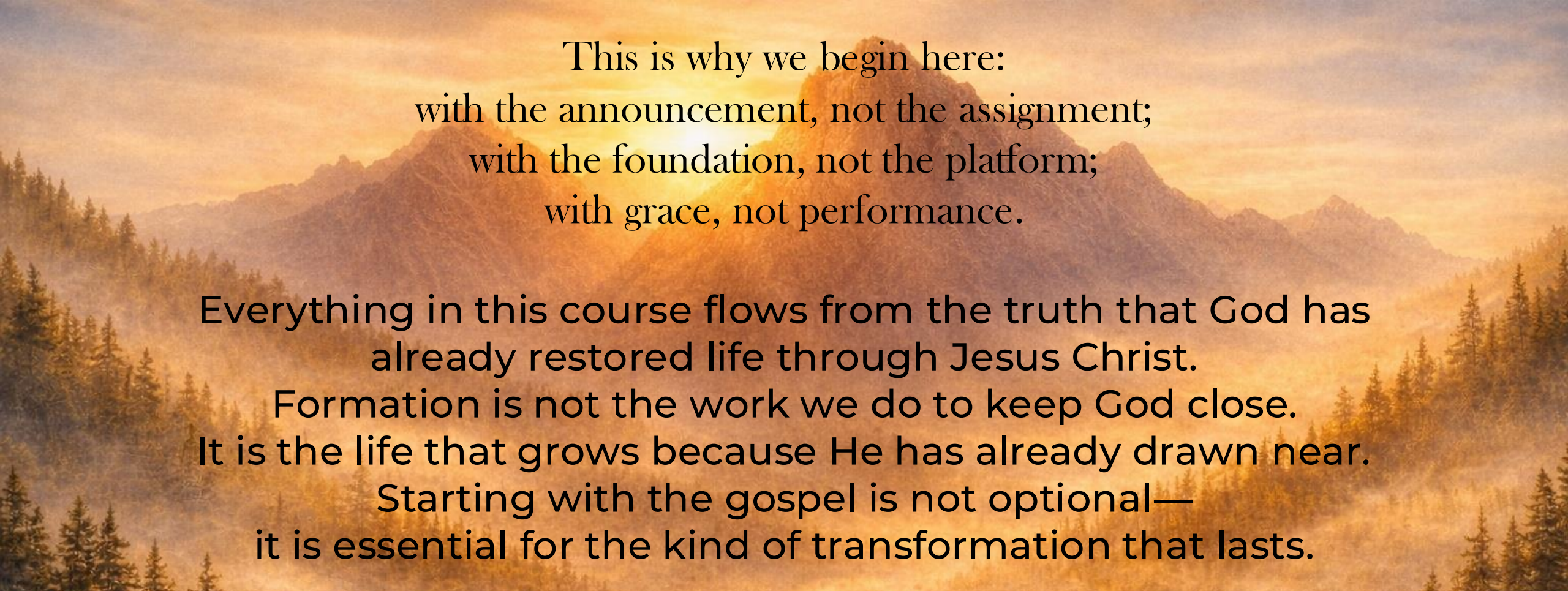


Our foundation, therefore, begins with the gospel—not as a ritual starting point, but as the only foundation strong enough to support a life that endures.

Before we talk about formation, calling, character, or obedience, we must first anchor ourselves in what God has already done. If we begin anywhere else, we risk building the Christian life backward—placing pressure where Scripture places grace and striving where Jesus extends rest.

The early Ekklesia did not live differently because they tried harder. They lived differently because something had already happened to them. God had acted. Christ had finished the work. The Spirit had come to dwell within them. Their formation flowed from this reality, not toward it.

Modern discipleship often reverses this order, placing instruction before identity, discipline before belonging, and effort before assurance. But when the gospel drifts into covenantal pressure—something to maintain or measure—we lose the very life that empowers true transformation.



This is why we begin here:
with the announcement, not the assignment;
with the foundation, not the platform;
with grace, not performance.

Everything in this course flows from the truth that God has already restored life through Jesus Christ.

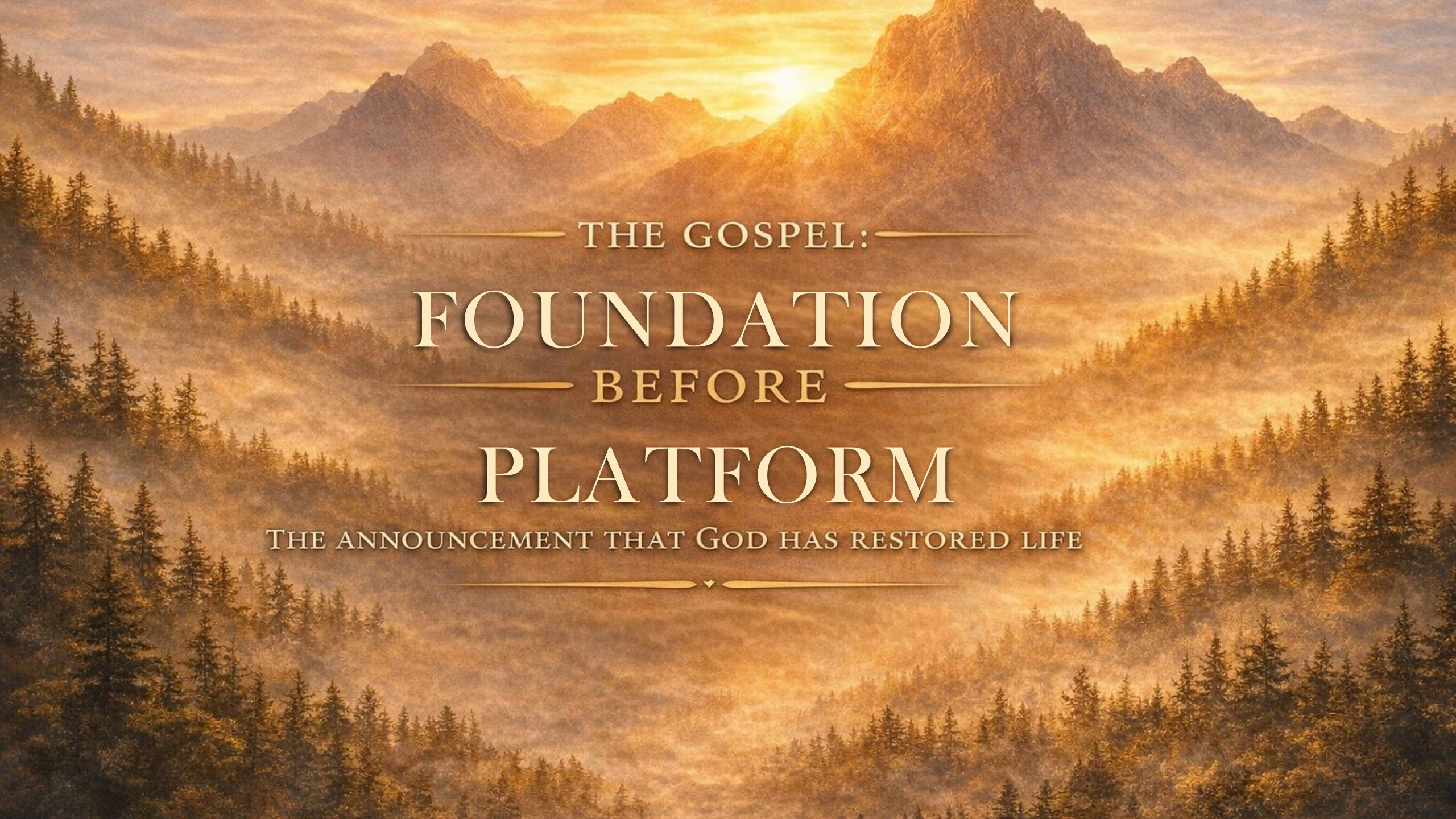
Formation is not the work we do to keep God close. It is the life that grows because He has already drawn near.

Starting with the gospel is not optional— it is essential for the kind of transformation that lasts.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT GOD HAS RESTORED LIFE

Salvation is a finished reality, not a process people are enrolled into


The power of the gospel is why we can live differently now



— THE GOSPEL: —
FOUNDATION
— BEFORE —
PLATFORM

THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT GOD HAS RESTORED LIFE





Before asking anything of us, God did something for us. Jesus didn't come to give us a better platform to stand on—**He came to become the foundation.** He stepped into our brokenness, took our sin and separation on Himself through the cross, and rose again to give us new life. Because of what He finished, we don't start by doing or proving; **we start by receiving.**

From this new foundation of being forgiven, restored, and made new—everything else in life and faith begins to grow.”

God came to restore what we could never fix.
Jesus gave His life so we could receive new life.
We are transferred into God's kingdom.
The Holy Spirit now lives within us.
We live differently because we are made new.

John 3:16 • Romans 5:8 • 2 Corinthians 5:17 • Colossians 1:13 • Romans 8:11

Common Modern Tendencies:

- Gospel is often reduced to decision moment
- Or expanded into maintaining an ethical program
- Or blurred into discipleship process

Correction:

The gospel is not what you do for God, and not even primarily how you grow—it is what God has done. **Discipleship flows from the gospel but is not the gospel itself.**

For Paul the Apostle, the central danger concerning drifting from this truth was this: Turning the gospel (announcement) into a system (administration). Paul's letters repeatedly warn that when the gospel is absorbed into law, covenantal obligation, or identity maintenance, it ceases to function as gospel—even if Christ's name remains attached.

JN Darby wrote: "The gospel is not a covenant*". This statement is basically Paul's argument reiterated after two millennia of misuse. ThroDarby was making a precision distinction, not a downgrade of the gospel. He is guarding what the gospel is from being confused with how God administers covenant life.



*J. N. Darby, Synopsis of the Books of the Bible: Colossians to Revelation.



What the Gospel Is

The gospel is not a list of rules.

It is the announcement that God has already acted
to restore life through Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:16

What the Gospel Is

**The gospel is not an agreement you enter into;
it is news you receive.**

**The gospel is not a list of rules.
It is the announcement that God has already acted
to restore life through Jesus Christ.**

Scripture: Romans 1:16

What God Has Done

**Salvation is not covenantal performance
but divine disclosure.**

**God unveils what He has done in Christ—full stop.
God came near in Jesus.**

He took our place. He opened the way back to life.

Scripture: Romans 5:8

A New Identity

God doesn't improve the old life.

He gives a new one.

New creation, not better behavior.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17

A New Kingdom

**We are rescued from darkness
and transferred into Christ's kingdom.**

Scripture: Colossians 1:13

A New Power

We don't live differently by trying harder.

We live differently because the Spirit lives within us.

Scripture: Acts 1:8; Ezekiel 36:27

A New Life



Resurrection is not only Jesus' story.

It is the power that animates ours.

Scripture: Romans 6:4; Romans 8:11

A New People

**The gospel forms a people—
the Ekklesia, called out and called together.**

Scripture: Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19–22

The Gospel

**It's not about rules
It's about relationship**

**It's not about pressure
It's about His abiding presence**

**It's not about our performance
It's about His life in us**

**It's not something we can earn
It's about receiving what He has already freely given**

THE GOSPEL IS

A proclamation:
Announces victory
Declares freedom
Invites trust, not compliance

The gospel is not a new set of rules dressed up as grace.
It is God announcing that salvation has already been accomplished in Christ.
**We live in the power and blessings promised in the new covenant,
but we experience them as life, not as law.**

Grace – The gospel remains free, unconditional, and declarative
Christ – Everything rests on His finished work, not covenant terms
The Spirit – Life is animated from within, not enforced from without

The danger to be resisted is turning the gospel into:
A new legal framework
A Christianized Sinai
A softened version of law

Being established upon the foundation of Christ is not a probation system or a means of judgment.

Grace always precedes, grounds, and sustains our obedience.



“If the gospel isn’t a covenant, are we missing the new covenant?”

Not at all.

Believers fully enjoy:

Forgiveness of sins

A cleansed conscience

The indwelling Spirit

Internal transformation

Intimate knowledge of God

All the substance of the new covenant is ours.

Everything is anchored in the cross—not in experience, or law-keeping. Obedience flows out of relationship. It is not a means of maintaining good standing.

Let's Pause for a moment to reflect

*You are invited to participate
in this prayerful declaration*

Father God

We come to You - not to secure our place,
but to remember that Jesus secured it on our behalf.
Before we speak, before we serve, before we build—
You have already acted.

Before one act of obedience, You already gave mercy.
Before calling, You gave life.

We confess how easily we trade revelation for responsibility,
how quickly we turn good news into quiet law,
how subtly we measure faithfulness by visibility
instead of by abiding.

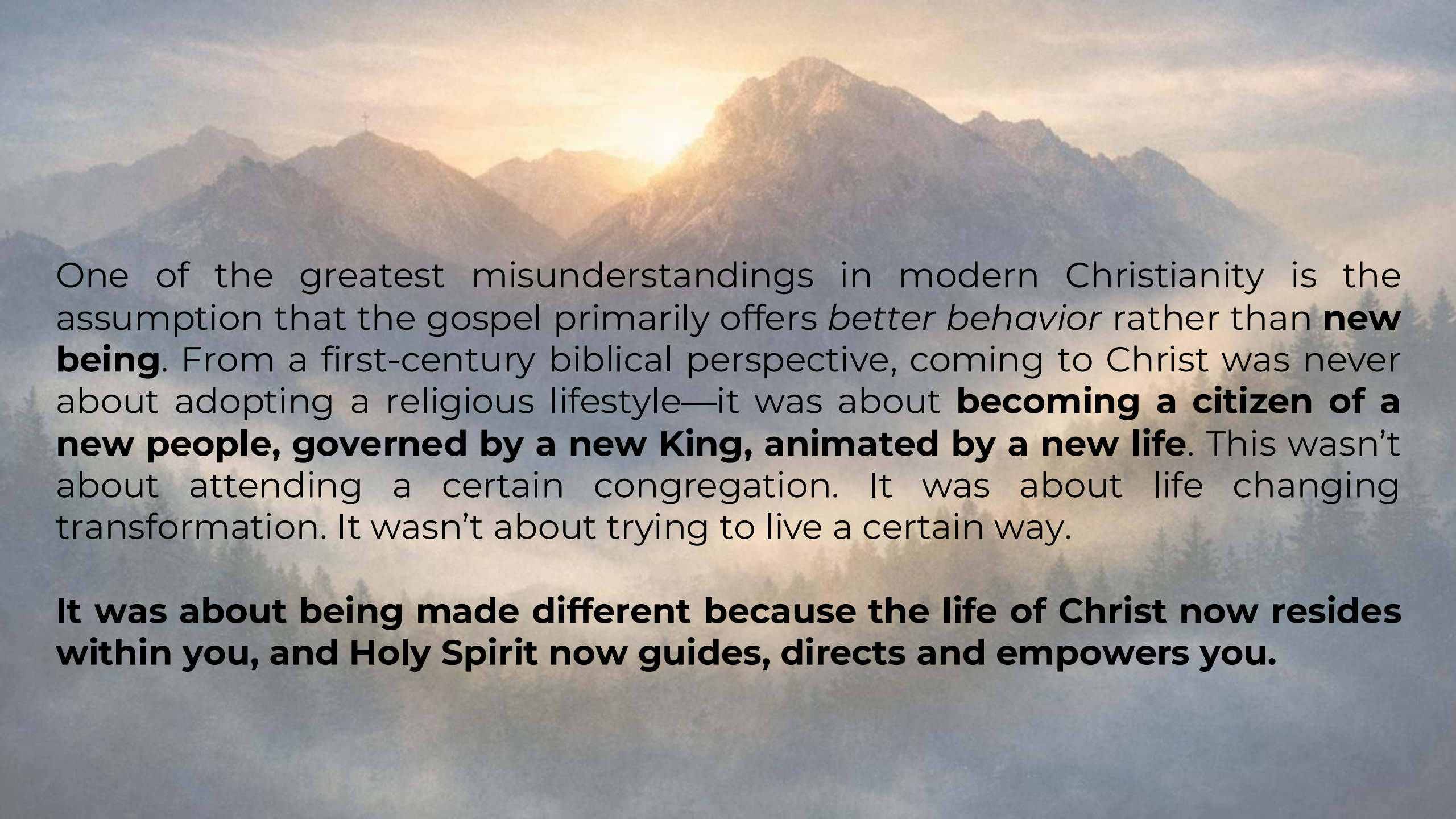
Return us to the foundation of the gospel.
Not to our sincerity. Not to our discipline. Not to our usefulness.
But to the blood of Christ
and the finished work that speaks louder than our striving.

Teach us to live from the inside out—
to move in the Spirit, not the letter;
to serve from the rest Jesus provided, not from fear;
to obey as sons and daughters,
not as workers trying to earn a place at the table...

...Where we have built platforms without depth,
tear them down gently.
Where we have rushed ahead of formation,
slow us without shame.
Where we have confused anointing with approval,
re-anchor us in Your love.
Form Christ in us
before You release Christ through us.
Establish character before capacity.
Root us in hiddenness before fruitfulness.
Let our lives proclaim the gospel—
not as covenantal pressure,
but as living testimony
that salvation has already been revealed.
We receive again what You have already given.
We rest again where You have already finished.
We stand again on the foundation
that cannot be shaken.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

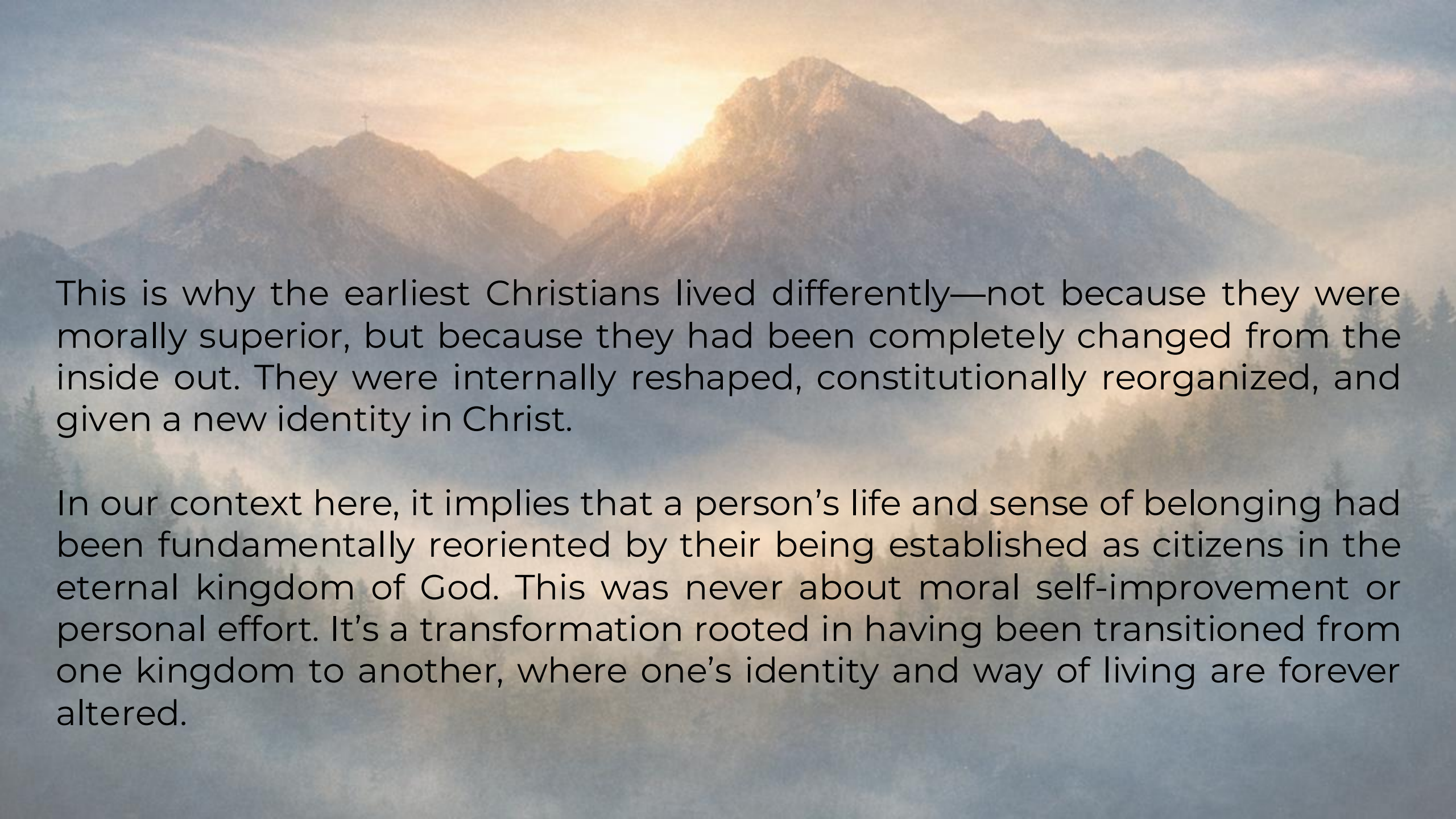


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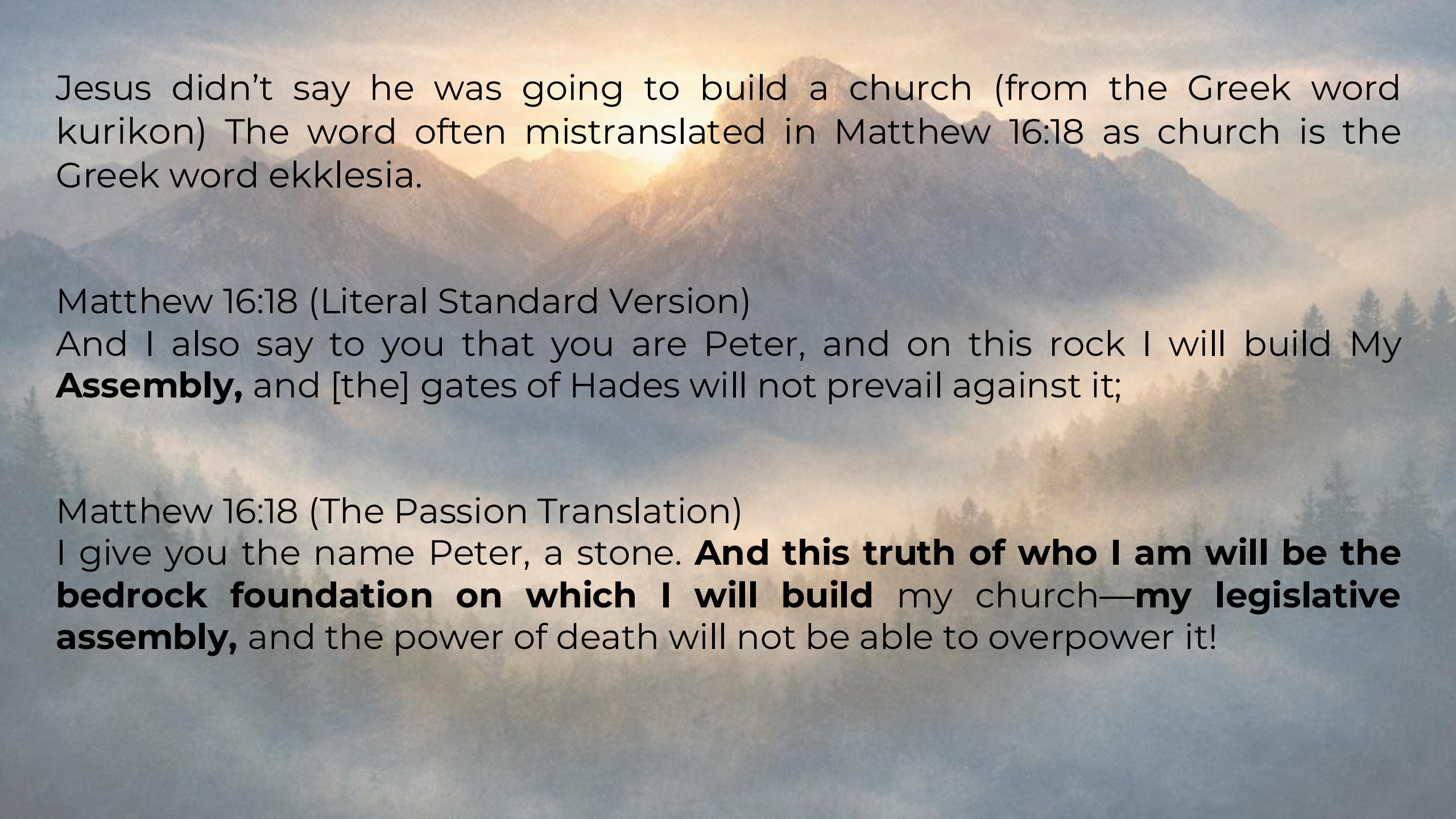
One of the greatest misunderstandings in modern Christianity is the assumption that the gospel primarily offers *better behavior* rather than **new being**. From a first-century biblical perspective, coming to Christ was never about adopting a religious lifestyle—it was about **becoming a citizen of a new people, governed by a new King, animated by a new life**. This wasn't about attending a certain congregation. It was about life changing transformation. It wasn't about trying to live a certain way.

It was about being made different because the life of Christ now resides within you, and Holy Spirit now guides, directs and empowers you.



This is why the earliest Christians lived differently—not because they were morally superior, but because they had been completely changed from the inside out. They were internally reshaped, constitutionally reorganized, and given a new identity in Christ.

In our context here, it implies that a person's life and sense of belonging had been fundamentally reoriented by their being established as citizens in the eternal kingdom of God. This was never about moral self-improvement or personal effort. It's a transformation rooted in having been transitioned from one kingdom to another, where one's identity and way of living are forever altered.



Jesus didn't say he was going to build a church (from the Greek word kurikon) The word often mistranslated in Matthew 16:18 as church is the Greek word ekklesia.

Matthew 16:18 (Literal Standard Version)

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My **Assembly**, and [the] gates of Hades will not prevail against it;

Matthew 16:18 (The Passion Translation)

I give you the name Peter, a stone. **And this truth of who I am will be the bedrock foundation on which I will build** my church—**my legislative assembly**, and the power of death will not be able to overpower it!

The word 'ekklesia' comes from two Greek words: 'ek,' meaning "out of," and 'kalein,' meaning 'to call.' So, ekklesia originally referred to "the called out ones." Back in ancient Greek culture, ekklesia was used to indicate civic gatherings, not just people who were called out. Even though we understand it differently now, that's how it started. In everyday Greek, it meant **men who were called from their homes or jobs to do civic work, and it also meant any group of people getting together.**

But when it comes to modern Christianity, the meaning has changed a lot.

The New Testament ekklesia is made up of people who have been called out by the Holy Spirit and have become citizens of the kingdom of God. They get together to worship, pray, grow spiritually, and help spread Christ's kingdom.

The word 'ekklesia' is also used in place of the Hebrew word 'qahal,' which means 'assembly' [as of Israel].

Early Christians would have used ekklesia because it had the same meaning as the Old Testament word for civic and general gatherings.

It's a Big Difference When it Comes to Identity

The English word church comes from an entirely different the Greek word: “kūrikón,” which means “the Lord’s house.” That’s why we often think of churches as buildings, but the original idea expressed through ekklesia was about people. It was never about buildings.

The subtle shift in English translation from assembly to church may not seem that drastic to us today, but the underlying message it conveys is essential for us to understand. The mistranslation of ‘ekklesia’ as the English word ‘church’ helped to furthered the misguided efforts of the religious organization attempting to maintain control over people through intimidation, coercion and threats. The agenda of course went further than one mistranslation, but that’s a story for another day.

It’s important for us to understand that we are a called-out assembly, a gathering of those summoned out of the world system, to gather as citizens of the eternal kingdom of God is important.

In order to have a proper foundation we need to start with who we are, and why we are different than the world around us.

The Ekklesia: Not just another Gathering, but a Governing Body

When Jesus declared, *“I will build My Ekklesia”* (Matthew 16:18), He did not introduce a new religious meeting. He invoked a word charged with civic, legal, and governmental meaning.

In the first-century Greco-Roman world, an *ekklesia* was:

- A called-out assembly
- Authorized to represent the interests of a ruling authority
- Commissioned to embody and enforce the values of that authority in a territory

Jesus was not forming an audience. He was establishing a kingdom outpost.

To come to Christ, then, meant being transferred into a people who **carried heaven’s authority on earth**, not symbolically, but functionally.

“You are... members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:19–20)



What Else Was Different?

A Change of Lordship, Not Just Lifestyle

In the first century, κύριος (Kyrios, Lord) was not a devotional term—it was a political and cosmic declaration. To confess “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9) meant:

- Caesar is not Lord
- Sin is not Lord
- Death is not Lord

Paul states plainly:

“You are not your own; you were bought with a price.” (1 Cor. 6:19–20)

A first-century believer understood that a new master now governed their life. Obedience then was not about self-discipline; it flowed from new ownership.

Different living followed naturally from different lordship.

A New Lord, a New Allegiance

For first-century believers, the confession “*Jesus is Lord*” (Romans 10:9) was a public declaration of allegiance.

This confession meant:

- **Jesus governs my life**
- **His kingdom defines my loyalties**
- **His authority outweighs every competing power**

Paul makes this unmistakably clear:

“You are not your own; you were bought with a price.” (1 Cor.6:19–20)

The Ekklesia does not negotiate lordship.

Different living flows from **different ownership**.

This truth is deeply edifying for us as believers, because it means obedience is not about striving to please God—it is the natural outworking of belonging to Him.

A Transfer Between Kingdoms

Early Christians believed salvation involved **spiritual relocation**:

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” (Colossians 1:13)

This was not metaphorical language.

They understood the world as ruled by competing powers—sin, death, the flesh, and the principalities. This truth remains whether we realize it or not.

To belong to Christ means we were **rescued from one realm and planted into another**.

That is why Paul says:

“How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:2)

A Transfer Between Kingdoms

From a first-century viewpoint, sticking to the old ways—whether continuing to follow the Mosaic law to be justified or remaining connected to pagan activities—would be seen as a surprising and backward step, like a freed slave choosing to go back into chains. Early Christian teachings, especially in Paul’s letters, describe this as more than just breaking rules or lacking self-control.

It was a deep contradiction: a major conflict with the new identity believers had gained through Christ. Going back to the old system after being freed in Christ would not just be a bad decision or a moral mistake; it would deny the true nature of the changed self, rejecting the new creation brought about by the Spirit.

In this perspective, living freely is more than just a choice. It is the essential way to express who one has become. To do otherwise would mean living in a state of constant inner conflict, out of sync with the new reality established by Christ’s death and resurrection.

BORN FROM ABOVE

Not trying to moralize the old life

Being born into a whole new life

Coming to Christ means being born from above [John 3:3,5-8 LSV]

Jesus answered and said to him, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone may not be born from above, he is not able to see the Kingdom of God”;**

Jesus answered, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone may not be born of water and the Spirit, he is not able to enter into the Kingdom of God; that which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.** You may not wonder that I said to you, It is required for you to be born from above; the Spirit blows where [that] One wills, and you hear [that] One’s voice, but you have not known from where [that] One comes, and to where [that] One goes; thus is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”

Being born from above fundamentally means receiving Jesus Christ through faith, which initiates a spiritual transformation. When you receive the new life in Jesus, the Holy Spirit enters your heart, (your inner most being) awakening and giving life to your spirit and providing eternal life—this is what launches us into the new birth.

To be born again is not about trying harder or becoming more religious. It's about receiving a new life. It's not about a change of behavior. It's a change of nature

When someone turns their life over to Jesus Christ, God does something profound:

His Spirit comes to live within us. This is the moment Scripture describes as being “born again.” It is not a metaphor for self-improvement—it is a spiritual awakening, where what was once dead is made alive by the Spirit of the Living God.

When a person prays, asking Jesus for forgiveness and inviting the Holy Spirit to come into their life. At that moment, God brings them into a new relationship as His child. This new birth happens through faith in Jesus, and it gives a person a new identity—no longer separated from God, but belonging to Him.

The Holy Spirit does this by resurrecting our once dead spirit. Our spirit, has been made alive unto God. We are animated by the Spirit of God. Christ now lives within, guiding, shaping, and renewing us from the inside out. This change happens immediately, no matter a person's past. As a result, everything begins to look different—Scripture comes alive, Jesus becomes real, and their new life is now seen through new eyes. It is a complete reorientation of life, made possible by being made alive by the Spirit of God.

From an Ekklesia perspective, this new birth is highly personal and completely transformational.

A person is brought out of the old way of life and into a new reality under Christ's reign. This humbly begins with honesty before God. We acknowledge that we have lived independent of Him, shaped by sin and unable to restore ourselves. Yet the story does not end there. God's love meets us in that place. He sent Jesus to stand in our place, to carry the weight of sin, and to open the way back to life with God.

This leads to repentance—not as shame, but as reorientation. Repentance means changing how we see sin, ourselves, and God. It is a turning away from the old life and a turning toward the life Jesus now offers. It's a shift of allegiance. We are no longer ruled by the old patterns; we come under the loving authority of Christ. No longer dead in sin, but alive unto God.

The response itself is simple. We come to Jesus honestly, asking for forgiveness and welcoming the Holy Spirit into our lives. In that moment, something real happens. God adopts us as His children. We are not merely forgiven—we are reborn. The Spirit forms a new inner life, and we are now part of God's renewed people, the Ekklesia.

What makes this transformation so significant is that it is not behavior management.

Being born again is not about modifying habits or adding spiritual activities. It is a change of nature. The Spirit of God now animates our lives. Christ dwells within us, reshaping our desires, our vision, and our direction. This not only happens immediately, regardless of our past, it continues to unfold as we learn and grow out of our new identity.

As a result, everything begins to look different. Our minds are opened to the Scriptures. Jesus becomes more than a historical figure—He becomes present and personal. The world itself is seen in a new light.

This is what Beyond the Dalet endeavors to point us toward: not merely crossing a line of belief, but stepping into a new way of being, formed by the Spirit and lived out from our new identity in Christ.



Jesus,
I come to You just as I am.
I acknowledge that I have lived my life apart from You
and that I cannot restore myself.
Thank You for loving me and for giving Your life
so that I could be forgiven and made new.
I turn away from my old life
and turn toward You.
I receive You now—
not only as Savior, but as Lord.
I ask You to forgive my sins
and to fill me with Your Holy Spirit.
Make me alive in You and come and live in me.
Form in me a new heart, a new mind, and a new direction.
Teach me to live from this new identity
as a child of God and a member of Your people.
I give You my life and put my trust in You.
Lead me by Your Spirit from this day forward. ~ Amen





From the Dawn of a New Life

A New Source of Power: The Indwelling Spirit

Made Alive by the Spirit of the Living God

What distinguished the post-resurrection Ekklesia from every other religious system is **the indwelling Holy Spirit**.

The prophets anticipated it:

“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.” (Ezekiel 36:27)

Jesus promised it:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” (Acts 1:8)

And Paul explained it:

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20)

The Ekklesia does not operate on self motivated willpower, but the power of Holy Spirit.

Transformation then flows from His **indwelling life**, not external pressure.

This is deeply consoling because it means growth is not sustained by self-effort, but by His divine presence within.

A New Source of Power: The Indwelling Spirit

Judaism before Christ emphasized obedience to Torah (Law) empowered by devotion and discipline.

What was brought about through the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ was a whole new way of living. Freed from conforming through outward compliance believers are inwardly transformed by Holy Spirit.

The first-century Ekklesia did not believe they could live differently because they could simply try harder or because they were empowered to now live Torah compliant.

They could live differently because they had been reborn with a new nature, one made alive by the indwelling Holy Spirit. They were being made completely new from the inside out. This spiritual transformation was due to Holy Spirit coming to reside in their heart which had been made alive through Christ.

This wasn't a moral conversion brought about by a change of mind. The change was evidence that a whole new life existed. This new life was being lived by the new internal power source. The life of God now empowered them from within.

The Indwelling Spirit - A New Existence

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is understood as the very presence of God taking up residence within believers, fulfilling promises long awaited from the Hebrew Scriptures.

For the first century Ekklesia, this was not an abstract idea or a mere moral influence. It was the divine life entering and bringing to life the human spirit which had been previously dead in sin but was now made alive. They believed that the Spirit which now inhabited them was the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. The Holy Spirit indwelling in them now produced in them a whole new kind of existence.

Moral transformation was not the result of stricter discipline or heightened effort. Rather, it was the visible sign of an inward reality: the Creator's Spirit reshaping the heart from within.

This understanding aligned with concepts from the Old Testament prophets—like Ezekiel's promise of a new heart and a new spirit—and with the early Assembly's conviction that believers had become the temple of God, the dwelling place of God's Spirit in the earth.

Their sense of empowerment and distinctiveness came from God's indwelling presence, which guided, convicted, and empowered them to live in a way that reflected the life of Christ.

The Power to Live Differently

Thus, for those in the first century, the indwelling Spirit was the source of their courage, holiness, and brotherly love. It was not a distant force but a personal and transformative presence. This is why early Believers could face persecution, love their enemies, and live in radical generosity. They were not trying to imitate Jesus. They were made alive by His Spirit living in them. And they were now living their new life by the power of the Spirit.

Becoming a follower Christ then was understood to involve a radical transfer of identity, allegiance, and power—establishing a concrete change in reality that naturally produced obedience and endurance. Believers saw themselves as part of a new creation, belonging to a new kingdom, and living by the indwelling Spirit. Living differently was the inevitable outflow of who they had become.

In contrast, a modern mindset often treats faith as a performance or lifestyle choice, measured by visible success, productivity, or influence. Instead of starting from formation and identity, contemporary approaches frequently prioritize outcomes—platforms, recognition, or moral achievement—hoping that external behavior will validate internal faith. Where first-century Ekklesia expected transformation to flow from being, modern believers often strive to prove belonging through doing, mistaking activity and visibility for a firm foundation.

Death and Resurrection Were Present Realities

From a first-century biblical reality, to follow Christ was to step into an entirely new existence, one that redefined identity, allegiance, and purpose at the deepest level.

Early believers understood that they were not simply adding faith to an existing life but were transferred into a new kingdom under a new Lord, animated by the indwelling Spirit. Obedience, then, was not a performance or a moral achievement—it was the natural expression of a transformed being, a life rooted in the fact that they had died and risen with Christ.

Endurance in trials flowed from this foundation because their very nature and reality had shifted; storms only revealed the strength of a life built on the bedrock of union with Christ.

In contrast, the modern paradigm often treats faith as a lifestyle choice or performance metric, where external outcomes—success, influence, or platform—are mistaken for spiritual substance. Contemporary believers can fall into striving to prove their belonging through activity and visibility, yet without deep formation, such faith is fragile under pressure.

The first-century lens invites modern disciples to recover a life built on hidden obedience and Spirit-driven formation, where identity in Christ precedes action, and endurance is the fruit of being, not doing.

Death and Resurrection Were Present Realities

The reality of Christ's resurrection empowers believers in a profoundly real and tangible way because it is not merely a historical event to be remembered, but a present reality that defines their lives (Philippians 3:10–11). By sharing in His resurrection, Christians experience a transfer from death to life (John 5:24), from bondage to freedom (Romans 6:6–7), and from fear to hope (1 Peter 1:3).

This resurrection life means that believers are internally animated by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11), giving them strength to endure trials (2 Corinthians 4:14–16), courage to stand firm in faith (1 Corinthians 15:58), and the ability to walk in obedience as new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It transforms the way they see themselves and their world, allowing them to live with confidence that their labor, love, and faithfulness are rooted in a life that will never perish (Colossians 3:1–4).

The resurrection is not just a promise for the future—it is the source of supernatural power and enduring hope in the present (Ephesians 1:18–20), equipping believers to live differently because they are truly different within (Romans 6:4).

Death and Resurrection Were Present Realities

The early church did not view the cross and resurrection as merely events Jesus experienced *instead of them*, **but events in which they participated.**

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death... so we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

To be baptized then was to publicly declare:

- My old life has ended
- My former identity has been judged
- A new creation has begun

This is why Paul says:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

Not improved upon creation. Not morally refined creation. **Completely New creation.**

Identity Before Instruction

Why Scripture Always Tells Us Who We Are

Before It Tells Us What to Do

One of the most consistent patterns in Scripture—often overlooked in modern discipleship—is that **God establishes identity before issuing instruction**. This is not accidental. It reflects how formation actually works in the kingdom of God.

Identity Before Instruction

Identity in the Ancient World: Fixed, Inherited, and External

In the first-century world, identity was not self-defined. It was **assigned at birth** and reinforced socially.

A person's identity was rooted in:

- Lineage (Jew/Gentile, tribe, household)
- Status (free/slave, citizen/foreigner)
- Gender (roles rigidly prescribed)
- Honor and shame (public reputation determined worth)

Who you were determined:

- What you could do
- Where you could go
- What authority you carried
- What future you could imagine

Identity Before Instruction

Identity preceded action—but identity was **static**, not transformative.

This is why Paul's declaration is so radical:

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female,
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (Galatians 3:28)

Paul is not erasing distinctions; he is **relocating identity**.

The primary marker of who you are is no longer social, biological, or cultural

—but **relational established through the new covenant in Christ**.

Identity Before Instruction

In the ancient world, identity was determined by lineage, status, gender, honor and shame

But in Christ, identity is **re-rooted**:

“You are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

The Ekklesia was taught who they were before being told how to *live*.

This is why biblical ethics always follows theological identity.

Being precedes doing.

This edifies the believer because we do not obey to become something—we obey because we already are.

Identity Before Instruction

Re-rooted Identity: “In Christ”

The phrase “*in Christ*” is one of Paul’s most frequent theological expressions. It is not poetic language—it is **ontological (the nature of being) language**

To be “in Christ” means:

- You share in His death (Romans 6:3–4)
- You share in His life (Colossians 3:3–4)
- You share in His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- You share in His inheritance (Romans 8:17)

Paul does not say, “You will become a new creation if you obey.”

He says: “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, this person **is** a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*” (2 Cor. 5:17)

Identity is **declared**, not achieved.



Built for Endurance, Not Exposure

Jesus' teaching on foundations (Matthew 7:24-27) was a warning to the Ekklesia before it was fully formed.

Storms were expected.

Pressure was assumed.

Testing was inevitable.

The question was never *if* storms would come,
but *what would remain*.

First-century believers understood that:

- **Storms reveal foundations**
- **Endurance confirms formation**
- **Faithfulness outweighs visibility**



The background of the image is a scenic landscape during a golden hour, likely sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with soft, warm light and scattered clouds. In the foreground, there is a stone wall or a series of stone blocks. In the middle ground, there are rolling hills or mountains. In the far distance, a city or town is visible, its buildings silhouetted against the bright sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

Foundation before Platform,

Character before Capacity,

Formation before Function.

Why We Can Live Differently Now

From a first-century Ekklesia perspective,
believers live differently because:

We belong to a new King

We function within a new kingdom

We are empowered by a new Spirit

We participate in a new life

We embody a new creation

We are being formed for eternity, not immediacy

This is not behavioral management

This is kingdom embodiment

And in the spirit of **1 Corinthians 14:3**, this truth:

Edifies by grounding believers in who we truly are

Encourages by affirming the Spirit's active work within us

Consoles by reminding us we are not striving alone

The Ekklesia does not live differently to prove its faith.

We live differently because Christ lives within us.

Scripture's Pattern: Declaration Before Demand

This pattern is consistent throughout Scripture:

Israel Before the Law

God does not give Israel the Law in order to make them His people. He gives the Law because they already are His people.

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt..."
(Exodus 20:2)

Only after this declaration does He say, "You shall..."



Deliverance precedes obedience.



A painting depicting Jesus standing on a rocky outcrop, gesturing towards a group of his disciples who are seated on the ground. The scene is set in a vast, mountainous landscape under a bright, hazy sky. Jesus is wearing a white robe, while the disciples are in simple, earth-toned clothing. The overall atmosphere is one of spiritual illumination and teaching.

Jesus and the Disciples

Jesus does not say, “Follow Me so that you may become My disciples.” He says:

“Follow Me, and I will make you...” (Matthew 4:19)

**Calling precedes formation.
Belonging precedes becoming.**

The Epistles: Identity First ~ Ethics Second

Paul's letters consistently follow this structure:

- Indicative (what is true of you in Christ)
- Imperative (how you are to live)

Example: Ephesians

- Chapters 1–3: Who you are (chosen, adopted, seated with Christ)
- Chapters 4–6: How you walk

“Therefore... walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received.” (Ephesians 4:1)

You do not walk to earn the calling.

You walk because you have received it.

Why Being Precedes Doing

From a biblical perspective, obedience that does not flow from identity is unsustainable. Jesus addresses this directly:

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” (Matthew 7:18)

Fruit does not create the tree. Fruit reveals the tree.

The Ekklesia is not trained to perform righteousness, but to embody it.

“Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.” (1 Peter 1:15)

Notice: called precedes conduct.



How This Differs from the Modern Mindset

Modern Formation: Instruction Before Identity

Much of modern Christianity—often unintentionally—reverses the biblical order:

- Learn the rules
- Adopt the behaviors
- Manage the image
- Hope identity follows

This produces:

- Performance-based faith
- Shame-driven obedience
- Exhaustion masked as devotion
- Platform without foundation

People are taught what to do without being anchored in who they are.

The Self-Constructed Identity Problem

Modern culture teaches:

“Discover yourself”

“Define your truth”

“Become who you want to be”

Identity becomes:

Self-generated

Emotion-driven

Constantly shifting

Fragile under pressure

But Scripture teaches the opposite:

“You are not your own.” (1 Cor. 6:19)

Biblical identity is **received**, not invented.

And because it is received from God, it is **stable**, not fragile.

Ekklesia Formation: Identity Anchors Obedience

The Ekklesia does not ask: “What must I do to belong?”

It asks: “How do those who belong live?”

This is why Paul can say:

“Live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” (Phil. 1:27)

Worthy does not mean deserving.

It means consistent with.

Edification, Encouragement, and Consolation (1 Cor. 14:3)

- This truth *edifies* because it grounds believers in what God has already accomplished.
- It *encourages* because obedience flows from empowerment, not pressure.
- It *consoles* because failure does not negate identity—it invites re-alignment.

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father...” (1 John 2:1)

Correction happens within relationship, not outside of it.

Summary Truth for the Ekklesia

- Identity is not the reward for obedience
- Obedience is the fruit of identity
- Instruction without identity produces pressure
- Identity without instruction produces immaturity
- But identity before instruction produces formation that endures

The Ekklesia lives differently
because it **knows who it is**—
and knows **to whom it belongs**.

Foundation Before Platform (Then)

Jesus' warning about foundations (Matthew 7:24–27) was not about religious performance—it was about **what kind of life can survive judgment, storms, and history itself.**

Early Christians believed:

- Storms reveal foundations
- Pressure exposes allegiance
- Endurance proves formation

They expected to live differently because they were being **built for endurance, not applause.**

Remember We Are Living From Our Given Identity

- We have a new Lord
- We belong to a new kingdom
- We are animated by a new power
- We share in a new life
- We are becoming a new creation
- We are being formed for eternity, not immediacy

Christian character ethics then should never be about behavior modification. Because it's about **embodying a new reality**.





Living Out Our New Identity in Christ

The gospel is not asking you to improve your life. It is announcing that God has already given you a new one. Before effort. Before obedience. Before formation. God acted. Jesus did not come to give better instruction for the old life. He came to end it—and to raise a new one in its place. This is the moment where response matters. Not response as performance. Not response as promise-keeping. But response as trust. To believe the gospel is not to agree with an idea—it is to receive a gift. It is to stop standing on what you have built and to rest your life on what Christ has finished.



If you have never received this life: You are not being asked to clean yourself up. You are not being asked to prove sincerity. You are being invited to receive what God has already given.

Turn to Jesus. Trust Him. Receive the life He offers.

If you have believed, but have lived under pressure: Let go of the quiet law. Step off the platform of striving. Return to the foundation.

The gospel is not waiting for you to be ready. It is announcing that everything necessary has already been done.

“If you are ready to respond—not by promising more effort, but by placing your trust in Christ— simply open your heart and receive.”



These are not steps to become something,
but practices for living from what is already true.

Embrace Your Identity


- Begin each day by declaring: *“I am in Christ. I am a new creation. I belong to Him.”*
- Remember: Your obedience flows from who you already are, not from self-driven performance.
- Let this truth be the foundation of your decisions and attitudes.

Rely on the Spirit’s Power

- Stop striving to “try harder” and start leaning on the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- In moments of question, pause and ask, *“Holy Spirit, guide my next step.”*
- Trust that moral transformation flows from His life in you, not your own effort.

Build for Eternity, Not Applause

- Focus on Christ's inner formation within you over outward recognition—endurance is the fruit of being rooted in Him.
- Remember that your life, anchored in Christ, will bear fruit that lasts far beyond temporary success.
- Live with confidence that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is actively shaping your life today.



A Foundation Before Platform
Rhythm of Life Prayer

God of life and truth,

I choose to order my life today around what You have already finished in Christ.

I receive again the foundation You have given me—not one I build, but one I live from.

I release striving, comparison, and urgency.

I refuse to measure my faithfulness by outcomes, and I entrust timing and fruit to You.

I let go of the need for affirmation from familiar voices.

My life is not stabilized by approval, but by belonging.

I commit to obedience without negotiation, and to faithfulness without self-protection.

Anchor me in truth when comfort tempts me to shrink back.

I live from an identity that does not need defending.

Teach me to stand quietly in the authority that flows from being in Christ.

Form in me a way of life shaped by revelation, not performance.

Let my words, choices, and rhythms flow from what You have revealed.

I listen first to Your Word above every surrounding voice.

Order my steps by truth, not by noise.

I do not wait for permission to live what You have already made known.

I respond with trust, not pressure.

**I receive the anointing You have given—
established, not seasonal; rooted, not reactive.**

**Let my life bear fruit in its proper time,
as what You have spoken unfolds naturally and fully.**

Amen.

A man stands in a valley with a waterfall on the left, his arms raised in a gesture of praise or surrender. In the sky above him, a dove is seen in flight, illuminated by a bright light. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The background features rolling hills and mountains.

Remember

The Gospel did not come to regulate you.

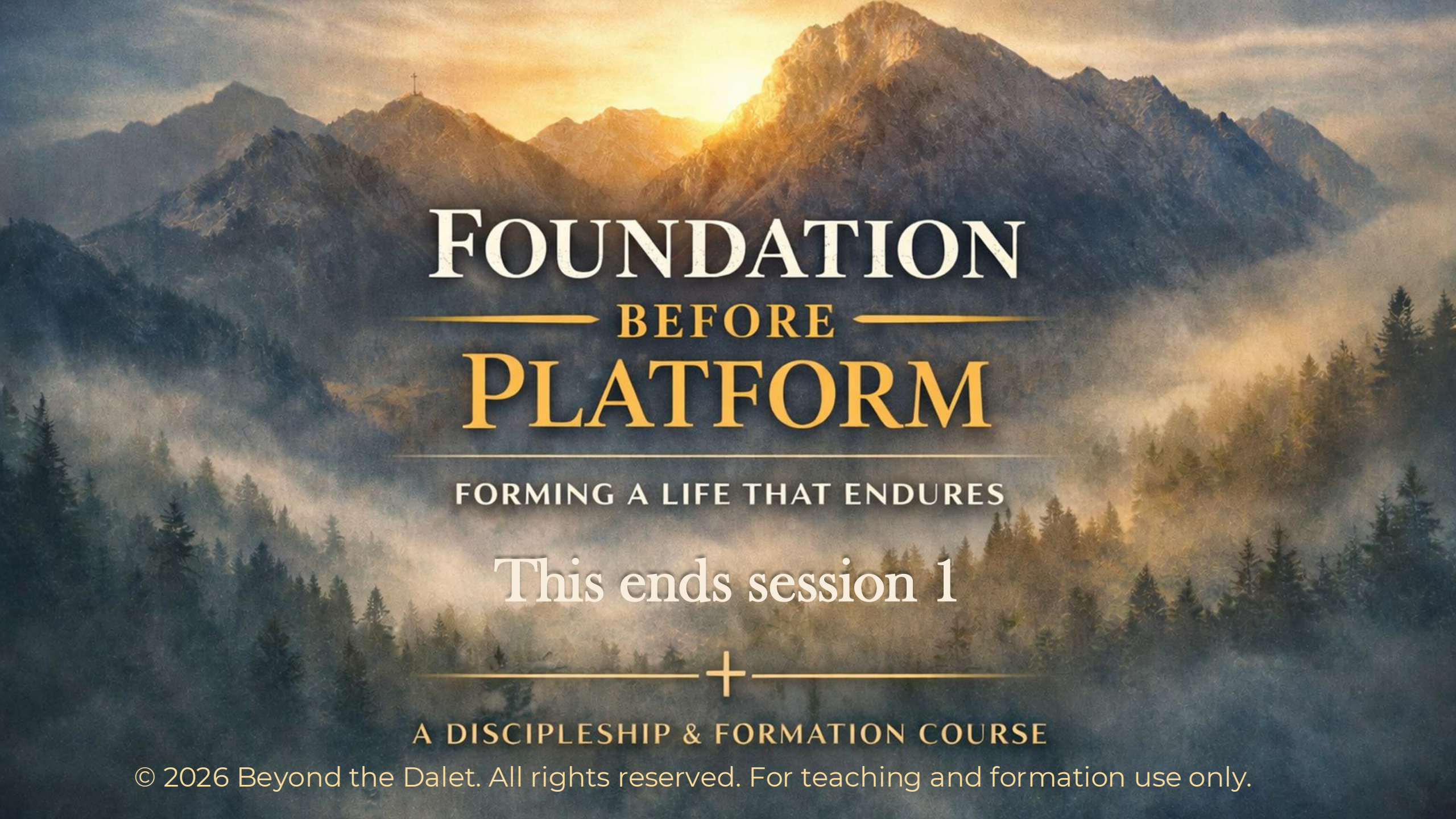
It came to recreate you.

Return—

Not to effort, but to announcement.

Abide—

Not in vigilance, but in life already given.



FOUNDATION
— BEFORE —
PLATFORM

FORMING A LIFE THAT ENDURES

This ends session 1



A DISCIPLESHIP & FORMATION COURSE

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