

## THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

Someone asked what I mean by the “Institutional Church.” (IC)

An institution is an organized social unit of any size which uses designated leaders and enforceable rules to influence peoples’ behavior. Members typically have a common sense of purpose, and shared values and beliefs which help give them identity and unity. Family, government, education and religion are common examples.

Some members are institutionalized, meaning they don’t think and act independently but simply go along with the system. Others resist that.

And then there’s the [Mt. 16:18](#) Church, the Body of Christ (BoC) which is identified in [Romans 12:4-8](#), [I Cor. 1:2](#), [I Cor. 12:27](#), [Eph. 1:22-23](#), and [Col. 1:18](#) for example.

In the Day to come, a guiding principle of the IC will be to prolong its existence, even to the extent of submitting to compromising government mandates. The guiding principle of the BoC will be to know Christ intimately and to make Him known to others, regardless of the cost.

The IC functions as determined by church leaders with little input from its members. The BoC first depends on the voice of God’s Spirit to the saints, sometimes through specifically gifted members, which is then discerned together with freedom for the individual.

As in China, the IC will provide a list of its members and attendees to authorities. BoC members will protect each other even at great cost. The IC will submit to the government’s definition of hate speech while the BoC will humbly but boldly proclaim Truth.

The IC model enables an “obey the government” focused, many-paged thesis on the mask’s threat to church unity, while ignoring much greater present and soon-coming threats. (The potential disunity of the mask will only be resolved where hearts are knit together at a higher level, as in the BoC model where spiritual identity and security in Christ overcomes the division-producing false identity and soulish insecurity that the IC offers.)

The complex IC is recognized by its visible buildings, programs, budgets, leadership structure, belief system, rules and religious culture. The much simpler BoC will be recognized by its invisible Spirit nature including its unpredictability as in [John 3:8](#), and its focus on Jesus and the Life and purpose of the Kingdom of God that He modeled for us.

The vision and resources of the IC are primarily turned inward toward its own functions, but those of the BoC are turned outward toward the purposes of God, and those who need Him.

The BoC can exist within the IC in a limited way, but that will become increasingly difficult. Painful decisions and separation are closer than most think. Many in the IC, including leaders, have little or no understanding of the dynamic BoC, or they assume that they are one and the same.

Considering your local church now, can give you insight into what is to come and will minimize surprises and disappointments. It will help you prepare, including forming deeper relationships with those whom you can trust to partner with you in the BoC in that Day. Even soon. Please do that.

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