Subject: The Concept of Leadership
Posted by william on Thu, 25 Sep 2008 17:05:10 GMT
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Recycled from an earlier note...

The article deals with the mistaken idea that the norm for leadership within the Christian Church is a plurality of eldership as opposed to the Biblical presentation which advocates one person as the ultimate leader of an assembly of believers.

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We found ourselves, during our wanderings, in a church that believed that the concept of one "head" pastor was not biblical. They believed in a multiple elder type of leadership and i was prompted to do a study--so here it is:

I. God's design in the beginning

A. Adam, Eve and the divine order

In the beginning God... with these words we see that it doesn't matter who has been delegated with authority, God is the one ultimately in charge, whether we are talking about Israel and her kings, or the Church and its shepherds.

Adam, in Gen. 2-3, was given the responsibility to lead and teach those who had been placed under his charge, and he was given a helper that would assist him in this mission. I believe that this is the established order that God intended throughout history. God-Man(one leader)-Woman(helper)-Children(our charge... the flock!)

As the family structure grew this basic pattern never changed, the head of the household remained the leader.

B. Noah leads the way

Noah was obviously the leader of his household and was able to lead and protect those under his charge. Gen 6-7

Like Adam, Noah wasn't perfect in his responsibilities (Gen 9)yet God doesn't stray from His original design of headship.
C. Abraham, Father of a multitude

The life of Abraham continues to reflect God's original design of headship. He becomes the "father" of the nation of Israel. We also enter into the blessings of Abraham through faith. Gal.3:7

Like those before, Abraham wasn't perfect in his leadership, yet God never invalidates the pattern that He established from the beginning.

D. Jacob and Esau

With Jacob and Esau, God introduces a slight variation on the concept of headship. Headship will now be enlarged to include more than the immediate family. This was hinted at in Gen 9:25-27 with reference to Noah's sons.

Jacob receives the blessing from Isaac that said..."Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord [ruler] over thy brethren..." Gen 27:29.

God continues to show through the pages of Scripture His design with regards to headship.

E. Israel becomes a nation

Jacob/Israel begat twelve children that were destined to become the twelve tribes of Israel

Gen 49:8 shows that Judah ultimately would have the leadership mantle.

The headship pattern was up until this point mostly limited to the family structure, but as the nation grew it became apparent that there would be a need to expand (not change) the leadership structure.

II. God's design for the nation of Israel

A. Moses, chosen by God to lead the nation of Israel

Moses became the central leader of the young nation of Israel. Moses exemplifies a leader that welded much power (some estimates say he ruled over 3 million!) yet he was known as the meekest man on earth at that time! (Num.12:3) How's that for a godly example to follow! Each family had its leaders, each tribe had its leaders but Moses was the central leader. With such a large nation to lead it was obvious that he couldn't lead effectively without help so he appointed "helpers" to judge the nation. Ex 18:17-26

B. Joshua, leader by example Josh.24:15

When it was time for Moses to move on, God instructed Moses to pass the mantle of authority to Joshua, who had been preparing for leadership by being a servant of Moses. Num. 27:18 Joshua

became the recognized leader of the nation even though the nation still maintained the same pattern that God had established and expanded through the leadership of Moses. Josh. 24:1f

C. No central leader equals chaos

When Joshua passes from the scene the elders that were alive during his leadership continue leading the people until they also pass from the scene. A leadership vacuum results and Israel forsakes the Lord and falls under the Lord's judgment.

D. Judges

At this time, God begins to raise up judges to rule His nation, and a clear pattern emerges; Israel flourishes during the leadership of the judge but when the judge dies, they backslide once again. Jud. 2:16-19

III. God's design during the time of the kings

It has been stated that God never intended for the nation of Israel to have a king, I agree with this, but it is obvious that He did intend for the people to have a leader that would lead them in the ways of righteousness. Why else did He raise up Moses, Joshua, and the judges? I contend that He has shown clearly from the beginning the pattern of leadership.

Certainly He chose David's leadership to be a type of His own leadership over the nation of Israel. One leader, with many helpers, was the pattern throughout the time of the kings.

A. Saul

Saul was chosen as the King over the nation and while his reign left much to be desired, God didn't change the structure that He had ordained from the beginning. Even after it became obvious that Saul had abdicated his responsibility in leading the nation in a godly manner, he remained the recognized central leader. David would not usurp the office of the king even though Saul's leadership was detrimental to the nation.

B. David, kingdom patterned after the heavenly

Throughout the Scriptures, David and his leadership has been likened to that of Christ's reign over the earth. He certainly wasn't a perfect leader, but his heart was toward the Lord and the resulting prosperity that sprang from this godly reign should teach us the potential of true God-ordained leadership.

C. Solomon, leadership gone awry

Solomon reaped the benefits of his father's reign, but because of a misuse of the power of leadership he was doomed to have part of the kingdom torn from his leadership and given to another. From this point until the Babylonian captivity, the nations of Israel and Judah were on a fast track to destruction. Here we begin to see the fruits of "bad" leadership. However, even during this period when it seemed that a new pattern of leadership was in order, God did not change the design that He had instituted at the beginning.

IV. God's design during the time of Babylonian captivity

After many years of backsliding and repeated warnings of judgment, both Israel and Judah were put under the rule of the Babylonians. Their temple was destroyed and they were led away from the land that the Lord had given to them. They became a nation without direction and were it not for the few godly prophets that prophesied during this time, they would have been completely without direction.

It seems that it was during this time period that the Synagogues came into existence. The Synagogue was their only link to their glorious heritage. It offered them a chance to maintain their religion while under the rule of the Babylonians and teach the next generation the tenets of their faith. Interestingly enough, they chose to maintain the same structure of leadership that had prevailed throughout their history... a single leader for each Synagogue. Acts 18:8,17

V. God's design during the time of Ezra-Nehemiah

After the Babylonian captivity, God once again raises up an individual to lead his people back into the land of their inheritance, first Ezra, and then Nehemiah. Apparently God intended that the leadership structure of one central leader would continue to prevail, albeit without the baggage of a king!

VI. God's design during the Roman period

During this period of Roman rule the Synagogues remained the central pillar of Jewish life, even though the temple had been rebuilt and the order of worship had been restored. Leadership was never by committee although a godly leader will always listen to council from other godly sources. It was at this time that Jesus came on the scene and established His Church

VII. God's design for the church age

We know that there were radical changes that took place when Jesus established his Church, however, the model that had served from the beginning was nowhere rejected. It would seem that if Jesus had wanted to change the headship pattern that had prevailed from the beginning there would have been a statement to announce this major departure from the norm. Instead we see that even among the twelve there clearly was a delineation between some of the apostles. Peter,

James and John emerge as the apostles who were chosen to have additional leadership responsibilities. Mk 9 & 14. Among this inner circle Jesus singled out Peter with the charge to feed His flock in Jn 21:15f. Peter was also given the "keys" to open the door to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) as well as the Gentiles in Acts 10. We see Peter leading in the selection of a replacement for Judas in Acts 1:15.

In discussing leadership with the Apostles in MK 10, Jesus made it clear that those who would exercise leadership in His Church, would be those who had the capacity for servanthood. It would not be those who had the most strength and power, or those who battled their way to the top!

Peter was recognized as leader of the twelve even though he became subordinate to the leadership in the Jerusalem assembly (which was led by another single individual).

The Jerusalem assembly was led not by an apostle but by James the brother of Jesus. By reading Acts 15 you will get a good picture of how a godly leader goes about his duties. Paul recognizes James' leadership and he is mentioned separately from the rest of the elders in Jerusalem in Acts 21:18. Early Church history confirms the fact that James was the leading elder in the Jerusalem assembly.

Even a cursory glance at early Church history show that all of the major assemblies had a plurality of elders but that there was only one leading elder (called a pastor or bishop) who was responsible for the direction and oversight of the assembly.

The Gentile assemblies also followed the same pattern of leadership that had been established from the beginning. Paul had establish many churches during his missionary journeys and continued to appoint leaders in every church. Timothy (who wasn't an apostle) is an example of one who was given authority in the Ephesian Church. He was given instructions on dealing with problems in the Church and was expected to lead the Church despite the fact that he was apparently very young. Paul also gives detailed instructions on leading the Church to Titus, leader at Crete. Here again, an example of one central leader given the responsibility over a young Church.

Even in the last book of the Scriptures, the book of Revelation, we see the divine order that was established in Genesis still prevails. Rev. 2 & 3 contains seven letters written to seven churches from the Lord Jesus. Each letter is written to a single individual who has the responsibility for leading the church under his care. The recipient of each letter is referred to as the "angel" of the church which is a descriptive metaphor for a single individual within the Church and not, as some have mistakenly said, literal "angels." This can be easily ascertained by looking at the language used by the Lord when He speaks to these "angels."

Revelation 2:1 1. To the angel of the church of Ephesus write;...vs 4 Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from which

thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works;...

Revelation 2:12 12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write;... vs 16 Repent; or else I will come to thee quickly,...

Revelation 3:1 1. And to the angel of the church in Sardis write;... I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Revelation 3:14 14. And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write;...I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit thee out of my mouth.

Literal angels don't need to be reminded to return to their first love, or to repent. They don't need to be told that they have a name that they live but are really dead. Literal angels aren't lukewarm!

The angel metaphor is used because these singular persons are in reality messengers from God. They are to be leading the church by finding out God's direction, His purposes, and then relaying the message to the assembly that God has given them charge over.

There are other places in Scripture that the same Greek word "angel" is translated as "messenger." Here is an example:

Luke 9:52 52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

VIII. Summary

It seems clear that God has from the beginning ordained that there be those who have the gift and responsibility of leadership, both within the confines of the family, as well as the broader context of the Church.

Having said all of this, I realize that not all "senior pastors" are operating the way God has ordained. Some are obviously in leadership when they are not even called. We often have to search for churches (even including Home Churches) where divine order prevails, yet this lack does not negate the divine pattern that God has established.

God's gifts to the church are the 5-fold ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (Eph.4:11) Not all have these leadership gifts in the church, although all have been given gifts and are expected to function in their place in the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4:12-14 tell us the purpose of 5-fold ministry in the church:
1. To equip the saints for the work of ministry

2. To edify the Body of Christ
3. To bring everyone into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God
4. To help perfect the Body of Christ, to reach the fullness of Christ
5. To protect and to feed the flock, so that they are "no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting." (Eph. 4:14) So that the flock will mature and "grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ".

And finally, vs. 16 of Ephesians 4 points out that it's the "WHOLE body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which EVERY part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

We have been members of churches which practiced body ministry, along with the God-ordained "senior pastor" and elders. In these churches, members were taught the Word of God by teachers who were gifted in this area, and they were encouraged to use their gifts to fulfill their place in the Body. (Peter 5:2-4) We don't believe that those called by God to be pastors and teachers must necessarily attend Bible schools or seminaries, but we do believe that they should have a solid foundation in the Word of God so that they don't lead their flock into error. Obviously, all Christians should obtain this solid foundation in the Word of God, but those who are in leadership will receive the stricter judgment, and it's extremely important that they not lead their flock astray by teaching error. (James 3:1 "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.")

There will always be those who, like Korah, don't like the idea that God chooses certain of His servants to lead His flock, but the overwhelming evidence shows that He indeed does just that.

To conclude, since the NT states that there will be people who have a problem with the "one" leader concept like the OT figure of Korah (Jude 11) I would like to quote the passage where Korah and his followers rebel against the divine order that God has established through Moses. Please note that these folk (like their modern day counterparts) were also concerned with the "senior pastor" who seemed to be "taking too much" upon himself:

Numbers 16:1 1. Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took [men]: 2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: 3 And they assembled themselves against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, [Ye take] too much upon you, seeing all the congregation [are] holy, every one of them, and the LORD [is] among them: why then do ye raise yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? {Ye take...: Heb. It is much for you} 4 And when Moses heard [it], he fell upon his face: 5 And he spoke to Korah and to all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will show who [are] his, and [who is] holy; and will cause [him] to come near to him: even [him] whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near to him. 6 This do; Take

you censers, Korah, and all his company; 7 And put fire in them, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be [that] the man whom the LORD doth choose, he [shall be] holy: [ye take] too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. 8 And Moses said to Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: 9 [Seemeth it but] a small thing to you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them? 10 And he hath brought thee near [to him], and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? 11 For which cause [both] thou and all thy company [are] assembled against the LORD: and what [is] Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

...Then comes the judgment:

Numbers 16:28 28 And Moses said, by this ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for [I have] not [done them] of my own mind. 29 If these men shall die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; [then] the LORD hath not sent me. {the common...: Heb. as every man dieth} 30 But if the LORD shall make a new thing, and the earth shall open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that [appertain] to them, and they go down alive into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. {make...: Heb. create a creature} 31 And it came to pass, as he had finished speaking all these words, that the ground opened up that [was] under them: 32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that [appertained] to Korah, and all [their] goods. 33 They, and all that [appertained] to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

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