
Subject: What Constitutes a New Testament Church
Posted by [mark1124](#) on Mon, 05 Feb 2007 23:43:46 GMT
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OK. It's my turn to start a new topic.

What, in your opinion, constitutes a true New Testament church?

This should be an interesting topic which I thought about today at work so I thought I would post it for anyone to take a stab at.

I would venture to guess that no one will be able to come up with one of my conclusions. I'll tell you what I think after some feedback to my question.

God bless.

Mark Scaliotti

Subject: Re: What Constitutes a New Testament Church
Posted by [william](#) on Tue, 06 Feb 2007 04:40:47 GMT
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A New Testament Church?

This would be an easy question if we had one on every corner that we could use as examples... but alas, it ain't so. We can surmise what it **should** be like by reading the book of Acts and some of Paul's epistles but I'm going to throw somewhat of a curve and say that from my reading it doesn't seem to be spelled out completely.

Oh sure, I believe that the Church has been given a mandate to both represent the kingdom of God on this earth and spread its message. And yes, the Lord promises to work with the church in this mission by working signs and wonders as the Word is preached. Mk 16.

But the curve I'm thinking about goes somewhat against even popular notions from those groups who actually believe in the present-day ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, it is because of the Holy Spirit that I believe it would be hard to define what a New Testament Church should look like (or be).

Think about this. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to my mind was the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ on this earth. Without Holy-Spirit-baptized-believers there

would be no Church. As you continue to read the book of Acts you'll find that problems arose that were dealt with on a case by case basis. The Grecians (Hellenists, Greek-Jews) were discriminated against in Acts 6:

Quote: Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Here you have a leadership (Holy Spirit filled) who, working together (multiple eldership) came to a consensus about a problem. Apparently this was something not addressed clearly in the bylaws of the Church or in principle in OT Scriptures, but a problem nonetheless. Working together, they offered a solution that seemed to please the whole lot of them.

One can argue whether or not they received a clear word from God on this issue or simply thought it would work and implemented this particular solution. If it wasn't a clear word from God, could there have been another solution that might have been also well received? Perhaps a solution would have been to make sure an equal number of both Grecians and Hebrews served together in this ministry? My point being that if another solution were possible and it was recorded, would we be saying today that this particular solution was the new testament way, and by extension the way we ought to be doing things?

I realize that we don't have Grecian widows that are getting shorted on the ministration side of things, but it does serve as an example of how certain things in the NT Church are apt to become the law in our 20th century thinking (at least among those of us who think on such topics and long for the NT pattern to be re-established in our present-day situation).

Another example would be Acts 15:

Quote:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

A couple of observations... Paul and Barnabas were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and Paul later wrote most of the NT yet here they seek out the advice of the Church leaders in Jerusalem.

Next, as you read the account you'll see that the whole issue was hashed out rather thoroughly, with OT scripture quoted with a lot of debating, and then James, seemingly the head-elder/Pastor of the Church (also *not* an apostle) steps up and gives his verdict and ends the discussion. This is a pretty good example of a lead pastor in action. He listens to all of the others, and then makes an authoritative/binding policy that affects all of the Grecian churches.

Quote:Acts 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. 19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Assuming that a direct word from God was not forthcoming, these men and ultimately James make a decision based upon knowledge of the situation and understanding of the circumstances that prevailed at that time, and that decision becomes an authoritative word to the gentiles.

Many examples could be given, but based upon these two, can we conclude that there are no ideal set-in-stone rules as to the exact way a church should operate?

Personally, I believe that there is, or can be, much leeway in the way local churches carry about their business. One church, based upon their location, might be struggling with local witch doctors attempting to make inroads into their midst, while another might need advice on dealing with the city-planning department attempting to annex their parking lot. Each situation and circumstance needs specific attention as opposed to the one-size-fits-all solution. Which is why I also believe that it is absolutely necessary for the Church, especially the leaders, to know how to be led by the Holy Spirit in every decision.

Probably not the direction you were headed, but I'm looking forward to your thoughts!

William

Subject: Re: What Constitutes a New Testament Church
Posted by [mark1124](#) on Wed, 07 Feb 2007 00:29:35 GMT
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Wow...what a repsonse. I will have to re-read it when I have a bit more time. I am in between tapes from Brother Freeman's Ethics tapes but I will get back to you. And you are right. It wasn't exactly the direction I was heading with this question. But your response, from what I read so far, is thought provoking. You will be somewhat surprised with mine. I will post it in a few days.

Thank you for the response.

BTW...Nice glasses. I see you received some commentary about them in the other chat room.
