
Subject: a difficult question

Posted by [wishing34](#) on Sun, 15 Mar 2009 20:20:04 GMT

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Greetings,

I am interested in comments/opinions regarding the following idea.

Thanks for your time in advance.

If we accept and/or justify Christianity without functioning apostles then we are practicing a form of Christianity that is different from the original.

Our new "variant form" of Christianity should be questioned as to validity.

Thanks,

Jman

Subject: Re: a difficult question

Posted by [william](#) on Mon, 16 Mar 2009 00:24:14 GMT

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On Sun, 15 Mar 2009, jman wrote:

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>

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> as to validity.
>
> Thanks,
> Jman
> _____
>

Hello Jman, glad to have you aboard!

Concerning your question... I don't think that Christianity should be defined by either the abundance of, or lack of apostles/prophets, etc., on the scene. Besides, even if it *is* defined by this, what can we do about it? Kinda like what Jesus said to Peter--" what is that to thee? follow thou me."

More later, got to run!

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: a difficult question
Posted by [william](#) on Mon, 16 Mar 2009 04:23:57 GMT
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I'm back with a little more time now...

You may be going in a totally different direction so feel free to kick me out of this tread if it isn't relevant! <grin>

Most of us have a perception of how the early church operated, how it was organized, how it functioned, etc.. Sometimes we idolize this or that aspect as if the church we read about in the NT was exactly what is should be throughout history.

In fact, if I were asked today what I thought the church should be like, I

would immediately point to the NT Church as the model. Eventually I hope to see something resembling what I've read about!

That said, a pretty good case could be made that the NT church was an evolving church.

They started off in an upper room, waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, in one accord, and praying much.

There didn't seem to be any structure, and apparently there was very little understanding, concerning how they were going to proceed.

Act 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

Act 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Next Peter, apparently based upon his own understanding of scripture, produces a plan to fill Judas' post.

Act 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)...

They end up casting lots between two men both of whom they felt were qualified.

Acts 2 brought the infilling of the Holy Spirit-- the empowerment for ministry!

Next:

Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Five things characterize the next step in this 'evolving' church. Preaching, teaching/doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers.

This isn't a bad place to start with a modern-day version of the early church. Get baptized in the Holy Spirit, find some anointed

preaching/teaching, fellowship with the saints, break bread with them and pray a lot!

Next in the evolutionary process was something we just don't want to emulate--selling all, giving it to the whole body and having all things in common from that point on.

Act 2:44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

Act 2:45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Act 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

After a little outside ministry (healing & preaching) and persecution in Acts 3-4, the subject of having all things in common is once again brought front and center as the NT pattern emerges (no relation to the 'emerging church' movement of recent years). Like I said, this particular aspect of the early church is rarely mentioned as something 'we need to get back to' when we talk about NT Christianity... but hey, who am I to be pointing this out. I will say that this stage of development produced the first two deaths as folks grappled with the whole idea of communal living. Maybe it's just too painful to think about or maybe this part of the evolutionary process is kind of like the appendix and now isn't as useful as it once may have been! (I did read something in a Wikipedia article about the appendix, but of course that isn't a reliable source for info.)

Anyway, the rest of Acts 5 deals with the things we want to see returned to the church.

A major step in the evolving church occurs in Acts 6:

Act 6:1-5 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. 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. 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. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of

the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude...

Here a very practical need became apparent and was just as quickly resolved by a practical solution... seven guys to handle the widows... no sexism here... men serving women!

Not one to limit himself to serving tables, Stephen, after hands were laid on him goes out and emulates Peter and pays for it with his life. (Are we willing to do the same... or are we emulating those we used to deride-- those who seem to be content with 'sitting around waiting to go up through a hole in the sky'?)

I could go on and on through the book of Acts and show how the church continued to evolve and adapt. (Especially interesting is the governmental aspects of the NT church.)

This process seemed to continue through the epistles and beyond, but the point I am raising is this:

Was this evolution of the Church finished by the time the biblical writers laid down their pens, or does it continue?

The OT 'church' (term used loosely) did not seem to be yoked with many 'evolving' aspects... it was more or less set forth in a 'take it or leave it' sort of way (i.e. not progressive). That might be a good way to express it... a static setting forth in OT times, verses a progressive revelation (seemingly) for the NT church.

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: a difficult question
Posted by [wishing34](#) on Mon, 16 Mar 2009 13:14:07 GMT
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Hi Moulder,
Thank you for being welcoming and thank

you for responding in such a thought out way.

Where I am at is to believe that apostles are a necessary part of the functioning church all the way until Jesus' return. I see the church in the 1st century having apostles play an important role all the time even years after the start up situation in early Book of Acts.

I see our group that started with Dr. Freeman as approximately 40+ years now with no apostles - and the church at large likewise with no apostles for much longer.

My thought is then - can you have a real church without the most important ministry(apostles) functioning? Have we not defined for ourselves a new "variant form" of Christianity?

If we are to accept that the "apostles part" of the Bible is not required anymore then we are on the slippery slope to decide other things are also possibly to be allowed to lapse because we are unable to make them work either.

If we are ever to say doctrinally that apostles are "not for today" (tempting given the uniform lack of apostles) as many christians do then that is not a credible position in the scriptures and would be a significant and unacceptable change from what we used to believe.

It is sort of a "rock and a hard place" situation - apostles are very important part of Christianity, they are absent, and we cannot have un-anointed substitutes because apostles must have the "signs of an apostle."

As you reasoned wisely in your post before - "what can we do about it?" It will have to God to bring about an apostle. We can endure - praying, seeking, importuning God to bring the apostles to His people - and many have done so for 40+ years which begs the question

"How can we be the church and not have the most important ministry for 40 years?" - and much longer if we consider Christianity at large. Some issues such as apostles cannot be seen as a "trial of faith" that we should just wait out until it is manifested because the very pattern and successful function of the valid church is compromised.

Somehow something is not working.

Again thanks for your time ... Jman

Subject: Re: a difficult question
Posted by [william](#) on Mon, 16 Mar 2009 14:57:53 GMT
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Jman,

I think I see where you are coming from in that you believe (I believe, we all believe) that the ministry gifts of Eph 4 are set into the church and are to be a vital part of the church/s until Jesus comes back. The problem, as I see it, is that God is the one who gives these gifts to men... they cannot be worked up.

Starting with this premise we can either conclude that God isn't giving these gifts anymore or He is giving the gifts and they aren't being used.

If it is the latter then I think that perhaps the reason we are not seeing these gifts is due in large part to ignorance. The gifts don't come with a detailed instruction manual as to the best way to use them!

I'm of the opinion (read the Women in Ministry/Women in Leadership threads for a better explanation) that these Eph 4 gifts are not gifts of leadership per se, but rather ministry gifts. However, I think that the lack of leadership has been the main hindrance to the restoration of the operation of the gifts within the church.

We seem to be in a catch-22 situation, leaders come from those who have the gifts, and the gifts don't seem to operate unless there is an

atmosphere created by the leaders...

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: a difficult question
Posted by [Mark L](#) on Tue, 17 Mar 2009 18:46:21 GMT
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I don't have a lot of time here but a few thoughts. I believe that apostles and prophets were a very common ministry in the early church. I also think they have been present down through history. St. Patrick of Ireland and some of those who followed him for eg. I think we be living in the end times and it is again going to be a common ministry. In the days in which we live I believe we will see them coming world wide in the 10's of thousands.

Here's a thread I started on the subject and havn't had time to add too lately.

http://overcomersonline.com/FUDforum2/index.php?t=msg&go to=2996&S=031b4ee2ed26977d71f9fc20888a33e8#msg_2996

I'll be back on the weekend.

Subject: Re: a difficult question
Posted by [william](#) on Tue, 17 Mar 2009 22:11:25 GMT
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Thanks for reminding us about that thread you started... it has so much good stuff in it.

I've got a question about apostles but I'll ask it over in the that thread since it needs 'bumping' to the top anyway!

