

## Articles and Sermons :: The Primary Mark of a New-Covenant Church by Zac Poonen

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What is the primary mark of a new-covenant church? Many think that it is having a particular pattern of church government and a particular form of meeting. But it is neither of these. The important thing about the church is that it should have Divine life.

When a baby is being formed in its mother's womb, in its early weeks it does not even have the shape (pattern) of a human being. It only has life. The shape (pattern) comes later. It is the same when a new church is being established anywhere. It will take time for the proper pattern to emerge. But meanwhile, there must be life.

The primary mark of a new-covenant church is that God is present in its midst. When the church comes together and everyone prophesies under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, those who come to the meeting should be convicted of their sins and acknowledge that God is present in the meeting (1 Cor.14:24, 25). That, and that alone proves that such a church has the right pattern.

If the presence of God is absent, we must confess that we have come short of God's perfect plan - and we must repent.

Consider the tabernacle that the Israelites made in the wilderness. Its pattern was written down clearly in the book of Exodus. The Philistines could easily have made a similar tabernacle. But there was one thing that they could never have reproduced - and that was God's presence in the Most Holy Place, manifested as a fiery flame lighting up the tabernacle. That was the most important part of the tabernacle. It is the same with the church.

You may see a powerful church somewhere and imagine that its secret is the pattern it follows in its meetings or the doctrines it preaches!! And so you imitate that pattern and preach the same doctrines and imagine that you have a new-covenant church. But you are deceiving yourself. Without the glory of God being powerfully present in your midst, there is no new-covenant church there at all.

When God is powerfully present in our midst as a church, His light will continually show us what is pleasing to Him and what isn't. That light will warn us of dangers that lie ahead. It will not only drive away the darkness but the prince of darkness as well. The powers of Hell will never be able to prevail against such a church.

It is no use having only our doctrines right in the church. What we need more than anything else is the presence of God.