

Revivals And Church History :: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs?**Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs? - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 9:35**

The breakout session I did at Greenock had an underlying theme that I want to raise again. We hear constant criticisms of 'the church' and what it is doing and what it ought to be doing, but just who is responsible to do something about it? The knee jerk reaction will be 'we are all responsible' but this is only partly true. You are not responsible for things that God has entrusted to me and I am not responsible for the things that God has trusted to you.

I really believe many of us have a fundamental flaw in our understanding of 'the church' which creates a fatal flaw in our theology of revival. It is an axiom that we are to give an account for our own lives and that we must give an account of those things which have been trusted to us. So just who is 'responsible for the church'?

This may come as a surprise to many but the Bible does not use the word 'church' in the way that I have been using in the previous paragraphs. We frequently hear reference to 'the church in America' or the 'church in the 21st century' or 'the church of today', but the Bible never refers to 'the church' in this way. This is not an academic point. The way we think effects the way we live.

It is significant that the scriptures refer to the seven churches which are in Asia (Rev 1:4) and NOT the 'church (singular) in Asia'. Biblically there is no such thing as the 'church in Asia' only the 'churches (plural) in Asia'. These churches were individual units which were individually held accountable for their life and witness.

The key point I am trying to make is that, biblically, the unit of responsibility is 'a church' not 'the church'. To blame 'the modern church' for conditions as we find them is a mistake. There is no such thing as 'the church' in this sense. There is an entity that we can call 'the church' and the one responsible for it is its head, Jesus Christ. To suggest that anyone else has any responsibility for 'the church' is either arrogance or biblical ignorance.

So where does that leave us? Where 'does the buck stop' for the current conditions we live in the midst of? There are two 'units of responsibility' for the testimony on earth at this time; one is the individual believer, the other is the local church.

To read the first chapters of the Revelation is to see spiritual responsibility as Christ sees it. Each of the 'churches' is unique, there is no general condition that fits them all, they are each unique. Christ presents himself in a unique way to each of these churches and begins by declaring that he 'knows' their current state. He reveals this 'state' to the messenger of each individual church and adds the necessary word for each church. The 'buck' stops with the messenger!

There is little point in ranting about the state of affairs in the US or the UK or anywhere else. We are not responsible for these things. As individuals we are responsible for our own lives and those lives that God gives us access into, but to complain is just blowing off steam. Such steam may make a piercing noise but it won't move the wheels one inch.

I have a simple word for all who complain about the state of 'the church'... mind your own business! ;-)

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs? - posted by enid, on: 2008/12/22 9:50

Wonderful post, I love it!

But enough euphoria, let's look at scripture.

Eph 1v22-23, 'And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, vs23, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.'

Frankly, we are individually responsible for our own salvation, Phil 2v12.

Complaining about the condition of the churches, does not remove responsibility from us to do as we please, or to join in with the crowd because 'everybody is doing it'.

Or, safety in numbers.

It does hurt to see the name of the Lord dragged in the mud, or maligned, because someone who professes the name of Christ, acts in opposition to His name.

But, as scripture says, the end is at hand, therefore be serious and watchful in our prayers, 1 Peter 4v7.

God bless.

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs?, on: 2008/12/22 10:11

Hi Ron

Well that was certainly an interesting point of view. And I totally agree that

"You are not responsible for things that God has entrusted to me and I am not responsible for the things that God has trusted to you."

I think the problem with your position is that it may be an academic one. The reality is that, as much as I hate the fact, the Roman Catholic church emerged and dominated for centuries. This was definitely a "church," singular. Luther definitely believed that it had to be reformed and he knew where the blame lay.

There are certainly Bishops and Apostles and they lead and guide and influence, not on a singular church, but across a wide range of churches. Brother Denny Keneston (whom I love) has planted 50 churches I believe. He certainly operates in an "Apostolic," role having great influence among those churches. If he was to influence them in a way that was not of God, he would be responsible for that. There are sheep, and there are shepherds. One has a certain responsibility, the other has a different responsibility.

In the US, there are many "leaders," of the Church. And by that, I mean people who influence across the board. Dr. Dobson influences millions and speaks to them on a daily basis. Rick Warren, Benny Hinn. Ted Haggart was the head of the "Evangelical Alliance," which included 33 million people. Pat Robertson and Gerry Falgout come to mind as well. These last two guys in particular, have little to no influence outside of America, but their constituency here in America goes across denominational lines. They "speak to the Church in America."

Just as countries have national characteristics, so do Churches. That is why the "American Church," is often, and rightly so in my opinion, referred to as the Laodicean Church. Now can individual Christians all over the planet be guilty of materialism and thinking that they are rich because of their material wealth? Yes. Can individual churches be guilty of the same all over the world? Yes. Yet here in America that is a common theme that runs in a great majority of Churches. In many ways it is the triumph of the world and its influence over the "Church." In Scotland, the middle class run the "Church," yet the vast majority of the people are working class. This is "class system," of the country influencing the "Church in Scotland." America does not have that particular problem because their social system is different. (and better in my opinion)

I am rambling now, but you get my point (hopefully).....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/22 10:27

Quote:
-----In the US, there are many "leaders," of the Church. And by that, I mean people who influence across the board. Dr. Dobson influences millions and speaks to them on a daily basis. Rick Warren, Benny Hinn. Ted Haggart was the head of the "Evangelical Alliance," which included 33 million people. Pat Robertson and Gerry Falgout come to mind as well. These last two guys in particular, have little to no influence outside of America, but their constituency here in America goes across denominational lines. They "speak to the Church in America."

I think this is a great problem in many local churches. Because many have left off of hearing what Christ is saying to their local church and have substituted listening to the so-called leaders of our times, the masses have come to a similar im

passee in their churches. Until they STOP allowing these so-called leaders to influence the affairs of that local congregation with its unique needs I don't see how we will ever get past the problems that we face.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/22 10:33

Quote:
-----Just as countries have national characteristics, so do Churches. That is why the "American Church," is often, and rightly so in my opinion, referred to as the Laodicean Church.

I think I have been guilty in the past of painting with a broad brush whole sections of society as one group when the more I read Acts and Revelation 1-4 I see how individualized and unique each local church was.

The way this plays out in real time can be realized when I have applied messages right here on Sermonindex and other places that did not apply to me at all. The preacher was speaking to a particular type of person and I was not them. But because I applied the words to my life, though I was already wildly out of balance, I listened to hear how I might apply even more pressure to myself until I have virtually overdosed on a 'medication' I never needed to begin with.

I truly believe that is what Greenock was about for me. I needed a detox from a lot of really potent and caustic teachings. If we continue to give blanket medications we will see more like damage in the lives of people being treated for problems they don't have. :-?

Re: , on: 2008/12/22 10:58

Hi Robert

I don't think it's one way or the other, I think it's both. Yes, there is individual application and in fact Scripture must always be applied, first and foremost to ourselves. Yet, there is such a thing as leadership. And with more responsibility comes more accountability. We see that you should not "receive an accusation against an elder except before two or three witnesses." Inherent in leadership is the ability to influence.

You may have made mistakes in the past Robert, in your application, but that is not really the point. When Paul writes to the Corinthians, I am sure that not every Corinthian was disorderly, but Paul was addressing a problem that this particular church was having, and of course, the solution lay with leadership leading and guiding, which was their role.

If we look at the State of the Church in the West, then, if you have been in leadership for the last generation, you carry a responsibility, which is different from the responsibility of the individual believer. Someone like Tozer would not be responsible for the ails of his generation because he never ceased to speak out against what he saw going on and what the results of that would be. This did not make him popular in his time, and there may be the rub.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/22 12:00

Quote:
-----If we look at the State of the Church in the West, then, if you have been in leadership for the last generation, you carry a responsibility, which is different from the responsibility of the individual believer.

I understand. The question I have is what is the extent of the responsibility and has God even ordained that leaders exist as they do today? Is it God's will that men wield such influence over local churches or have men usurped the prerogative of the Holy Spirit on an individual church level and that is what they are 'accountable' for doing?

Is it the whole 'grievous wolves' thing of Acts 19 in which the people were hearing the word of God's grace, but men entered seeking to lead folk away from it and unto themselves. It that makes sense.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 12:01

Quote:

-----Eph 1v22-23, 'And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

vs23, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.'

'the church' is the one church in heaven and earth stretching through all the ages. This 'church' is truly the 'fulness of Him who fills all in all' but this is not 'the church' on earth, is it? True believers are certainly part of this 'one church' but it is 'invisible' except to the eye of faith.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2008/12/22 12:07

Quote:

-----There is little point in ranting about the state of affairs in the US or the UK or anywhere else. We are not responsible for these things. As individuals we are responsible for our own lives and those lives that God gives us access into, but to complain is just blowing off steam.

Ron, I would like to hear more of your thoughts on this topic.

I think you are shedding light on an area of great bondage, pride, and even personal torment for many saints who feel they must shoulder more responsibility than God has given them and equipped them for.

One of the reasons I am increasingly drawn to 18th and 19th century books by Christians, is that their perspectives were much more primitive and simple in regards to living out their faith. Few of them felt the need to worry about the entire planet. They did not sit in judgement of their local church while imagining they are called to prophesy to or reform an entire society...for them the whole of their humble calling was first to be convinced of their own sin, and then, having received the blessing of justification by faith, to seek and live out Christ in their homes and their local church communities. A life of simply serving in their church, and being faithful to the measure of grace given to them in leading quiet Christian lives gave many of the 'old ones' peace like a river sufficient to sing hymns on their death beds.

Again Ron, I think your perspective here is a much needed balm for many sincere but overwhelmed saints who have confused the accessibility of global news with the responsibility to shoulder global responsibility. It is this overwhelmed feeling that eventually hardens into cynicism and indifference...the love of many waxing cold because their love seems irrelevant to all the news they hear every day. We cannot directly effect the sphere of the whole world, but we can touch those in our smaller spheres.

I've been told that such an attitude is indifference, but it is how Christians have been doing it for almost 2000 years. Once in a while we might triumphantly say that 12 men in the upper room changed the ancient world, but in truth this statement is an incomplete history. The Apostles touched lives, and those they touched in turn touched lives. The spread of ancient Christianity is a story of small spheres intersecting with small spheres...a miraculous Mitosis that only God can take credit for.

The technology we have today whereby we can feel like we know more information about the entire planet all at once in real time is giving us the illusion that we have more reach and responsibility than we really do. It is a debilitating illusion that should be recognized as contributing much towards inactivity and paralysis in the actual sphere of humble influence we actually have entrusted to us. It is a paradox that makes us feel aware and alert of the whole planet, while being less aware and interested in individuals. Indeed, individuals can seem like a waste of our time in the face of such national and international crisis' that demand great and drastic action.

In all of this, is there an application of the prophetic portrait of Jesus given by Isaiah...For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder...as opposed to crushing our shoulders?

Blessings,

MC

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 12:11

Quote:
-----I think the problem with your position is that it may be an academic one. The reality is that, as much as I hate the fact, the Roman Catholic church emerged and dominated for centuries. This was definitely a "church," singular. Luther definitely believed that it had to be reformed and he knew where the blame lay.

No it wasn't and it isn't. Just because men choose to call it 'a church' that does not make it one. Several denominations call themselves 'the church'; it only goes to show that they have not understood the biblical revelation.

Quote:
-----There are certainly Bishops and Apostles and they lead and guide and influence, not on a singular church, but across a wide range of churches. Brother Denny Keneston (whom I love) has planted 50 churches I believe. He certainly operates in an "Apostolic," role having great influence among those churches. If he was to influence them in a way that was not of God, he would be responsible for that. There are sheep, and their are shepherds. One has a certain responsibility, the other has a different responsibility.

There is no record of a conglomeration of local churches being regarded as 'a church' in the scripture. There were many local churches in Galatia that had succumbed to the Judaizers but Paul never refers to them as the 'church of Galatia' but writes to the churches of Galatia. In Galatians 1:22 Paul does not refer to 'the church in Judaea' but to the 'churches in Galatia'. There is no conglomeration of churches which is ever referred to as 'a church' in the scriptures.

Your illustrations are just illustrations of the wrong understanding of the biblical concept of 'the church' and 'a church'. I know that people use the language of 'the church' of the USA; what I am saying is that there is no biblical warrant for such a usage.

I reject the eschatological interpretation of 'development' throughout the 'church age'. Try to interpret the Revelation as it would have been understood by the people who first read it.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 12:29

Quote:
-----Again Ron, I think your perspective here is a much needed balm for many sincere but overwhelmed saints who have confused the accessibility of global news with the responsibility to shoulder global responsibility.

I agree wholeheartedly. There is a challenging verse in the proverbs...

"Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth" Prov 17:24

You put your finger right on the spot. We are so busy minding someone else's business that we so easily fail to do our own.

interesting topic - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/22 12:58

In the revelation of John didn't Jesus always bring it down to "him" or in other words, the individual and their personal responsibility? While I see the possibility of such great good that could be produced from the combined efforts of the saints within the building complex we call "A" church, the reality is that many establishments take on the characteristics of their leadership. The people follow and there lies the problem, many good men who lead need to have a following in order to pay the bills, so the people become a means to the end, so in much of the individual churches leadership doesn't develop Christ-character meant for reproduction independent of that leadership. That's why there is little to no life in the churches. I think that while the responsibility can be placed on church leadership, leadership really has failed Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

I also believe that the individual believer has some responsibility too, I do know that Jesus is faithful to call out to His own and they must respond.

Re: interesting topic - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 13:16

Quote:
-----In the revelation of John didn't Jesus always bring it down to "him" or in other words, the individual and thier personal responsibility?

Yes, and no. There is a personal and local church responsibility. For this reason the individual, 'he that has ears to hear' , is required to listen to what the Spirit it saying... not to 'his church' but to 'the churches'. There is always the call for a p ersonal response but their is a wider responsibility here referred to in the language of the messengers.

Quote:
-----I think that while the responsibility can be placed on church leadership, leadership really has failed Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders an d submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that wo uld be unprofitable for you.

This AV version is really too strong and picks up the hierarchical bias of King James. it ought to read 'trust those leading you... There is no doubt that these 'leaders' will have to give an account of their stewardship. These 'who lead' however are to have a clear testimony as we see in verses 7 and 8. The outcome of their lives is to be nothing less than a shinin g forth of the unchanging Christ... the same yesterday, today and forever.

I want to comment about the identity of the 'messengers' of the book of Revelation but I want to establish the nature of a uthority among Christ's people here on earth first.

There is no trace of hierarchy in the New Testament. I believe in the continuing ministries of apostles. evangelists, prop hets, pastor-teachers but these functions are never presented in a hierarchical way in the New Testament.

Re: interesting topic - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/12/22 13:17

Well observed, Ron.

More commitment to a church is needed by many believers today.

Compton - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/22 13:28

Quote:
----- I think you are shedding light on an area of great bondage, pride, and even personal torment for many saints who feel they must sh oulder more responsibility then God has given them and equipped them for.

I believe you are right here, however I also believe more than 75% of the pulpits are helmed by sincere men and women who are not called, but who went anyway for what ever reason, which can be many. 1Pe 5:2 shepherd God's flock amon g you, not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God's will; not for the money but eagerly; 1Pe 5:3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

On a local level the church normally has no direction. As I go and speak part-time at some churches, I normally ask what thier vision is from the Lord. I normally get a blank look. I believe that godly men/women see exactly what is happening o n a local level and try to do more inorder to compensate for the "lack" of what they either see or don't see in thier leaders hip. In other words, good intentions usually, more out of a knee jerk reaction than something being lead of the Holy Spirit .

Re: , on: 2008/12/22 13:40

Robert write.....

"I understand. The question I have is what is the extent of the responsibility and has God even ordained that leaders exist as they do today?"

Now, that is an excellent question. Leaders today will do what they have always done, they will protect themselves, exonerate themselves and, usually strive to protect the status quo that leaves them in leadership. Its an old argument. People like Tozer cut through the argument. The Prophets in the Old Testament spoke to the state of the nation of Israel or Judah, although I am sure there were thousands of synagogues and some were better than others. So, perhaps it is the Prophets job to speak to the "State of the Church," whether in America or the UK or anywhere else. Of course one of the problems of today is that there is thousands of people claiming that they are Prophets.

It is not the role of Pastors and teachers and those in leadership to speak to the state of the church, because inevitably they will defend themselves, their record and their legacy. Those who truly speak for God as to the state of the Church, will never be accepted generally by the "Church," in question. Think of Whitfield as he stands and accuses "the clergy," of knowing almost nothing of the new birth. This was a bold sweeping general statement as to the state of leadership. What happened to brother George? He was banned from almost every pulpit in the West. Just as well, for there was no church that could have handled the people that showed up to hear him. I am sure many fine arguments were made against brother Whitfield at the time by very learned men of the cloth, who would roundly condemn him.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/22 13:45

Quote:

-----Compton's: It is a paradox that makes us feel aware and alert of the whole planet, while being less aware and interested in individuals. Indeed, individuals can seem like a waste of our time in the face of such national and international crisis' that demand great and drastic action.

I think your observations are right Mike. I have felt the same for a very long time. I have also watched as people spun their wheels trying to accomplish something for God with a global outlook at the expense of local ministry. I have sometimes been 'criticized' (that is too strong of a word, but...) because I go into nursing homes to minister. Some see it as a waste of time, etc. But we can only make up our own spot in the hedge. I can only be responsible for that 'spot'.

Re: Compton - posted by paulamicela (), on: 2008/12/22 13:49

Philologos,

How do you see local churches relating to each other / working together? In other words, what do you see as the "bigger picture"?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/22 13:51

Quote:

----- What happened to brother George?

I think you mean George Fox? I think God gave him a special calling to his times. But for the vast majority of believers I can't say that they could shoulder George Fox's burden or even Ravenhill's perhaps. I just don't think God intended for us to be carrying things that are not ours to carry.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 14:15

Quote:
-----It is not the role of Pastors and teachers and those in leadership to speak to the state of the church, because inevitably they will defend themselves, their record and their legacy.

It isn't anyone's role to speak to the state of the church. Only Popes have ever claimed the authority ever to do so. Not even New Testament apostles 'spoke to the state of the church'. There is no 'state' of 'the church' because there is no 'the church' just the churches.

People like A W Tozer are true servants of God but they cannot speak to 'the church'. One of the issues we have had to face here on sermonindex is the presumption that 'we' are 'the church' and that God can speak to 'the church' through sermonindex. Most of the world have not heard a dial tone yet, yet alone broadband access. What is represented here on sermonindex is a tiny fragment of evangelicals. To post rebukes and warnings to 'the church' through the sermonindex website is foolhardy and presumptuous but we have had more than our fair share of those too.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 14:27

Quote:
-----How do you see local churches relating to each other / working together? In other words, what do you see as the "bigger picture"?

I am trying to pin down our understanding to the biblical revelation. It is an interesting quest to try to work out just what 'relationships' the local churches had to each other. The links seem to have been itinerant gifts of apostles, evangelists, prophets and pastor-teachers. I have been trying to find information for years about the later development of the churches in the post apostolic period but there is very little evidence to go to. From the biblical period the pattern seems to have been independent churches networked through itinerant visitors.

As regards the 'bigger picture' I think this is our struggle that we think there is a 'bigger picture' and our 'eyes are in the ends of the earth'. We slip into the concept of strategies and look for 'church' strategists and 'church' spokesmen; there never were such in the biblical period.

We tend to think that there must be a right way of doing it. We hear such phrases as... 'what the Lord is saying to the church is...'. I have been listening to this for almost 50 years now and am convinced that the Lord is not saying anything to 'the church' but I am sure He is saying lots of different things to lots of different 'churches' if we only had the pattern of listening.

I am not an iconoclast. I am a conservative radical, but when a man says the Lord's message to the church in 2009 is.... I am sure the speaker is wrong.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 14:34

Quote:
-----I think you mean George Fox? I think God gave him a special calling to his times. But for the vast majority of believers I can't say that they could shoulder George Fox's burden or even Ravenhill's perhaps.

George Fox was a mighty servant of God who itinerated widely but he still only serviced a tiny section of all the churches on the earth in the 17th century.

I think we do struggle with the concept of what God is doing in the world. Did you know that in the year 800 there were more Christians East of Damascus than West of Damascus? What God is doing is much greater than our narrow western perspectives.

Re: , on: 2008/12/22 15:09

Hi brother Robert, no I meant Whitefield.....brother Frank

Re: , on: 2008/12/22 15:15

Brother Ron...you write "It isn't anyone 'role' to speak to the state of the church. Only Popes have ever claimed the authority ever to do so. Not even New Testament apostles 'spoke to the state of the church'. There is no 'state' of 'the church' because there is no 'the church' just the churches."

It might have been better to add "in my opinion." Just a thought. By the way, there was a strategy to the conference in Scotland, that is why we were there. Brothers and sisters came from all over the world to pray that God's people would be revived. Now, was that for the Church or for the church's? In my opinion, it's an academic point. All I know is that good people from all over the world, came together in prayer, and cried out to God. People from different spectrums came together, that too was a strategy, one that the enemy did not like.....brother Frank

Re: :) - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/22 15:18

Quote:
----- We tend to think that there must be a right way of doing it. We hear such phrases as... 'what the Lord is saying to the church is...'. I have been listening to this for almost 50 years now and am convinced that the Lord is not saying anything to 'the church' but I am sure He is saying lots of different things to lots of different 'churches' if we only had the pattern of listening.

I believe you are right here, most churches I visit one of the questions I ask are aimed at the vision the Lord has for their local fellowship. I'll get normally two types of responses, 1- a religious response, something like "we are here to build up the body of Christ", when probed a little further they have no real idea what that even means, 2- no response, they can't get me an answer at all. No meaningful specifics here! I believe that each church "cell", building, congregation has a specific call of God or vision or mission, but few ever discover it.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 16:04

Quote:
-----It might have been better to add "in my opinion."

I am indebted to you for your 'opinion'. ;-) Every post that has ever been posted on this website has, by implication, the phrase 'in my opinion' added to it.

I am supporting my opinion by reference to the only 'not in my opinion' source that we have ... the Bible. Every historian is writing 'in my opinion'. I am submitting my interpretation to the scrutiny of my peers here on this forum. I ask you to challenge my interpretations.

Quote:
-----Just a thought. By the way, there was a strategy to the conference in Scotland, that is why we were there.

I know there was a strategy for the conference. I am not discussing the conference; I don't want the thread closed down. I am discussing our whole concept of how Jesus Christ is administering HIS church. He has never delegated the creation of this strategy to anyone, not apostles, and not the writers on these forums.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/22 16:18

Quote:
-----I believe you are right here, most churches I visit one of the questions I ask are aimed at the vision the Lord has for thier local fellow ship.

I want to come on to the way in which Jesus Christ imparts 'vision' to the local assembly, but I want, first, to establish the fact that there never was any human authority that extended to a grouping larger than a local church. In terms of groups there is nothing larger than 'a local church' until you come to 'the church'. I mean in terms of 'authority'.

Re: - posted by paulamicela (), on: 2008/12/22 17:16

What about someone like the Apostle Paul? He seemed to have some kind of input, or perhaps authority in some way, over many different churches which he had started.

(Please, I'm not saying I disagree with you. I just like to ask questions to "test" ideas.)

Re: , on: 2008/12/22 18:05

Hi Ron, you wrote

"I am not discussing the conference; I don't want the thread closed down."

Why would the thread be closed down???

Anyway, the city of Corinth, in Biblical days, was reckoned to have a population of roughly 400,000, perhaps the size of Glasgow. Greenock, by comparison, has a population of about 50,000. Yet in this one town, there is over 70 different churches (yes that is plural.) Now, just under 1% of the population of Greenock attend church. If we follow the pointer on the graph, within a very short period of time, there will be no churches left. The Sunday before I left I attended the church my mum and dad goes to. It has, on a good Sunday, 12 people. There was 8 people there that morning, the youngest being 60.

So, If Paul was writing to the church at Greenock, who would he write to? Is it conceivable that in a town ravaged by darkness and evil, that these small little groups huddled in their small gatherings rather than gather together. Don't you think that the policy of divide and conquer by the enemy has been very successful? We are in a war. It is time for good people of Christ to come together. The walls of division, that have pitted one "church," against another, in their splendid isolation, must come down. Baptist and Pentecostal together, one town, one church perhaps?....brother Frank

Re: , on: 2008/12/22 19:57

Brother Ron writes.....

"I am supporting my opinion by reference to the only 'not in my opinion' source that we have ... the Bible."

Amen brother. Here in Acts chapter 14 we have an interesting story.....

"Act 14:26 And from there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Act 14:27 And having arrived, and gathering the church they related all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the nations.

Antioch, in that day, had a population of 500,000 and 70,000 Jews. Yet, from Acts 14:27 we see that "the church," was gathered so that they could be informed. Not a multitude of "local churches," within Antioch, but "the church." This leads to Acts 15 and the Council in Jerusalem. This would be considered an authoritative body. Even Peter would bow to this body.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/22 21:59

Quote:
-----Don't you think that the policy of divide and conquer by the enemy has been very successful? We are in a war. It is time for good people of Christ to come together.

I think our greatest danger is to lose the candlestick. The gates of hell will not prevail against a church in which the Lord is tending that candlestick.

So a carefulness to come together with a readiness to hear and obey what God is saying is essential. Again, this is not crafty sermons- it is a conscious sense that God is speaking to the people.

Once the candlestick is gone there is nothing left but death. The voice of God is no longer present because the candlestick on which the oil is consumed is gone. No light means - no revelation.

I think it would be fair to say that some may need to seek the Lord to see if perchance they might need to meet together as a local church and allow Christ to move among them and reestablish a local church that is a true light in the community.

Re: , on: 2008/12/22 22:20

Hi Robert

I think that one could make a pretty good argument that one could lose the candlestick because of a lack of "one accord."

Act 1:14 these all were continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Act 2:1 And in the fulfilling of the day of Pentecost, they were all with one accord in one place.

Act 2:46 And continuing with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they shared food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

Act 4:24 And having heard, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, You are the God who made the heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them;

Act 5:12 And many miracles and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

Act 8:6 And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the many miracles which he did.

Act 15:25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Php 2:2 then fulfill my joy, that you may be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 2:02

Quote:
-----What about someone like the Apostle Paul? He seemed to have some kind of input, or perhaps authority in some way, over many different churches which he had started.

(Please, I'm not saying I disagree with you. I just like to ask questions to "test" ideas.)

I WANT you to ask questions to test my ideas! :-)

You are right Paul has an authority in, notice I have switched your word from 'over', in the churches that God had raised up through his ministry, but they were individual local assemblies not something called 'the church'.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 2:06

Quote:
-----So, If Paul was writing to the church at Greenock, who would he write to?

He would have written to the messengers of the churches in Greenock. You are trying to understand the scriptures in the light of current circumstances. I am saying that we will never understand current circumstances until we understand the scriptures in their original context.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 2:10

Quote:
-----Antioch, in that day, had a population of 500,000 and 70,000 Jews. Yet, from Acts 14:27 we see that "the church," was gathered so that they could be informed. Not a multitude of "local churches," within Antioch, but "the church."

This is speculation. We have no idea how large the church in Antioch was but from Acts 13 we can see it gathered together with teachers and prophets in the midst of it.

Take a look at the word 'churches' in the New Testament. You will find several instances where our current usage would be to say 'the church' and in each one you will find the reference is to 'the churches'. This ought to tell us our current conceptions have strayed from the original.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 2:12

Quote:
-----I think that one could make a pretty good argument that one could lose the candlestick because of a lack of "one accord."

You could make a 'pretty good argument' for many things but there is no biblical evidence for this. The one lampstand which was threatened with removal was so threatened because it had abandoned its first love.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2008/12/23 2:39

Quote:
-----"Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth" Prov 17:24

As a young opinionated man becoming a father, it was a humbling and settling transformation when I realized that for someone who thought he could size up christendom, I was hardly prepared to raise three children. I find that there are many men who are ready to be promoted to high rank in the church who have neglected to execute the duties of home worship faithfully.

Quote:

-----We are so busy minding someone else's business that we so easily fail to do our own.

One thing that I am continually impressed with by life in general, is how hard it is to do even one thing well. I am impressed with people who can repair an automobile engine, or build an attractive patio, or plant a productive garden, or write a good song. Every-time I meet someone who can do one thing well, I see there is always a measure of integrity in their character, even if this virtue is not easily evident on the surface. They may be even be greatly flawed in other ways, but nevertheless they have persevered enough to master an area of knowledge. I find conversing them on their respective subjects usually very instructive to my own character.

Yet, among all the different people I find who have mastered various things, I find the rarest person is one who has mastered themselves. This is a man who is gentle but sturdy, one who is wise but not proud, a man who is aware of his own limitations yet not lazy, and one who has traveled far ahead in his spiritual walk, but always seems to have patience to wait for those who are lagging behind him.

Now there is one more trait this type of man has. He is simple in his heart. He may have two doctorates and a Masters degree, or he may just know how to fix car engines, but he is a simple fellow. That's his secret of self mastery; sophisticated men are too busy mastering other topics to master themselves.

Forgive my bit of country philosophy here, but this is how I see Proverbs 17:24 being played out in my own experience. Many men want to be like John Wesley, but John Wesley wanted to be like the Moravians. Their spiritual service was to clean the filth off of their sailing ship, because "it did our proud hearts good". And the great learned scholar Wesley marveled over and coveted their peace with God.

I am days away from my 43rd birthday, and the sphere of influence I desire has never been smaller. It is a weighty matter to look to the conversion of my own children. There are times when my ambitious heart grows restless, and I begin to look outside the borders of my home, perhaps in pursuit of a business opportunity, or perhaps even in response to some flattery to take a more visible role in church...but then I see I have underestimated the task at home and an eternal pathos sobers my dreaming imagination.

I am not a great man, but a small one entrusted with a great responsibility. If I cannot keep my eyes diligently on this one task for God until it is completed well, then I have not been faithful, and if I have not been faithful in the responsibility I have been given, then how can I rightfully move on to instruct others in their business for God? It is my goal to learn how to do one thing faithfully for God, and to do it honestly and diligently, knowing these children are more his than mine.

For this specific task, God has provided my soul many rich instructions, both through his Word, and through the Holy Spirit's comfort in many ongoing trials and triumphs. I believe that completing my task successfully will teach me everything he wants me to learn should he have another task for me in the future, or should he take me home.

There is a pleasure I sense from God in me lowering my eyes towards my task. His pleasure brings me a deep abiding peace, and helps me to live daily in his presence. It is a paradox, that my stillness mitigates the awful dread I once had of seeing him face to face when I was busying myself with so many issues I had taken on in an attempt to make peace with him.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.

Blessings,

MC

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs? - posted by JoanM, on: 2008/12/23 3:52

I am following your key point, as I did in the Greenock breakout session (*"The key point I am trying to make is that, biblically, the unit of responsibility is 'a church' not 'the church'."*) and I hope this thread gets to the second part of your original post (*"a comment on the identity of the messengers; the way in which Jesus Christ imparts 'vision' to the local assembly"*). This second part seems very important to me. (Are you sure the second depends upon the first part?)

Going on with "the test" of the first half of your idea:

1. How do you understand the council at Jerusalem? Did they exercise governmental authority over one or many?
2. Do you see any difficulty in the one offering that Paul brought from many churches to Jerusalem?
3. How did Paul view the many churches he ministered to with their individual difficulties?
4. How did the local churches view the copying and sharing of Paul's letters? (reading other people's mail ;-))
5. Are there more than seven churches (messengers) now? Were there more churches when John wrote?
6. Was there agreement so far on this thread that the church is His Body and that the "currently living in the flesh" aspect of His Body is spread out across nations and in throughout many churches? (I hope so.)

Note: There are distinctions made in the Bible (God's view) between people groups/nations and groups are called by names though the land may not be divided as man has divided it.

Note: A particular shoe can fit many feet. A man can speak broadly without speaking hierarchically. Are we our brother's keeper?(a serious question)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 4:45

Mike MC

I am moved and challenged by your post. It brought to mind the forgotten verses of the Lamentation;

Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed.
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is your faithfulness.
"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
Therefore I hope in him."

The LORD is good to those who wait for him.
To the soul who seeks Him.
It is good that one should hope and wait quietly
For the salvation of the LORD.
**It is good for a man to bear
The yoke in his youth.**

From my perspective 43 is still young! :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 5:06

Whee Joan... quite a bundle of questions here.

Quote:

-----"The key point I am trying to make is that, biblically, the unit of responsibility is 'a church' not 'the church'."

You got it!! :-)

Quote:

-----Going on with "the test" of the first half of your idea:

1. How do you understand the council at Jerusalem? Did they exercise governmental authority over one or many?

You see this is the power of tradition. Everyone calls this 'the council at Jerusalem because they are thinking about the later 'church councils' of the 3-5 centuries. This was not a council it was a conference. The word conference, and confer literally mean to carry something together. This was a gathering of brethren and 'the Word of His grace' came through James. The wonderful thing is that the whole gathering recognized that God had spoken and embraced it.

The later 'councils' were representative and sent delegates. The consequence was that the outcome of these councils was seen to be binding on all the churches represented. The Jerusalem had no legislative power.

Quote:

-----2. Do you see any difficulty in the one offering that Paul brought from many churches to Jerusalem?

Not at all. These many churches had heard of the plight of one church and their instinct was to aid it. This is spontaneous family function. The organization of the relief was necessary and that was done proficiently.

Quote:

-----3. How did Paul view the many churches he ministered to with their individual difficulties?

Individually... although it is interesting that to the Corinthian church he frequently reminded them of the pattern of other churches. This was particularly necessary to this church which was proud in its self sufficiency.

Quote:

-----4. How did the local churches view the copying and sharing of Paul's letters? (reading other people's mail)

They were encouraged to do it. See the close of Colossians and the beginning of 1 Corinthians. These are not just letters they are scripture... God breathed.

Quote:

-----5. Are there more than seven churches (messengers) now? Were there more churches when John wrote?

Yes, there were more than seven churches then as well. Colosse was in this same area. It is interesting that John did not write to Colosse, perhaps this was a church that was outside John's influence at this time. When Paul wrote to Corinth

he acknowledged the fact that some churches would not recognize him in his role as apostle.

Quote:

-----6. Was there agreement so far on this thread that the church is His Body and that the "currently living in the flesh" aspect of His Body is spread out across nations and in throughout many churches? (I hope so.)

It is a good question. The local church at Corinth was encouraged to think of itself as the body of Christ but this was not in a comprehensive sense. There is, in the ultimate sense of Ephesians, just One Body.

Quote:

-----Note: There are distinctions made in the Bible (God's view) between people groups/nations and groups are called by names though the land may not be divided as man has divided it.

This is a topic for another thread but the New Testament speaks most of 'ethnic groups' rather than nation states.

Quote:

-----Note: A particular shoe can fit many feet. A man can speak broadly without speaking hierarchically. Are we our brother's keeper? (a serious question)

If I SEE my brother in need, he has become my responsibility.

Re: The Messengers - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 6:53

Just who were these messengers and what can we gather about their role?

The Greek word is aggelos, which really means 'a sent one' from the Greek word meaning to send someone with a message. There are other words which can be translated messenger but have their focus on the sending.

There is verse in 2 Cor 8:28 where it describes some as being 'messengers of the churches'. The English is the same as in the Revelation but the focus is slightly different. A messenger in this sense is someone sent with another's authority. In fact, it is the word 'apostle'!! The word apostle is used in more than one sense in the NT. So, in 2 Cor 8, who had sent these messengers and to whom were they sent? The 2 Cor 8 messengers were clearly representatives of the churches who were entrusted with the responsibility of collecting the funds which would be sent to Jerusalem. This gives us a valuable glimpse into life in the early church and their patterns of doing things.

But what of these Revelation 'messengers'. It seems they came from the churches in question. In Rev 2:1 the phrase is 'the Ephesian messenger'. The word translated 'Ephesus' in the KJV is actually an adjective, and so is the next 'town names'. So we have 'an Ephesian messenger', a Smyrnan messenger, From then on we have town names as nouns but I think we can make the point that the messenger belongs to the local church.

But what is their role? I have made the suggestion that the early churches were linked through itinerant ministries. Almost certainly these messengers were representatives of the seven local churches. They are not 'pastors' in the modern sense of that term but function a little like what in the US might be called the Secretary of State or in the UK the Foreign Secretary. They were the points of contact between one local church and another. A similar role developed in communist countries during the cold war; one person would be responsible for maintaining the contact with the outside world.

There is another interesting clue in Paul's letter to the Philippians. This letter was often used to describe a 'perfect church order' by some of the early brethren; the letter is addressed to both the elders and the deacons. But there is an interesting feature which emerges when Paul speaks about Euodia and Syntyche. Paul urges someone that he calls 'a true companion' to help these sisters to get along. In the middle of a letter to a local church there are specific words for individuals and one of these individuals is the anonymous person to whom Paul apparently sent this letter. Who was this and what was their role? The answer is 'we don't know' but it shows that Paul had an 'address' to which he could send his letter.

er. Was this the 'foreign secretary' of the church at Philippi and a personal friend of Paul?

In one sense I am happy to have to remain a little vague on these 'messengers' in the Revelation. I know that they are held securely in the right hand of Christ; they are 'his men' in the situation and I am not being gender specific here. These were the 'routes' by which the ascended Christ would bring 'his message' to the local churches.

I'll pause to wait for comments on the Revelation 'messengers'.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/23 7:28

Quote:
-----MC's: There are times when my ambitious heart grows restless, and I begin to look outside the borders of my home, perhaps in pursuit of a business opportunity, or perhaps even in response to some flattery to take a more visible role in church...but then I see I have underestimated the task at home and an eternal pathos sobers my dreaming imagination. I am not a great man, but a small one entrusted with a great responsibility. If I cannot keep my eyes diligently on this one task for God until it is completed well, then I have not been faithful, and if I have not been faithful in the responsibility I have been given, then how can I rightfully move on to instruct others in their business for God?

I think that the task of rearing children is indeed an awesome one. I have 6 children with two left in school. One thing that I don't frequently hear brought up is the fact that John 3:3 still applies to a child no matter how much training they receive. In many ways I have tried to teach my children rising up and lying down. They have practically 'heard' a bible college education in the years I have spent teaching them the ways of God. I have tried to model it- though far from perfect. Indeed it is because of God's mercies that we are not consumed.

But at the end of the day the rod of correction will have only driven foolishness far from the heart of a child. The heart is still corrupt. The heart must still be replaced. The child is unregenerate no matter how well we try to train them to say the right things, act the right way and to pray and read the scriptures, etc. We have to know this. You cannot train a child into regeneration. This one challenge is the most difficult to reckon with of all.

Children must be born of the Spirit. If they are not they will turn from their upbringing as sure as the sun rises in the east. They might not do it in front of the parents or those they wish to impress, but they will *be what they are* when the prick of the consequences of behaving badly are gone or the sting of someone they respect correcting them no longer has an effect.

My kids know when to pray. They know the scriptures. They know what to say and when to say it. They are talented in many ways. They have heard the Lord by the hearing of the ear. They know what to watch and not to watch. The question is; "Have they begun in the Spirit?" Rules and training and preaching, etc., are wonderful, but only their willingness to respond to God in regeneration will cause them to be children of God. So we are the 'schoolmasters' that through the word of God seek to lead them to Christ. We cannot choose for them. One may choose rightly in the same home as the one that rebels and goes into the far country.

And this is a parallel issue to this thread. How can we have genuine church life with a people that have not been regenerated? How can anyone even relate to this thread that has not known the life of God? It is all surface and superficial until the reality is experienced.

Re: oil bearers - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/23 7:29

I have long believed that revival comes through an individual, or through the assembly of saints, or by a sovereign act or move on the Lord's part. Now what do you do with the local pastor who might say that he is bringing forth the very word of God in his/her ministry and that it's the pews responsibility to act on that message in faith (many scriptures come to mind here but I'll leave it at that for now)?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/23 7:44

Quote:
-----I know that they are held securely in the right hand of Christ; they are 'his men' in the situation and I am not being gender specific here. These were the 'routes' by which the ascended Christ would bring 'his message' to the local churches.

Would this mean that these messengers were operating in *offices* or would that be *functions* within the local churches? Could the local church expect to hear the word of His grace from a certain person all the time or does God speak His word through the cumulative sharing of each person as they offer their oil?

I see James as that person in Acts 15; but could it be someone else next time?

Re: , on: 2008/12/23 11:21

Hi Ron....you write...

"You could make a 'pretty good argument' for many things but there is no biblical evidence for this. The one lampstand which was threatened with removal was so threatened because it had abandoned its first love."

I would simply say that if you cannot love the brother that you can see (lack of one accord) then it is a hard claim to make that you love the Lord..."abandoned its first love." We may be saying the same thing here.

Here are some facts that may be interesting to study. The phrase "The church," is used 70 times in the NT. 19 OF them talk about "The Church of God." The word "churches," is used 35 times. In those 35 times it makes reference to seven names. Judea, Galatia, Asia, Galilee, Samaria, Cilicia and Macedonia. Every one of these is either a province or a region. There is not one example of "churches," used in reference to a city. If we are to just use the Biblical source, then it seems clear.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2008/12/23 12:24

Hi Robert,

Quote:
-----We cannot choose for them. One may choose rightly in the same home as the one that rebels and goes into the far country.

So we are not in control of the outcome of events, nor responsible for the choices others make, even when it comes to our own children. Well noted brother. :-)

Blessings,

MC

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 12:28

Quote:
-----Would this mean that these messengers were operating in offices or would that be functions within the local churches?

Either or both or neither. Now you can't say that isn't accommodating! ;-) In other words I don't think that God gives messages based on either but either might receive such a word.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/23 12:43

Quote:
-----M.C: So we are not in control of the outcome of events, nor responsible for the choices others make, even when it comes to our own children. Well noted brother.

Well, I think I put so much pressure on myself and dreadful fears for my kids souls and for all that worry it added not a single cubit to my stature. I was not like Job, but I tried to do everything but decide for them. I just have to entrust them to God.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/23 12:45

Quote:
-----In other words I don't think that God gives messages based on either but either might receive such a word.

So that means that anyone in the local church might potentially bring the message? Everyone is a candidate depending on who God chooses to use?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 13:25

Quote:
-----The phrase "The church," is used 70 times in the NT.

Some of these are technically mistranslations. For example in 1 Cor 11:18, 14:4,19,28,35; 1 Tim 3:5,15; Heb 2:12; 3John 1:6 the definite article is missing so they ought to be translated 'a church' or even better 'an assembly'. The references in the Pastoral epistles are particularly interesting showing that the 'bishop' (of the old KJV) referred to in these epistles function in 'an assembly' and not as a territorial/hierarchical bishopric.

Laodicea was much larger than Colosse and was a major city, but it seems that the church met in the home of Nymphas; Col 4:15. From the letter to Philemon it seems that the church at Colosse may have met in the home of Philemon.

In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks about a circumstance in which 'the whole church is gathered together'; this probably means the whole company of believers in Corinth. This would still be 'the church in Corinth' as a gatherable unit and hence accountable through its 'leaders'.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 13:26

Quote:
-----So that means that anyone in the local church might potentially bring the message? Everyone is a candidate depending on who God chooses to use?

potentially, yes. the foot cannot say to the eye, I have no need of thee.

Re: , on: 2008/12/23 14:09

Blessed Incarnation Recognition week to all.

Not to truly enter the conversation except to say that this last post had hit an emotional/spiritual tender spot.

Quote:

-----Quote:RobertW wrote:

So that means that anyone in the local church might potentially bring the message? Everyone is a candidate depending on who God choses to use?

Philologos wrote:

potentially, yes. the foot cannot say to the eye, I have no need of thee.

That both dear brothers use the word "potentially" here is understandable.

What hit my heart personally, is that I almost feel it as a mandate from our Lord to every "member" of His Body to do so.

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

Blessings all in His Body!

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2008/12/23 14:59

Quote:

-----I just have to entrust them to God.

Amen. (Love can make it difficult sometimes.)

The irony for me is that even when I learn this hard lesson as a parent for my own few children, it is easy to forget or not apply it when I turn to consider the millions of people that comprise "The Church" and society...whom I have even less direct influence over. I share this admission in the context of the title of this thread.

Blessings Robert,

MC

Revivals And Church History :: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs?

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/12/23 15:08

Quote:
-----So that means that anyone in the local church might potentially bring the message? Everyone is a candidate depending on who God chooses to use?

Quote:
-----potentially, yes. the foot cannot say to the eye, I have no need of thee.

Just to bring another Scripture to bear on this situation:

*...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to **faithful men** who will be able to teach others also... (2nd Timothy 2:2)*

Perhaps I am wrong, but it seems to me that the privilege and responsibility of explaining the Scriptures is not something that **anyone** in the assembly should/can do.

In Acts 6, men were set apart for preaching of the Word (the Apostles), and men were set apart for handling more domestic duties (the deacons).

In 1st Corinthians 14, prophets are given the freedom to speak in the assembly - but not everyone in the assembly is a prophet.

With care in Christ,
Taylor

Re: , on: 2008/12/23 15:32

Quote

'In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks about a circumstance in which 'the whole church is gathered together'; this probably means the whole company of believers in Corinth. This would still be 'the church in Corinth' as a gatherable unit and hence accountable through its 'leaders'.'

This is what we do not see today. In any city or town, it seems implausible that the "whole church," would be gathered together. While some of the "the church," may be technical translations, it still stands that we do not see the word "churches," in the Scriptures unless it is in reference to a region rather than a town or city. While there may be large towns and cities with too many believers to gather together in one spot, when they had to, they came together as "the church," of that town or city. Oh what joy if genuine believers in every town and city could gather together. It would show the world, that despite some non-essential doctrinal differences (Luther would never have imagined 70,000 denominations) that we stood together.....perhaps the Lord is waiting on just that.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/23 15:38

Quote:
-----The irony for me is that even when I learn this hard lesson as a parent for my own few children, it is easy to forget or not apply it when I turn to consider the millions of people that comprise "The Church" and society...whom I have even less direct influence over.

Amen MC, that is most sobering and very true. I guess I keep telling myself I'm going to just give them over to God, but the reality is that is very hard to do. It's the whole baby in the basket thing.

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs?, on: 2008/12/23 16:00

Quote:

philologos wrote:

I have a simple word for all who complain about the state of 'the church'... mind your own business! ;-)

:~)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 16:05

Quote:

-----Perhaps I am wrong, but it seems to me that the privilege and responsibility of explaining the Scriptures is not something that anyone in the assembly should/can do.

I am sure you are right but exposition is not the only way that 'the Word of his grace' comes into a gathering.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 16:14

Quote:

-----it still stands that we do not see the word "churches," in the Scriptures unless it is in reference to a region rather than a town or city.

Only 1 & 2 Corinthians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians are specifically written to 'the church in X'. Romans, Ephesians and Colossians are written to the 'saints' in those cities.

Quote:

-----Oh what joy if genuine believers in every town and city could gather together.

I fear it would be a farce. I tremble that someone might actually try to organize it.

Re: The word of his grace - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/23 17:47

I have realized that I may be presuming too much of those who might read these posts. Some know the background to this thread but others may not have the elements in place.

A vital element of this theme is the concept of 'the word of his grace'. This is a phrase which comes from Paul's admonition to the elders from the church in Ephesus. In Acts 20:32 Paul in making his concluding statement where he commends these elders 'to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.' Paul is trusting these men and the church in which they serve to 'God and to the word of his grace...'

It is important to understand the context of this statement. When Paul speaks of the 'logos of his grace' he is not speaking primarily of the Bible; most of the New Testament was unwritten at this time. He is not putting his trust in the organization that he has left behind but in God himself and in the enabling word of God as it is brought into their lives.

This is a challenge for all 'follow up' thinking. How do we ensure that our converts 'go on'? Paul's answer would be 'get them relying on God and in the way he can bring his enabling word into a life.' Is he for real??? :-\ This kind of naive counsel is completely unrealistic, new converts need structure and patterns don't they? How different the New Testament is to what most of us have every experienced.

Paul believed, I mean really believed, in the power of the Holy Spirit to take converts on. Paul speaks of 'the word of his grace'. Grace is not only unmerited favour, it is also enabling power. He is saying pretty much what the Lord said in the wilderness...'man lives by the word which is proceeding from the mouth of the Lord.' The tenses here are important; it is

the word which IS PROCEEDING from the mouth of the Lord. It is what God is saying at this moment of time. Do we really believe that God is able to sustain us day by day... by Himself?

Of course, in our day, he may well bring that 'word of his grace' through the scripture. Alternatively he may bring it through a hymn, or through a testimony, or ... and this is probably one of the main ways... through a word of prophecy when the saints were gathered together in the local church.

I'll pause... or as Robert sometimes says 'I'll just go and get my helmet'.

Re: , on: 2008/12/23 18:28

Quote ...

"Only 1 & 2 Corinthians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians are specifically written to 'the church in X'. Romans, Ephesians and Colossians are written to the 'saints' in those cities."

That may be the case, but has no real bearing on the fact that each city or town had "the church," and not churches plural. If this is in fact the case, then it is our model for today.

Quote.....

"Oh what joy if genuine believers in every town and city could gather together."....

"I fear it would be a farce. I tremble that someone might actually try to organize it."

That is what Greenock was. We walked the streets and invited everyone, from the Assembly of God, to the Brethren to the Baptists and the Methodists and the Church of Scotland. The Elim Pentecostal and the Struthers Memorial church helped to organize it. God's people working and praying together. Do I feel a tremble coming on brother

;-)

Re: , on: 2008/12/23 18:52

Quote:

-----philologos wrote:

I am sure you are right but exposition is not the only way that 'the Word of his grace' comes into a gathering.

This and your last post on the previous page NOW I'm smiling.

Thank you Brother!

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/23 21:45

I grew up in a non-denom setting as a babe in Christ where the services were open mic if you will and the leadership was spread all over the place, the assembly numbered about 500 or more and the elders waited on God for direction or a Word from the Lord. Since I was so young in the Lord at that time I really didn't grasp what the plan would be if God decided to be silent on any given day :-(. however there was always something spoken. While I do believe that it's important for everyone to hear from heaven for themselves, I also see it being important for the exposition of sound doctrine on a regular basis. Of course the body of Christ (though in the pew), normally can not get involved in the general service -- no real liberty of the spirit -- because leadership often times lacks discernment and wisdom in the "overseeing" of people and things spiritual. Often individuals will come in to hurt the flock of God, like Paul warned Eph. day and night, and there is where the rub is. So while I do see God as in charge, and the apostle Paul's faith as being supremely strong in that by his faith in Christ he was able to commit though fellow Christians to the word of God's grace, I have some reservations about the quality of faith in the pulpit these days. Am I the only one here? I don't want to go negative because I can see much that's praise worthy, but....? :-o

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/12/23 21:56

Ron,

I would suggest that the "word of his grace" and the "word of Christ" (Col 3:16) is simply the gospel; that Christ has died for sinners that they may be forgiven and saved from the wrath of God. It doesn't seem to necessarily be a fresh prophecy.

The gospel, or the word of his grace, is sufficient for both the justification and sanctification of those who believe in Christ.

Dohzman - I'm not sure what you mean by "it is important for everyone to hear from heaven for themselves". In these last days, God has spoken to us by his Son - Christ. His words and the words of his apostles are recorded in the Scriptures for the better comforting and establishment of the churches. When we read the Scripture, and hear it correctly expounded, we are, in a very real sense, hearing from heaven.

With care in Christ,
Taylor

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/23 22:44

Quote:

-----Do we really believe that God is able to sustain us day by day... by Himself?

Well, when we have decades of teaching that undermines the importance of the Holy Spirit to be front and center *speaking that we might hear what He 'saith' unto the churches*, it can be a challenge.

Quote:

-----I'm not sure what you mean by "it is important for everyone to hear from heaven for themselves". In these last days, God has spoken to us by his Son - Christ. His words and the words of his apostles are recorded in the Scriptures for the better comforting and establishment of the churches. When we read the Scripture, and hear it correctly expounded, we are, in a very real sense, hearing from heaven.

There is a difference between an orator and an Oracle. the point here is that God has not abandoned man to proper exposition of the Bible. God has spoken to us by His Son, but listen to this...

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. (Acts 20)

This is remarkable. In every city Paul went the word of His grace was present to bring this particular revelation to Paul. We do not know how it played out, but Paul understood what he was hearing as testimony to the fact that he was headed for trouble.

And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. (Acts 21)

Here again, the Holy Spirit is testifying to Paul through this prophet Agabus that he is going to suffer.

And this is an essential ministry of the Holy Spirit in the local churches. God is wanting to speak directly into the situation at hand; not at the expense of Bible exegesis and teaching but in addition to it. Jesus said it over and over again- probably more than any other statement he repeated in his recorded ministry...

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;...(Rev. 2:7)

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Rev. 2:11)

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Rev 2:17)

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Rev. 2:29)

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, (Rev. 3:6)

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, (Rev. 3:13)

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, (Rev 3:22)

How many times do we have to be told until we seek to obey this commandment? We argue about a great many issues, but who can contend with a 7X command? Churches split over the color of the carpet and I have not heard a single sermon ever preached on this 7 times in a row command to HEAR, not just what the word of God has already said, but what the Spirit 'saith' unto the churches.

'Saith' here is in the present active indicative. That is, the tense is present, the voice is active (meaning that the verb's subject is acting), and the mood is indicative meaning a true reality. Surely this event in Revelation 2-3 is a pattern of how our Great High Priest tends the Candlesticks? The churches need to know what God's perception of their actions is. This is more than self-assessment; this is what the Spirit 'saith'.

Re: :) - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/23 23:44

Thank You Robert, you answered for me with great accuracy my very heart. I have always sought to hear/understand the voice of God in my personal circumstances. I think in the days ahead it will be very very important to hear His voice on a level that is other worldly, that transcends human logic or reasoning, bible knowledge and intelligence, not to do away with those but to be able to hear His voice in those things. Thanks again bro:)

Re: , on: 2008/12/23 23:56

Praise GOD Brother Robert.

Seems we've gone full circle to

(https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id26512&forum40&9) 12/20/08

Have rejoiced with you since your return from across the pond.

Joh 7:37, 38 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come.

And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Re: , on: 2008/12/24 3:52

Quote:

-----Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs?

Well if you look at the all out spiritual warfare I am having with trying to have a forum for the women that will give you a

clue. It's the "r" word--rebellion.

The fact of the matter is that it makes us all look like hypocrites saying we want revival but we do not what to obey what scripture clearly says.

Re: Why We Get Shipwrecked? - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/24 5:15

When Jesus was on the earth the disciples could lean upon Him for direction. But yet Jesus said He needed to 'go'- but why?

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (John 16)

This is an awesome passage. God was not only going to leave us with the God breathed scriptures, but would send the Holy Spirit to do on a massive scale what Christ was doing as an individual. We would have access to the direction of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Two things here, "He will lead you and He will shew you". This is Divine direction and Divine revelation. Did it really happen?

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.(Acts 8)

This is the Spirit clearly directing the life of an individual. James says that in God there is no shadow of turning. This was His design for the Holy Spirit at work in the church and He has not turned from it. There is not a single passage in scripture that can trump the 7 X call to 'hear what the Spirit says' or to trump what Christ said in John 16 or the biblical recorded history of how this plays out in the churches.

While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. (Acts 10)

And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house (Acts 11).

First Phillip and now again Peter. The word 'bade' here is interesting as it is usually translated as *said, say or tell*.

And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. (Acts 11)

OK. Now here is an interesting point. The Holy Ghost felt the people needed to know there would be a drought coming. This was not an exegesis of Old Testament prophesy it was a present word of God's grace to the people in fulfillment of what Jesus said, *He will shew you things to come*.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 13)

This erases any doubt that God intends to be in charge in His churches. This is not just men having a 'hunch' they are called to some work. This is the word of His grace coming forth giving clear direction. (You will notice I have skipped some examples already such as God speaking directly to Peter in a dream not to call the Gentiles common, etc.)

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; (Acts 15)

5)

This is the gathering at Jerusalem. This is the Holy Ghost making the decision and the saints affirming it with a willingness to do what they believe the Holy Ghost just revealed as HIS will.

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, (Acts 16)

This really shows their resolve to listen to God. Imagine a human thought based on logic that God had said preach the Gospel to every creature and then hear what *appears* to be a contradiction. This shows for sure that exegesis is not enough. Had they gone on exegesis alone *they would have gone into Asia* as they intended to do when they were forbidden. They would have been out of the will of God.

And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

Even having found these unnamed disciples Paul found the word of his grace. Think of the utter consistency here. Every where Paul went He found the Holy Ghost speaking to him information relevant to the direction of His present course. This is the Holy Ghost utterly at the helm of the New Testament disciples lives. This is not pretense. This is them hearing what the Holy Ghost 'saith' presently and actively.

And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. (Acts 27)

It is important to note that Acts 27 is devoted to Paul's shipwreck. Paul told the people that 'I can see' that this voyage will be with hurt, etc. Paul was the Oracle of God on that ship. And we do well to read this story and expound this story because it shows the consequence of disregarding what the Spirit of God is saying in any given situation. To have 'not heard' what the Spirit was saying would have brought similar consequences; shipwreck. how many have made 'shipwreck' because they did not hear what the Spirit was saying?

But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. (Acts 27)

Paul would not have said you should have hearkened unless he knew what he warned them of was actually true and not a logical deduction based on historical weather patterns. Paul could 'see' and therefore he warned. When they did not listen to the voice of God they were in blackness and darkness and fears without hope. they were carried along in disobedience. And God was silent. They could not see their hands in front of their faces at night it was so dark.

But as with Jonah so also with these Romans the word of God's grace came a second time:

And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. (Acts 27)

If you have ears to hear what the Spirit saith God will do what it takes to get you the word of His grace. So the question comes to this; are we going to be centurions or are we going to be disciples?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 6:18

Quote:
-----That is what Greenock was.

What was that comment of yours about 'in my opinion'? I was at Greenock and I have 'my' opinion too.

Quote:
-----That may be the case, but has no real bearing on the fact that each city or town had "the church," and not churches plural. If this is in fact the case, then it is our model for today.

No it isn't because there is hardly any resemblance between what constituted 'the church in Ephesus' with what today is perceived as 'the church in Kansas'.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 6:28

Quote:
-----I really didn't grasp what the plan would be if God decided to be silent on any given day

We have a story told about the early days of the church of which I am part. It was long before my arrival here but the legend lives on.

The saints gathered and the meeting seemed to 'hang fire'. It is so easy for saints to rely on the experts to provide 'the word of His grace'. So one of the elders said 'Does anyone have a word from the Lord?' The question was met with silence. 'Let's go home then' said the elder...

It only ever happened once and the saints were left with a clear understanding that 'it is important that every saint brings his beaten oil to place at the feet of the high priest'.

Quote:
-----hs in the pew), normally can not get involved in the general service -- no real liberty of the spirit -- because leadership often lacks discernment and wisdom in the "overseeing" of people and things spiritual. Often individuals will come in to hurt the flock of God,

This is always the practical issue but it is the underlying instinct that is important. Paul said that an elder should be 'given to hospitality'. I love Tyndale's translation of this 'he must be harbourous'. An interesting word. Does the eldership have the instinct to be a haven for the storm tossed or is the instinct rather one of manning the barricades and hanging in under seige?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 6:32

Quote:
-----I would suggest that the "word of his grace" and the "word of Christ" (Col 3:16) is simply the gospel; that Christ has died for sinners that they may be forgiven and saved from the wrath of God. It doesn't seem to necessarily be a fresh prophecy.

This is why I said I would get my helmet. :-)
If we complete the quotation we will see how Paul expected the 'word of Christ' to be in the midst...

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, in grace singing in your hearts to the Lord; Col 3:16 Youngs Literal Translation

I am all for preaching 'the gospel' but this is not what is in view in this verse, in my view.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/24 6:48

Quote:
-----Ron's This is always the practical issue but it is the underlying instinct that is important. Paul said that an elder should be 'given to hospitality'. I love Tyndale's translation of this 'he must be harbourous'. An interesting word. Does the eldership have the instinct to be a haven for the storm tossed or is the instinct rather one of manning the barricades and hanging in under seige?

I heard a while back that in a meeting a young man wanted to give a testimony that has mental and behavior challenges. He typically rambles a bit, but not terribly. However, on this occasion an onlooker (when they heard him carry on a minute) began mumbling under his breath, "Shut him down! Shut him DOWN!" This person could never be a candidate for an elder with this attitude.

Sometimes people try to share things in the Nursing Home service that are at different levels spiritually and mentally. It seems to me that we get more impatient than God does. Jesus' attitude was 'suffer the little children to come to me and forbid them not...'. I think we must have this attitude also. If God can bring a message through our enemies surely He can speak through someone that may not quite fit the mold or may frustrate some with their slowness or difficulty speaking, etc. If we make room for them God will make room for us, I think.

Re: , on: 2008/12/24 9:54

Quote

"What was that comment of yours about 'in my opinion'? I was at Greenock and I have 'my' opinion too."

Yes, I understand that you have an opinion about Greenock, Ron, I appreciate the fact that your opinion and mine differ in this regard.

I wrote....

"That may be the case, but has no real bearing on the fact that each city or town had "the church," and not churches plural. If this is in fact the case, then it is our model for today."

And you replied....

"No it isn't because there is hardly any resemblance between what constituted 'the church in Ephesus' with what today is perceived as 'the church in Kansas'."

Are you saying that because there is hardly any resemblance between what the Church was like in Biblical times and what the Church is like today then the Biblical model is nullified? Yet, in an earlier post you said....

"He would have written to the messengers of the churches in Greenock. You are trying to understand the scriptures in the light of current circumstances. I am saying that we will never understand current circumstances until we understand the scriptures in their original context."

I am not sure that you can make both statements without a contradiction. Please correct me if I have misunderstood youbrother Frank

Re: What is OUR business? - posted by roadsign (), on: 2008/12/24 12:59

Quote:

----- I have a simple word for all who complain about the state of 'the church'... mind your own business!

This is a painful word, even offensive. It offends our cherished sense of identity as Christians – even our perceived purpose for existing: to change the world! It is painful because it targets an ungodly assumption that lurks beneath our authoritative sounding “prophetic” utterances, our endless complaints about defective Christians, and our frequent discussions about the ideal “church”. (There is a good reason why all that changes nothing!)

Ron’s word aims at a malicious root that needs to be put death before we can be free to be what God called us to be. Sometimes I see it in myself; but most often I don’t – because it is submerged beneath a mountain of faulty assumptions about self, God, the church, and even the Bible. For me, the uprooting process continues to be an endless battle.

Ron said:

Quote:

----- I am saying that we will never understand current circumstances until we understand the scriptures in their original context.

This hurts too! For it means dislodging ourselves from the center of our own world and try to discover other worlds – not only the Biblical world - but also the vast expanse of history between the NT and today. Really, rarely has any society known a freedom of religion and freedom of speech that we assume today. Most Christians have never experienced the “freedom” to mind their own church’s business – let alone the business of their nation’s churches. When people tried to do so, they typically made a big mess of it! Consider the Puritans who left England because the king refused to enforce their ideal of Christianity. They came to the New World in the hopes of proving that, freed from hierarchical restraint, they could create the ideal Christian society. It was ultimately a disaster – and lead to such evils as the Salem Witch-hunts, etc. The Reformation (lest we idealize it) left behind a trail of war and division – maybe because people were striving after the very ideals that the Reformation seemed to promise (or so many assumed). As Ron says:

Quote:

----- We tend to think that there must be a right way of doing it.

Even if we discovered the “right” way, we defile it by falsely assuming that it is our calling to produce this “right” kind of Christian environment. We set out to create our ideal Christian world in our own power: by manipulating the church, putting demands on the governments, friends, spouses, children, etc. Others become pawns our valiant expectations on them, and this (as history proves) leads to no end of evils. Our goals become centered on mastering others even while we fail to master ourselves. Compton wrote:

Quote:

-----Yet, among all the different people I find who have mastered various things, I find the rarest person is one who has mastered themselves. This is a man who is gentle but sturdy, one who is wise but not proud, a man who is aware of his own limitations yet not lazy, and one who has traveled far ahead in his spiritual walk, but always seems to have patience to wait for those who are lagging behind him.

This is also the person who is free from the need to play God, and thus free to understand others and walk with them on the spiritual journey.

Quote:

----- In terms of groups there is nothing larger than 'a local church' until you come to 'the church'. I mean in terms of 'authority'.

And yet, I am reminded of Augustine’s teachings: The church will always be a mixture of wheat and tares, and we must leave people in God’s hands. God will transform them in his timing and will. To me this ancient warning in no way su

uggests a passive abandonment to fate, but instead, a humble rest in God's sovereignty. This view keeps us from trying to create a universal ideal – at the expense of the authentic, even our own authenticity.

I ask:
Do we need government approval in order to practice our faith?
Do we need the "right" minister, the ideal church where everybody is saved, the ideal creed, the ideal music, the ideal elders, etc... in order to live as God calls us to live?
Do we need united denominations?

Quote:
----- We hear such phrases as...'what the Lord is saying to the church is...'. I have been listening to this for almost 50 years now and am convinced that the Lord is not saying anything to 'the church' but I am sure He is saying lots of different things to lots of different 'churches' if we only had the pattern of listening.

Wow! Is Ron not suggesting that we abandon our tendency to project our own unrealistic dreams onto a non-existent entity?

That, to me, is intensely liberating! It frees us to really hear God!

Diane

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/24 13:10

I can amen this whole section here. I walked in on an African brother praying in the sanctuary, he had a map laid out of the whole world and was clutching the globe and just weeping over it all crying out to God (he had been there for 3 days and nights). I crawled out backwards realizing that even though I have a burden for my own children like that I fall way short where it comes to the rest of the world though. I have had seasons where I carried that kind of burden, but I don't know if I could function in life with that kind of burden on a day by day all day basis.

robertw - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/24 13:14

Just a personal observation for my brother Robert, since you've come back from abroad there is a fire that burns in your posts that wasn't there before. the above is a very good post and will preach too : !! God Bless

Re: , on: 2008/12/24 13:18

Diane

That's a nice opinion on the state of the church for the last 50 years. Your post is a "watchman's post. :-) Should you really be meddling as Ron suggests? Why not just leave those people alone and focus on yourself? I say that, of course, tongue in cheek, but you get the point ? Maybe. It seems that we only do not want meddling when it is not our pet subjects? Maybe not. The danger of self-righteousness is on the rise ;-)brother Frank

Re: robertw, on: 2008/12/24 13:29

Quote

"Just a personal observation for my brother Robert, since you've come back from abroad there is a fire that burns in your posts that wasn't there before. the above is a very good post and will preach too : !! God Bless"

I agree with dohzman. In fact, I posted Robert's report on the Greenock conference on my blog. According to my own feedback, many people were touched and so many came forward when Keith Daniels gave the call on the last night. May they take the Word of God and His Spirit back to all the corners of the globe that they came from.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/12/24 13:32

Quote:

-----This is why I said I would get my helmet.

If we complete the quotation we will see how Paul expected the 'word of Christ' to be in the midst...

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, in grace singing in your hearts to the Lord; Col 3:16 Youngs Literal Translation

I am all for preaching 'the gospel' but this is not what is in view in this verse, in my view.

Ron, I still think there is a logical leap going on here. The word of grace, or the gospel of what Christ has done for us on the cross, is declared in our singing and our teaching. It still seems like the view of a continuing revelation is not necessitated by these verses.

Just speaking in terms of general Scripture observation, it seems that the apostles emphasized a faithful preaching of the gospel and the fruit it produces, rather than a focus on a "fresh word". Having read the apostolic fathers as well, I don't see anything in their writings that indicated a need for fresh revelation from God.

Honestly, I used to believe and cherish "words the Lord gave to me", however, I have since come to embrace a view that, now that the Old Covenant and New Covenant Scriptures have reached their completion, they are completely sufficient for every question of doctrine and practice (2nd Tim 3:16-17), for the encouragement and building up of the saints, and the conversion of the unbeliever.

Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manner, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.

Honestly, in my opinion, we will never see a growth in sound churches until a proper understanding of Scripture is reached, as well as proper church order practiced.

However, this is an interesting discussion. I am always open to see the churches grow into more Biblical theology and practice.

Re: The Blood of the Lamb - posted by JoanM, on: 2008/12/24 13:48

I did not post this last night after Jesus-in-God and Dohzman posted rejoicing with Robert.

I too have rejoiced with Brother Robert since his return (even during as he shared the last morning). I continue in prayer for God to work out what He worked in during those days. (You already encourage others Robert.)

Ron somewhere on this site I thanked God for your message to Greenock. Just to be clear, I have already applied the truth you drew out of Revelation, in prayer for my pastor, and have seen fruit. However, I am particularly interested in what you brushed against in the beginning of your breakout session before you continued into Revelation. I also think Brother Robert anticipates that hearing (more of that hearing). If you have found the Blood in "imparted enabling" (grace) please share it at some point. The Blood of the Lamb accompanies the Christ of "our" testimony that overcomes. I'd say we need that now. (I see your plate is full. I'm just putting in for my wish list. ;-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 14:31

Quote:
-----Are you saying that because there is hardly any resemblance between what the Church was like in Biblical times and what the Church is like today then the Biblical model is nullified? Yet, in an earlier post you said....

I am saying that recipes for apples don't necessarily work with coconuts.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 14:38

Quote:
-----Consider the Puritans who left England because the king refused to enforce their ideal of Christianity.

I know that you are in broad sympathy with what I have said but I think, for history's sake, we need a minor modification here.

I have studied, for many years, the history of the churches in England and their responses to the political climates. The Puritans, actually they were independents rather than puritans, did not leave England because the king refused to enforce their ideals of Christianity. They left because the king was trying to enforce his ideas of Christianity upon a whole nation.

He wanted an episcopal system because it is more easily controlled by monarchy. The strife rumbled on for many years and resulted, within 50 years, in our bloody civil war.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 14:46

Quote:
-----Just speaking in terms of general Scripture observation, it seems that the apostles emphasized a faithful preaching of the gospel and the fruit it produces, rather than a focus on a "fresh word". Having read the apostolic fathers as well, I don't see anything in their writings that indicated a need for fresh revelation from God.

I doubt that you will find a more vocal champion on this forum than myself when it comes to verbal inspiration and the sufficiency of scripture. I am not saying anything that weakens that position. I am not thinking in terms of the prophetic word that gives 'fresh' revelation. I think there was an aspect of that, possibly, before the scripture was completed. I am speaking about the application of truth, with or without a Bible verse, to the hearer's condition.

The essence of prophecy is revelation, but not necessarily 'fresh' revelation. The prophetic utterance applies the particular truth of God to a context and to those within it. This 'word of His grace' is not an academic exposition, although an academic exposition may contain it, and frequently does.

However it is not to be restricted to the academic exposition. There is a distinction between teaching and prophecy although each may contain the other.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 14:48

Quote:
-----If you have found the Blood in "imparted enabling" (grace) please share it at some point. The Blood of the Lamb accompanies the Christ of "our" testimony that overcomes. I'd say we need that now. (I see your plate is full. I'm just putting in for my wish list.

Sorry Joan, you lost me there. Let's talk again after Christmas.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/24 14:51

The family are here now... so I had better go and start Christmas... greetings to you all from the UK.

Let's talk later... :-D

Re: - posted by TroyorTakoda (), on: 2008/12/24 17:42

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Quote:

-----Consider the Puritans who left England because the king refused to enforce their ideal of Christianity.

The Puritans, actually they were independents rather than puritans, did not leave England because the king refused to enforce their ideals of Christianity. They left because the king was trying to enforce his ideas of Christianity upon a whole nation.

Yes, I believe the Puritans left because the King was trying to promote his own idea of Christianity and they wanted to get back to the Bible.

1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The foundation cannot be modified or shaped so as to suit the wishes of people. It must be laid as it is in the Scriptures.

Eph 2:20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone

.

Upon this foundation all the faithful ministers of Christ build. Upon this rock all the Christians found their hopes. Those that build their hopes of heaven on any other foundation build upon the sand.

The doctrine of our Savior and his mediation is the principal doctrine of Christianity. It is the foundation of all other doctrines. Leave it out, and you have no foundation for our hope of salvation.

When preachers substitute their own fancies and inventions for the foundation of Christ they will not pass the test when the day of judgment comes.

There is a day coming that will cure all our mistakes, and show us ourselves, and show us our actions in the true light, without covering or disguise.

Building a church with human wisdom or eloquent speech that circumvents the cross is building with wood, hay and straw.

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs? - posted by Koheleth, on: 2008/12/24 18:36

Not enough room to respond to all of Ron's posts, but would like to say the introductory post is excellent. I appreciated the need of its perspective in my own life. Some of the ensuing discussion is instructive as well. May God use it to teach us to be serious and studious, and then active about the church, meaning "the church we are part of" and not "the church"

.

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs? - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/12/24 19:02

Merry Christmas to you all. I had not read through all the posts I admit and I run in danger of repeating something. Several verses came to my mind:

Numbers 25:7-9

7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear through both of them—through the Israelite and into the woman's body. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped; 9 but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

Phinehas did not have the responsibility of the spiritual state of the Israelites, yet his gruesome action prevented the plague from spreading. Aren't there many plagues that are spreading around us? It is not my fault nor my responsibility but blessed is the man who wields the spear in a righteous God-given opportunity.

The Levites also unknowingly(!) consecrated themselves while acting out judgement against their brother and their friend. It was not their responsibility, nevertheless it effected their appointment as priests.

I believe there is also apostolic and presbyterian responsibility that affect the sheep under their immediate care which is different from the above example.

Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

The responsibility lies with God, but he is looking for one to go for him. The bible is full of example of people whose bold action changed the course of things dramatically, and it is still so today. It would be sad to miss such an opportunity if it is given to you like this one below

Judges 4:9

"Very well," Deborah said, "I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.

This is the prophetic call and only few pass God's stringent prerequisites to be commissioned to speak for him now. Oh may God send us prophets who can bear reproach outside the camp and are more at home in the holy temple.

narrowpath

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/24 19:17

Quote:
-----Having read the apostolic fathers as well, I don't see anything in their writings that indicated a need for fresh revelation from God.

I think we should distinguish between 'new' revelation and 'fresh' revelation. I would not say there was a need for 'new revelation', but there is an ongoing sense in which the Holy Spirit brings a fresh revelation of God's word.

13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses

s said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

16 This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.

17 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

18 And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

19 And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

20 Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

21 And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. (Exodus 16)

There was a fresh batch of manna for the children of Israel every morning. They were not allowed to carry it over to the next day. Why this commandment? God is a God of perfection; if the manna came from God surely it will be perfect a week from now?

The problem is not that God's word changes, it is that *our* condition and circumstances change. The picture in Revelation 2, 3 was a 'snapshot' of a fast changing situation in the 7 churches. The dynamic nature of their condition demanded an ongoing remedy by the Holy Spirit. We have an expression, "rolling with the punches" that means that the situation changes and you have to adjust to it.

We need the Holy Spirit to speak to the moment. We need specific direction just like Peter, Paul, Phillip, the 7 churches, etc. in the New Testament. If they needed that guidance and they were Apostles, how much more do we need it?

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/12/24 23:44

Robert,

I say this respectfully, but the children of Israel gathering manna in the wilderness has nothing to do with fresh revelation. It does speak of the provision of God for his people, but to take this text and apply it to fresh revelation from the Spirit is simply a stretch. Jonathan Edwards gives a thorough discussion on this kind of Biblical interpreting in *Religious Affections* - I would recommend it to everyone.

The letters in the book of Revelation are Scripture - so using them to support fresh revelation doesn't really make much sense.

You mention that our conditions change - I disagree. The Biblical teachings on sin, justification, the fruits it produces, church order, the ordinances of the New Covenant, and all other Biblical teachings are perfectly suited to our current condition the same as they were to the condition of the first century man.

This is really an entirely different topic, in some sense, than the original post, so perhaps, if people want to discuss this topic, it could be discussed in another thread. However, the topic has been discussed at length here before.

With care in Christ,
Taylor

Re: Who is responsible???, on: 2008/12/25 0:59

I see the church constantly drifting toward Apostasy, while constantly churning toward repentance and holiness.....a constant flux and change as some are overcome by the world, the flesh and the Devil, and some overcome unto holiness. ...with a wide mix in between. I see the Church as an entity....a number that no man can number, a whole, and the Church is primarily in Heaven..not on Earth.

I also believe that there always has been a remnant, a minority I think, probably a hidden minority, who have maintained a purity very pleasing to the Father. Hebrews 11, and the 7000 "that have not bowed their knee to Baal" in Elijah's day.

This is a portion of the message to the 7 churches of Revelation; not that they were not united by the same Holy Spirit, and part of the Church of the redeemed but that they were unique in their flavor...the character of their fruit.

If we were to accuse men of this crime, let us begin with Paul, Peter and John, the Chief church planters of all of the early Church; Paul being the Chief. In Acts 20, it became clear to Paul that the seeds of perversion were already sewn within the infant body he planted, best identified in Acts chapter 20. Verses 29 and 30..."for this I know, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

"Also, from among yourselves MEN will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples away after themselves."

This was evident in a very, very young Church, filled with holy revelation and the care of the great Apostle himself... Ephesus.

So, was Paul to blame? Were his warnings and admonitions too weak? Was he not diligent? I think he was not to blame, but the thing that Paul feared came upon much of the church. Why? In the end of it, as I see it, it was the spirit of clergy/laity....the "NICOLAITAN" heresy.....essentially, there is a ministry class, that is capable of leading you, that you, as a sheep, should follow. The qualified, the ambitious.

These are they who "love the pre-eminence", and "do not receive the brethren". 3 John.

What then what do we gather from these historical scriptures? I think one lesson is that each member of His body must learn to walk with God alone, and this is the very nature of Faith in itself. No one will stand before God, in Judgment day for you. No leader and no Pastor or mentor. Sola Scripture! The Word alone, agreeing with the Spirit of God, melded into our faith, and our walk.

Possibly another title to this thread is, "Where did the Devil get in?" I am saying that he was there, right at the cradle in Ephesus, and lurking in the baby churches that John oversaw, as he is here today. I think, that one of the main avenues of attack has always been through men, and the aberration of doctrine that oversight, shepherding, a ministry class to feed and protect the church in a domineering fashion is God's way, and it isn't.

continued for timing's sake.

Re: Who is responsible? 2, on: 2008/12/25 1:54

2. continued.....

It seems that in almost every cult there is a strong leader. Think of one. At least the founder was strong, and it always points backwards to the Root of Deception...the mother of Apostasy...a deceived, an anointed leader..... in whom the church evolved round.

The Church then establishes doctrine, that the laity MUST adhere to, in order to be a part of that particular Church. The Word; sola scripture...scripture alone...is trumped by the strong leader, and the simple faith walk of the simple saint is swallowed up in the leader's charisma, or the peer consciousness of it's combined leadership. This is where we get the proverbial..."WE BELIEVE!" This is the modus operandi of every cult and aberration on the Earth...from the legalism of SDA theology, to the venerable halls of the Mormon Tabernacle.

I would step on toes to name some of our more established denominations, but most have a rigid qualification or parameter for a brother or sister to belong. It is almost based on man being the "master of ceremonies", with controlled meetings, from the announcement to the benediction, and the handshake.

The Lord has no place to express Himself, for Man is in control. Wherever we see this, we must see the Lord's departure. Eventually, He removes His light permanently, and leaves an Anathema sign on the front door...and the saddest thing is that nobody notices. It will usually be billed as a "good service."

There is no community, really, for the lay "LAY", like bumps on a log to be soon fed something the Pastor deems appropriate.

The "Meeting" was never designed by God to trump or precede the Community. It is the vestige that Clergy/Laity...the Pastor class, or the Clergy class, derive their power. Without the meeting being the primary force in the church, and the implication of the Pastors pre-eminence to run it, there is no clergy. "The Lords of the Gentiles are called benefactors, "BUT IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU!"

"You are all brothers, and have One as your Lord, even Christ!"

Everything is stripped, taken away, when WE allow these divisions to super cede scripture. What about body life? Where is that in our modern "PULPIT" centered churches? Where is the ministry that EACH believer has...."One has a song. one prophesies, one has a teaching, one has a testimony...as each member and joint supplies, and MORE grace is given to the weak, that Christ would be all in all!"

Today's church usually has little or no relationship at all within her members, much less real Agape selfless Love...th

e laying down your life type one for all commitment the early Church has,,,the "Behold! How they love one another! type witness.

Usually, members go a lifetime without ever really knowing their Church family. They are lonely, and perish from a terminal loneliness and boredom. even after the Lord may leave a church, and the fruits of Apostasy are flowering, they are bewildered,,; never being grounded in Christ, or His true body, they wither to death, It is very sad.

In the end, WE are responsible. There is One Body, One Lord, One Baptism, One Faith , above all, and in you all, not a subplot begetting more partitions. The least of the Brethren are honored as much as the Shepherds.

Individually, we will be judged by Jesus Himself on How we treat the least of the Brethren, which includes EVERY Blood Washed daughter or son on the entire Earth.

"For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks JUDGEMENT to himself, "Not discerning the Lord's body."

"for this reason many are weak, and sick among you, and some sleep"

I think of Churches and denominations and movements and local churches too. For this reason many are weak, some are sick, and some are dead.

Without holy and Godly shepherds who lay their lives down for the sheep of God....feed, protect and manifest the living Lordship through their lives,,,,the Church will perish...

John said: "Beloved, let us love one another."

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/25 6:23

Quote:
----- I think one lesson is that each member of His body must learn to walk with God alone, and this is the very nature of Faith in itself.

that is the essence of what is being said when we hear a "fresh Word from the mouth of the Lord" it is not a "new" word but an old word with fresh life/grace in it.

Quote:
----- No one will stand before God , in Judgement day for you. No leader and no Pastor or mentor

True but there will be much accountability in leadership when it come to the saints Heb 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

I think that much of the church has dropped the ball on the gifts of the Spirit which would be fresh direction, maybe even vision, discernment, true discernment into the mind of God on a matter that is relevant for the moment.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/25 6:41

Quote:
----- The Lord has no place to express Himself, for Man is in control.

Scripture alone can get to be a god in itself, a legal billy club that is used by men to inflict control over other men, that is why every believer must be able to hear the Word of God within the Word of God for themselves. It is not that instruction and the teaching of sound/healthy doctrine is not important, it is, it is not that community and love of the brethren is not important, it is, but you can have all this and not have the life of Christ in your midst and in your life. Too many examples can be cited here. One who sits daily at God's gates or one who seeks His wisdom and understanding is the one who will be able to stand in the days ahead. It is not that they want a "new" revelation, but like Job they want to hear from God and God alone, not a man, although it may come from a man, but the very nature of the "Words" they hear will bring new life(fresh life if you will), it is that personal aspect of God interjecting into their present life that is meant by "a fresh word from heaven".

On much of your other observations I agree whole heartily, as pertains the church proper in its love or lack of love toward one another.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/25 6:46

Quote:
-----You mention that our conditions change - I disagree. The Biblical teachings on sin, justification, the fruits it produces, church order, the ordinances of the New Covenant, and all other Biblical teachings are perfectly suited to our current condition the same as they were to the condition of the first century man.

You totally disregarded the 7 X command of Christ to hear was the Spirit 'saith' and your answers are woefully short of the operation of the Holy Spirit in my posts. God did not abandon the church with the scriptures to navigate this life alone with a manual in hand. God is present active in our affairs and expects us to 'hear' what HE is saying to us. This is the clear pattern of the book of Acts all the way to Acts 27. What about that 7 x command? What say you?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/25 7:14

Quote:
-----I say this respectfully, but the children of Israel gathering manna in the wilderness has nothing to do with fresh revelation. It does speak of the provision of God for his people, but to take this text and apply it to fresh revelation from the Spirit is simply a stretch.

Is God concerned to feed His people bread? Or is He concerned to speak to them presently and actively? These things were a figure just as the pattern of the Wilderness Tabernacle was a figure. What did Jesus say?

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)

Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (John 6)

The key to this passage is verse 63:

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

They words are 'life'; they are the every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God that we are to 'live' by. They are quickened words spoken by the Spirit and not the profitless flesh. And this is critical to our understanding of edification. We are not just educated in God's word, but are 'built up' when the Spirit quickens the word to us. It becomes fresh manna. We need it daily.

God is not trying to make us Christians academically; He is working to speak to us the word of His grace that we might be built up have an inheritance among the sanctified. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit- not the flesh.

The Bible tells us so much. There are so many examples of peoples lives that it is impossible to read their and discern God's will for ours or our local churches. We need ears to hear what the Spirit says. We need to reject the grievous wolves that come in in the flesh with Bible in hand leading disciples after themselves and proof text God's people into the will of fleshly men. That is the main problem today in many local churches. The solution is that we determine again to come before the Lord and hear what the present active voice of the Spirit is saying.

What is the true Manna? In a sense it is Christ. But when we couple John 16 with our previous passages it is clear that Christ needed to ascend to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to communicate what HE is saying to us; His words that are Spirit and life. How else will we know His will? We have a general sense of God's will in His word. But our accountability is realized when God *quickens* His word or will to the hearts of a person or persons. If we are not hearing what the Spirit is saying then we cannot make corrections and are doomed to our own fleshly applications of a spiritual word.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/25 7:24

Quote:
-----Jonathan Edwards gives a thorough discussion on this kind of Biblical interpreting in Religious Affections - I would recommend it to everyone.

You may commend us to Edwards, but Paul commends us to God and the word of His grace.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you a n inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (Acts 20)

I am shocked that you would commend Edwards words over Christ's 7 X commands? One of our greatest problems is o ur refusal to stop sifting through the blackened cold embers of a bygone generation. We need a fresh coal from off the al tar and a cleansing of our blackened lips. We need to repent of our ongoing resisting of the Holy Ghost as our fathers di d. We have kicked against the pricks long enough.

It is high time that we hear not Edwards, Finney, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Whitfield, Bounds, Tozer, Reidhead, Ravenhill, and a thousand others that we have formed into an almost 21st Century losely bound Talmud, and come before God un til we hear in the present active voice what the Spirit saith to our churches.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/25 7:39

Quote:
----- This is really an entirely different topic, in some sense, than the original post, so perhaps, if people want to discuss this topic, it coul d be discussed in another thread. However, the topic has been discussed at length here before.

This comes off way wrong in my ears. Forgive me if I am wrong, but it is coming off way to dismissive of such a critical s ubject. We cannot afford to go forward in the 21st century sermonizing and proof-texting. Bibliolatry is as great a sin as i dolatry as it seeks to establish a religion in the absense of God. This is what the pharisees did when they declared (<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?viewarticle&aid1959>) It Is Not In Heaven (Bath Kol).

The original post seeks to establish who is responsible for the church. Responsibility implies revelation and understandin g. The extent of our responsibility is the revelation of God brought forth individually or on a local church level. We have g eneral moral responsibility from God's word, but there is a responsibility on a local church level and that implies 'orders'. What are our 'orders' from God? To hear those orders the word of His grace has to be in operation in the assembly other wise it is hunches and guesswork.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/25 7:42

Quote:
-----It is high time that we hear not Edwards, Finney, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Whitfield, Bounds, Tozer, Reidhead, Ravenhill, and a thou sand others that we have formed into an almost 21st Century losely bound Talmud, and come before God until we hear in the present active voice wh at the Spirit saith to our churches.

Amen Robert, the great curse i think we focus so much on this. Yes it is a great blessing to read and and see what God said through these men. It can be of highly benefit for our spiritual life. But the truth is Edwards was not raised up for us t oday, edwards was raised up for his generation and wesley and Luther and all the rest for their time.

We can imitate Edwards and many do, with missing Edwards results by light years. We need to hear from God direct tha t he may rise us up and we be the man of the hour. And those who hear what the spirit says can be such a man.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/25 7:57

Quote:
-----Amen Robert, the great curse i think we focus so much on this. Yes it is a great blessing to read and and see what God said through these men. It can be of highly benefit for our spiritual life. But the truth is Edwards was not raised up for us today, edwards was raised up for his generation and wesley and Luther and all the rest for their time.

I have read these men for a long time. But they are no substitute for hearing from God. in fact, I think it can be a sign of *backsliding* but I'll get my helmet for that one. :-o (We try to glean from their devotional life instead of having our own, etc.)

In fairness I am borrowing from the message of Art Katz on 'Two Judaisms'. The truth is, many have nearly come to Rabbinic Judaism and don't know it. Are was big on what is 'good' and what is 'best'. He believed we needed to hear from God.

The issue is *authority*. Who is responsible implies a question; who is in authority and how has that authority been delegated?

The Pharisees formed Rabbinic Judaism by taking the Book and rejecting God. This is a sobering truth because they would kill a person for saying or implying that, but it is exactly God's estimate and histories verdict of what they had done. Now many many Jews are atheists and even many of the practitioners don't believe in a real God.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/25 8:18

Quote:

RobertW wrote:
The Pharisees formed Rabbinic Judaism by taking the Book and rejecting God.

I think you can leave the helmet on :-)

This is powerful Robert, i think this is probably one of the greatest deceptions in Christendom when i think about it, I have probably not read as much as you have yet of these men, but i have noticed the more "good" stuff i read, as good and true as it is, it only gives a "stirr" for the moment, the times I have been changed, the times I have been able to lay away sin and self is the times God spoke directly to me.

I think if God does not speak directly to us, what makes our religion different from islam?

And basically simplified, there can never be a real relationship unless both part is active. Imagine a couple where the bridegroom never spoke to the bride except through letters and messages. That would be a dead relationship. we see this in the number of divorces and destroyed marriages, how many is because there have been a lack of communication? i don't know but i am assuming a great deal. How many is there that have departed from God because they will not listen or even try to sit still and listen to Him.

I remember Zac Poonen said most people pray like this and he give a picture.

Imagine someone phoning you and imminently start speaking and asking and saying things for ten fifteen minutes and then just hangs up, you didn't get a chance to get one word in. So many people pray to God, they do all the speaking and God all the listening.

be still....

for meditation:

Isa 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

the word stand can also be translated abide, and i am sure God does not mean a book. Many do not even own a bible, but they can hear God more clear than those with sixteen different translations and study bibles and the rest. Blessed be God

Quote:

-----Who is responsible implies a question; who is in authority and how has that authority been delegated?

Completely wrong in most churches if you ask me :-)

In my church we do not have a pastor, we have a set of elders that are responsible in the meetings to oversee. But they are not "higher" more like brethren, and the spirit is free to give a word to whom so ever, or a psalm or a word from the book :-)

And i have been amazed how many times, one has gotten up and gave his burden and word from the Lord and it turns out that after three hours (time is not a problem when the spirit is speaking) every single one that stood up to speak had been following the first message like a red line. And it is truly something to behold how the spirit can control a meeting and "speak forth something" to his church.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/25 8:51

Quote:

-----In my church we do not have a pastor, we have a set of elders that are responsible in the meetings to oversee. But they are not "higher" more like brethren, and the spirit is free to give a word to whom so ever, or a psalm or a word from the book And i have been amazed how many times, one has gotten up and gave his burden and word from the Lord and it turns out that after three hours (time is not a problem when the spirit is speaking) every single one that stood up to speak had been following the first message like a red line. And it is truly something to behold how the spirit can control a meeting and "speak forth something" to his church.

May God grant this in all of the churches! What an awesome thing if this could be true everywhere. May God grant it in our circles again. Thanks for sharing this.

Re: Who is NOT responsible....for where we are at..., on: 2008/12/25 9:18

One thing I want to add, is who is not responsible for the current state of affairs. There is a doctrine concerning "The angel of the Church of Ephesus" etc, or the messenger of a particular Church, as being a leader of that church, city, or geographical area. I assume this doctrine was derived from the first few chapters of Revelation, and the letters to the 7 churches, prefaced by, "And to the angel, of the church of Pergamos or "to the angel of the church of...."...

These were evidently very important Words that our Lord wanted to convey, and if you notice there were 7 angels that were given a variety of tasks to perform, throughout the book of Revelation. These churches no longer exist, though perhaps a city or two does in this list. The WORD, however, given to these 7 churches DOES exist. This exchange is very, very important, and establishes doctrine and is CANON...universally accepted as the Word of God....Scripture. but in no way imply a Pope like figure has the last word, and is the main teacher and holder of the greatest anointing. This flies in the face of all the doctrine of PLURALITY....beginning from the 12....."You are all brethren, and have one Lord...even Christ.", to the letters written over and over "to the elders, or shepherds , ...of the church of _____.

I understand that very popular bible teachers, including Zac Poonen, see this scripture as the basis of establishing the authority of a "super Apostle"...IE, One Man is given power over an area to establish and maintain a grip, or absolute authority over many, and perhaps a city or region. This is exactly what I see as the root of the Nicolaitan spirit, which the Lord hates, both in teaching and deeds.

This is precisely what John the Apostle speaks of in his 3rd letter of Diotrephes who "loves the pre-eminence" and did not receive the brethren.

I believe that there must, out of necessity be an Apostolic voice to BEGIN, or start a church; to set the church on it's pillars, but the Church is never, never ruled by one man.....NEVER.

To the Elders....that's plural, and equal...not a lead elder and a posse of sub-elders.....of the Church at ..."do I write." To assume that one man is given power over many, is simply the doorway to Popism, and controlling heresy.

Yes, there is , or was, it seems an Apostolic succession, but trumping even that was the counsel of the Elders, or shepherds, IN EVERY SITUATION. These were commanded to be non-professionals, WORKING for a living, with their own hands. This is ANATHEMA for the clergy of today....the Pastor...or those in "ministry." They are indeed "hirelings", in general, and the recipient of the tithe, and the honors of the Priest Class. It is unbiblical. See Acts chapter 20.

There is no "MESSENGER" to a group of churches, but a community of shepherds, that love God's people more than themselves or their perceived ministries. There is no pre-eminence....and the modern notion of the one pulpit Pastor and the accompanying one man show would be utterly absurd to the early church, as IT IS in the persecuted Church of today.

The greatest destroyer of the true Church was the usurping of ambitious man over the unity of the meek and lowly Jesus, and the beating down of the Church to accept that we are pew dwellers, the epitome of our faith. The moves of the Spirit then descended into liturgy.....THE SERVICE! The body then disintegrated in a partition...the Priest.., and the lay..

This is the spirit of the Pharisee, which is the Nicolaitan, which is despised by our Lord Jesus more than any, and was as the brunt of His rebuke more than any.

"If we let Him Continue, the Roman's will come, and take away our place, and our nation!"....they then planned on how they should kill him.

This is the true spirit of much of the church, and it's leadership today. This very word I write is heresy unto them, for they love the pre-eminence, and to be supported by the Church, and the honors and power and prestige. It is Babylonian and Romish, but perhaps without a collar. It has destroyed the brotherhood, the equal love and honor, and has done more to destroy everything good in the Church.

This is primarily why our state of affairs is so grim. Our churches are dead, without life.

God has a remnant, and always has.

Re: , on: 2008/12/25 9:21

Quote:
-----In my church we do not have a pastor, we have a set of elders that are responsible in the meetings to oversee. But they are not "higher" more like brethren, and the spirit is free to give a word to whom so ever, or a psalm or a word from the book And i have been amazed how many times, one has gotten up and gave his burden and word from the Lord and it turns out that after three hours (time is not a problem when the spirit is speaking) every single one that stood up to speak had been following the first message like a red line. And it is truly something to behold how the spirit can control a meeting and "speak forth something" to his church.

Glory !

Re: Is it hard to speak Norwegian?...hmmhmm..., on: 2008/12/25 9:32

I'm moving to Norway....well hmmhmm, that's an encouragement. Let this freedom consume all, to where we can really love each other.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/25 10:26

Quote:

Brother Tom wrote:

I'm moving to Norway....well hmmhmm, that's an encouragement. Let this freedom consume all, to where we can really love each other.

you're welcome brother :-)

Although, even if we have this freedom, that in itself won't bring an automatic to a perfect church. Our church has issues just as any I guess.

Here is a message Zac Poonen shared with our church this summer.

(<http://www.spiren.org/media/bibelhelg08/080630-AaByggeEnNytestamentligMenighet.mp3>) building a new testament church by Zac Poonen

You will learn some Norwegian while listening ;-)

Re: , on: 2008/12/25 15:45

Hmmmmmm writes....

"I think if God does not speak directly to us, what makes our religion different from Islam?"

Brother Yun writes.....

"Jesus said that His sheep listen to His voice and the good shepherd recognizes and calls each one by name. I believe that God speaks to His children all the time. We just need to listen and obey. When we start to obey His voice, we see God's power and authority in us and operating through us.

Of course the main way that God speaks to His sheep is through the Bible. Nothing God says will ever contradict the Scriptures, nor will He ever add to them or take away from them. But I also believe that the Holy Spirit guides followers of Christ by directing them and guiding them daily. We see this happening in the book of Acts. On one occasion the apostle Paul was "kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the Word in the province of Asia (Acts 16:6) only to receive a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come and help (Acts 16:9) On another occasion Paul proclaimed "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me" (Acts 20:22-23)

How was it that the Holy Spirit directed, compelled and warned Paul? Was it solely a result of reading the Scriptures? Surely Paul was in constant fellowship with the Father and heard His voice guiding him along the way. Isaiah prophesied that at the day would come that the people of God would be guided by His voice "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying "This is the way, walk in it" (Isa 30:21)

On numerous occasions, preachers in China have travelled to a remote mountainous area to visit a group of believers. Although nobody is told they are coming, when the preachers arrive, they often find the believers already gathered together and expecting them, sometimes even in the middle of the night! When asked how they knew the preachers were coming at that time, they reply "The Lord told us to get ready because you were coming at this time."

In other places the house church had problems when undercover agents came along to spy on the believers and to see if they could gather information that might be used against them later. The Christians prayed and asked God what they should do. The Lord told them to stop announcing the place and time of their meetings and instead just trust that the Holy Spirit would reveal the details to each person He wanted at the meeting.

On the day of the meeting, no one, except the leader knew where the church service would be held, or at what time, but one by one believers began to turn up, all having been told where to go while they were praying earlier that morning. This method is one way of making sure that only those people the Lord wanted to fellowship together actually do so. It also put an immediate end to the unwanted visits by the undercover agents.

The Bible is full of examples of God's people hearing and following His voice. Listening is an integral part of having a relationship with someone. Can you imagine what kind of marriage it would be if a husband and wife never heard one another's voice? So it is for a child of God who has a relationship with His father."

There is nothing complicated about what Brother Yun just shared. I wonder how many of us would be able to find where and when a meeting was if we had to rely on receiving the information from the Lord? Do you have that kind of relationship?.....brother Frank

Re: , on: 2008/12/25 15:53

I plan on reading this whole thread on my day off. This has been so encouraging and a matter that has always been on my heart. Great thread! :-)

Re: , on: 2008/12/25 17:05

Quote:

Compton wrote:

Quote:

-----"Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth" Prov 17:24

As a young opinionated man becoming a father, it was a humbling and settling transformation when I realized that for someone who thought he could size up Christendom, I was hardly prepared to raise three children. I find that there are many men who are ready to be promoted to high rank in the church who have neglected to execute the duties of home worship faithfully.

Quote:

-----"We are so busy minding someone else's business that we so easily fail to do our own."

One thing that I am continually impressed with by life in general, is how hard it is to do even one thing well. I am impressed with people who can repair an automobile engine, or build an attractive patio, or plant a productive garden, or write a good song. Every-time I meet someone who can do one thing well, I see there is always a measure of integrity in their character, even if this virtue is not easily evident on the surface. They may be even be greatly flawed in other ways, but nevertheless they have persevered enough to master an area of knowledge. I find conversing them on their respective subjects usually very instructive to my own character.

Yet, among all the different people I find who have mastered various things, I find the rarest person is one who has mastered themselves. This is a man who is gentle but sturdy, one who is wise but not proud, a man who is aware of his own limitations yet not lazy, and one who has traveled far ahead in his spiritual walk, but always seems to have patience to wait for those who are lagging behind him.

Now there is one more trait this type of man has. He is simple in his heart. He may have two doctorates and a Masters degree, or he may just know how to fix car engines, but he is a simple fellow. That's his secret of self mastery; sophisticated men are too busy mastering other topics to master themselves.

Forgive my bit of country philosophy here, but this is how I see Proverbs 17:24 being played out in my own experience. Many men want to be like John Wesley, but John Wesley wanted to be like the Moravians. Their spiritual service was to clean the filth off of their sailing ship, because "it did our proud hearts good". And the great learned scholar Wesley marveled over and coveted their peace with God.

I am days away from my 43rd birthday, and the sphere of influence I desire has never been smaller. It is a weighty matter to look to the conversion of my own children. There are times when my ambitious heart grows restless, and I begin to look outside the borders of my home, perhaps in pursuit of a business opportunity, or perhaps even in response to some flattery to take a more visible role in church...but then I see I have underestimated the task at home and an eternal pathos sobers my dreaming imagination.

I am not a great man, but a small one entrusted with a great responsibility. If I cannot keep my eyes diligently on this one task for God until it is completed well, then I have not been faithful, and if I have not been faithful in the responsibility I have been given, then how can I rightfully move on to instruct others in their business for God? It is my goal to learn how to do one thing faithfully for God, and to do it honestly and diligently, knowing these children are more his than mine.

For this specific task, God has provided my soul many rich instructions, both through his Word, and through the Holy Spirit's comfort in many ongoing trials and triumphs. I believe that completing my task successfully will teach me everything he wants me to learn should he have another task for me in the future, or should he take me home.

There is a pleasure I sense from God in me lowering my eyes towards my task. His pleasure brings me a deep abiding peace, and helps me to live daily in his presence. It is a paradox, that my stillness mitigates the awful dread I once had of seeing him face to face when I was busying myself with so many issues I had taken on in an attempt to make peace with him.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.

Blessings,

MC

This was a rhema word for me. Thanks for sharing that, Compton. The Lord really spoke to my heart through this. As you can see I'm still catching up on this thread. :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/25 17:49

Quote:
-----The doctrine of our Savior and his mediation is the principal doctrine of Christianity. It is the foundation of all other doctrines. Leave it out, and you have no foundation for our hope of salvation.

I think we must be talking past each other. I have never thought of the 'word of His grace' in the Acts context as being a reference to the foundations of their place in Christ. Neither am I referring to the importance of the scriptures in the life of the believer. I am simply saying that God finds ways of speaking to us personally and one of the ways that this way that God does this is in the context of the gathering of the saints.

When Paul speaks of the prophetic in this sense he sketches the scenario of someone attending a meeting and discovering that God could speak to the heart. The reaction Paul expects is that the 'stranger' will 'fall down on his face, he will w

orship God, and testify that God is among you'. 1 Cor 14:25

This is not the result of exposition, although exposition is vital. It is the consequence of 'revelation'. God has lifted a veil and revealed the man for what he is. I know the cessationists would prefer to relegate these verses to history but I see no biblical evidence for that conclusion.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/25 18:09

Quote:
-----There is a doctrine concerning "The angel of the Church of Ephesus" etc, or the messenger of a particular Church, as being a leader of that church, city, or geographical area. I assume this doctrine was derived from the first few chapters of Revelation, and the letters to the 7 churches, prefaced by, "And to the angel, of the church of Pergamos or "to the angel of the church of...."....

Indeed there is such a doctrine and I have known of 'leaders' who believe themselves to be the 'voice of God' in a particular context. This effectively lifts the responsibility from everyone else and neatly silences them at the same time.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians is the only letter we have that gives us any clue as to how a meeting 'worked' in the New Testament period. The extraordinary thing about Paul's letters in there is no little reference to 'elders' or church leaders, other than in the pastoral epistles. Why would this be? Paul clearly believed in the functioning of an oversight/eldership and yet they are not addressed in the Corinthian epistles. It is the church that Paul holds responsible for their carnality, the church where 'each one is saying I'. Wouldn't you have expected Paul to lay this responsibility on the elders?

I am not saying that true 'leadership' is an obstacle to 'the word of His grace' being in the midst... but leadership wrongly understood can become a control mechanism and then it can be a real obstacle to such 'words of grace' coming into the meetings.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/25 19:23

Quote:
-----Ron's: Wouldn't you have expected Paul to lay this responsibility on the elders?

So in what sense are the elders accountable to God? It is starting to seem as if there is a responsibility that individuals share and the elders share? But who is responsible for what?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/26 4:49

Quote:
-----So in what sense are the elders accountable to God? It is starting to seem as if there is a responsibility that individuals share and the elders share? But who is responsible for what?

I think what Paul, by the Spirit, is doing is to bring accountability to those who are accountable and in this case that is 'every one of you'.

It is interesting that Paul does not address the church 'through the elders' which is the way of hierarchy.

The responsibility of the oversight is to oversee, or keep a watch, (like the Christmas shepherds.. they were 'keeping a watch over' not 'ruling over'). They are not the initiators of every move in the church but they are the safety element in the church.

Do you have those dual-controls for learner drivers over there in the US? In the UK dual-control usually means that the instructor has a clutch and a brake on his side of the car... but not a steering wheel! Consequently the instructor is able to veto any dangerous maneuver but does not 'steer the car'.

I see the oversight, and notice I keep using that phrase which speaks of multiple responsibility, as providing the veto as necessary. That doesn't mean that the oversight is prohibited from taking an initiative but that initiative in the church is not restricted to the oversight.

Re: Who is responsible???...Philo, on: 2008/12/26 6:56

I think we have to bring ourselves to face that what we are facing is Apostasy itself, and in this era, it is WE who are the keepers of the Holy Gate. This is not a theological gate, which exists between our ears only that measures holiness through being right or wrong, but one in which is the very Temple of God Himself, who dwells in light and the peaceable fruit of Righteousness; His presence and Love in the Church.

It is also important to realize that much of the fight is over pure doctrine, and the understanding that pure doctrine is foundational in our BEHAVIOR as a Church, and what we believe affects our Faith directly. For instance, if I believe the doctrine of Mary's adoration and omnipotence, and pray through her as my mediatrix, then another being will "answer" my prayers....or the combination of descending doctrines from Catholicism will alter the reality of the absolution of my sins, and thereby my SALVATION. I will end my life yet fully in my sins, and thereby dead and forever in Hell.

You can apply this empirical logic and truth to any heresy, and in the end must realize that Doctrine ALWAYS bears fruit to God, for it is always acted out either in faith, or deception and unbelief. One brings Eternal life, one death.

"and their Word will eat as does a canker, of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;, Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection has passed already....AND OVERTHROW THE FAITH OF SOME."

In this sense, the overseeing of doctrine, there is no question in my mind who is more culpable. The Shepherds! "Strike the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." The difference being, that we have the singular "Pastor", or even with elders, they are usually subservient ones, and the new testament always had a group of equal authority, so that a rogue could NOT hijack an entire Church.

This is why Character was such a load-stone for a Shepherd to be ordained, as per the Pastoral epistles. Ambition is the twin sister of Pride, and are firmly rooted in the "I will's" of Satan's rebellion. HE and his equal brothers held no desire to attain to a higher seat, or a superior position. The Pastor was not supported by the tithe, but held a job. He was not a professional, a hireling. He was a brother first, and His heart character dictated His spirituality. Always plural. always equal. This was an important safety net ignored today, and our teachers and elders have descended into roles resembling "Master of Ceremonies" rather than the lowly shepherd who loves and protects his lambs entrusted to his care.

Saying that though, we are all, at least the mature, have a responsibility to honor the holy Spirit within as Lord, no matter what. Jesus is our Lord, and if we are real Christians, we will walk with Him FIRST, no matter what our leaders do or say or instruct. In the end, we cannot say that our Pastor made me do it. He taught me wrong. In the end, we all stand on the platform responsible for our own Faith, and the fruits of our lives in whether we Loved, or whether we loved ourselves, the World, and our own desires and lusts.

"A little leaven leavens the whole lump." We must also realize that leaven is generational, and to some extent the Church is ever purging herself of these stains. I consider some of the Anabaptist leaders, who in essence constructed a massive repentance, and held to it. The sola's.....the RETURN to the "simplicity of the faith" and the Word. God answered with a mighty Presence that was enough to carry the body through for a long season...but we have again become corrupt, for we believe that agreement and understanding alone is the LIVING OF IT, and it is not.

This is why the adaption of the singular pulpit has been so destructive. It has ripped the heart out of the church by denying "the least of the brethren" access to being a part, having a ministry! This could, and was often Above the ministry of the Pastors or shepherds. NICOLAITANISM....this is the Pharisee's, who were the OBSTACLE to the common union of equal love and body life... "you are all brethren and have one Master, even Christ."

Jesus hates the teaching and the Deeds of the Nicolaitan. This is one of our greatest battles today, and it is nothing less than presenting the Lamb the Lordship that He has over His purchased possession. He loves and honors the teenager, the elderly widow, and the educated teacher the same, and demands that we act exactly the same, or incur His judgment.

Many scriptures point to this unity and equality, throughout the Bible. Overall, we must repent, and repent to be a brother first. A Brother to Christ Jesus, pleasing to Him, a "GOOD BROTHER.", or Sister to Jesus, and our commandment to treat every blood washed son on Earth the same. "Love one another."

Re: Who is responsible???...Philo, on: 2008/12/26 7:43

Philo: I appreciate your insights and clarity. Thank you. There must be those who labor in the word and in doctrine within the Church. I think you labor here.

With absolutely no fingers pointed, I must say that Theologians, in general have become a stumbling block, even Anabaptist ones! We must live the gospel, and that is Always unto "the least of the Brethren."

Our hearts are revealed when we must sacrifice to the weak...IE, love them and comfort them, in a real and nonreligious way. It is simple to stand before a crowd and deliver a great truth, and assume that you are a great and anointed Christian, and maintain the "BAR", to the ongoing exclusion of most everyone else, and of course the least of the family of God. That is what "ministry" has fell to today. We do not know, or fellowship those who labor among us. They are separate, a priest class, and usually maintain this separation, and justify it their entire lives. It is sad...and all the while, assuming that they are laboring in the Kingdom.

We are brothers and sisters..absolutely equal in every way, and all of us have the opportunity to become as close to Jesus as anyone who ever lived. This is who the Lord seeks; WORSHIPPERS and those who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. Vessels! Temples of the Holy Spirit...and sadly, sometimes, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Perhaps we will see the down syndrome child or retarded mother and senior citizen, way in front in the holy Throng on that day. I believe we surely will, if you get my drift.

Man fights for the highest seat, and promotion. Jesus loved the repentant harlot beggar and leper as much as his disciples. His last night on Earth, before Gethsemane was with Simon the leper.....in Bethany. A nobody he healed, perhaps the one leper who returned,,,we do not know. He did not stay his last night on Earth with Peter, John, or His mother. ..no. A lowly nobody Jesus had mercy on. This is you and me, and the Pastor, or the Apostle. God is no respecter of persons, nor or His true Shepherds He has ordained.

This, in my opinion, IS the RETURN...that we will see in these last days. It is the Word of Elijah, in Isaiah 40.

"Every valley shall be exalted...and every mountain and hill shall be made low and the crooked shall be made straight... and the rough places shall be level plain."

"AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHALL BE REVEALED...AND ALL FLESH SHALL SEE IT TOGETHER!"...FOR THE MOUTH OF THE Lord HAS SPOKEN IT.

This is where we are heading. You can get on board, or hold on to an old wineskin, that in the end, will leave you barren. We will become a family, and then a pure and spotless Bride. There will be a pure love in this company, unto the least. We need the weak and the least, for this proves Love, and where would any one of us be without it.....those of us who have been redeemed, and born the second time from above, who KNOW our utter depravity and the filth that has left us, when we were flooded by the Holy Spirit.

The other great attack that has brought us into the depraved state of the Nicolaitans is when Satan stole the doctrine of the Crosses from the Church. Yes, crosses....Jesus's glorious cross that he bore...His Blood, and the cross that we must bear today...to deny ourselves and to follow Him. This, coupled with the devil's genius in removing the FEAR of the Lord from the Body, has left us helpless, and destitute.

I'll comment later if the thread permits.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/26 8:19

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them,...

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock...

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them...

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (Acts 20)

I'm seeing some clues here. Paul says in that last verse, 'now' I commend you to God. Why now? Because he was leaving and would see their face no more. If I can say it like this, the Apostolic era was coming to a close. It is interesting that Paul knowing he was leaving did not seek to shut down the word of God's grace in favor of exclusively only the written word, but commended them to the word of His grace. It strikes a hard blow on those that think that the prophetic was the 'childish things' that are to be put away once we become men (as it were). If so, Paul is here commending them upon his Apostolic departure to the childish thing.

I also see an added responsibility to 'feed' the flock of God. A shepherd typically did this by preparing the land for grazing; i.e. removing hazards such as poisonous plants, fall hazards and ridding the area of dangerous animals (For those not familiar see A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23). The Lord still has to provide the grass, etc. The shepherd has to 'prepare the table' (tablelands as it were). This agrees with what Paul is saying, I think.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/27 0:09

I believe you are right>>>>>>This agrees with what Paul is saying, I think.

I do believe there needs to be more freedom in the assembly of saints, however I don't see this happening short of a really big move of God within the local churches all at once. In this area the local churches tried to organize a church unity revival this year and it was man centered, man controled, man organized. What a flop! I wonder when we will gather to hear and follow the very "Word of God" in our midst? :-(

Re: , on: 2008/12/27 0:49

Quote

"What a flop! I wonder when we will gather to hear and follow the very "Word of God" in our midst? "

That was sad to hear brother. Living here in the States I do not sense any "sense of desperation."
There needs to be a desperation for God's presence. One second in His presence changes everything.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/27 5:39

Quote:

-----I wonder when we will gather to hear and follow the very "Word of God" in our midst?

I think this will happen when the Saints begin to gather, probably in homes, for the purpose of realizing *genuine* church life. I think it requires a willingness to follow a biblical pattern and allow God to have all of the glory.

I believe also the Lord is calling out a people for this very thing. I experienced this in the UK and coming home find it hard to muster the desire to return to having church as usual. Besides, the numbers of people attending church is dropping almost everywhere I have seen except some of the churches that have lots of activities for people. One of the largest Pentecostal churches in KC just stopped having services on Sunday Night recently. This is a trend that has no parallel in the 70's and 80's.

It seems, and I could be wrong, that the Lord is not blessing many churches with His presence as He once did when they gather. This may be due to the soulish nature of worship or because He is wanting a genuine church life pattern. just a theory I have. But truly the times will demand that we really come together with like minded believers and seek God together New Testament style. I believe the days of 'playing church' of 'entertainment based church' may be numbered.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/27 16:20

Quote:

-----If I can say it like this, the Apostolic era was coming to a close.

Well to a degree THEIR apostolic era was coming to an end. It is key, i think, that Paul did not expect to see them again. He could write to them, but his personal presence would not be available. This is very similar to our condition today in that we don't 'see' Paul around, although we do have his letters. Paul knew he could make an input by correspondence but he knew they had to become 'a weaned child' and learn to receive from God.

Quote:

-----I also see an added responsibility to 'feed' the flock of God. A shepherd typically did this by preparing the land for grazing; i.e. removing hazards such as poisonous plants, fall hazards and ridding the area of dangerous animals

I wouldn't want to overemphasize this aspect. I have watched shepherds in Romania. Their main role is to guard the flock and leave them to get on with it. The shepherds will guide them to good pasture but they don't do any of the chewing for them. ;-)

Re: , on: 2008/12/27 18:34

Hi Robert, you write.....

"This may be due to the soulish nature of worship or because He is wanting a genuine church life pattern. just a theory I have. But truly the times will demand that we really come together with like minded believers and seek God together New Testament style."

I think your theory may hold some water. There is a leanness in the Church. I believe it is largely because we were given the desires of our hearts. Attendance is dropping of because people "have not time," yet if the genuine presence of God was there, corporately, you would have to put on extra services. As I visited various Pentecostal churches in the last several years, I noticed a change. Most of the churches I visited no longer had "tongues," and interpretation of tongues. Words of knowledge were gone. In some of the churches, if God put a hymn on your heart, you could just start singing it and people would join in. All of these things are "God speaking to us." Were their abuses? Yes. Was some of it merely soulish and generic? Yes. But, what price freedom? Should the "baby have been thrown out with the bathwater?" So, between the desires of our own heart, and a desire to control the service and follow the program, we have slowly but surely ejected the Holy Spirit from the building (in general terms of course) So, the question is, what now?.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/27 19:47

Quote:
-----All of these things are "God speaking to us." Were their abuses? Yes. Was some of it merely soulish and generic? Yes. But, what price freedom?

As Ron would say, the solution for abuse is right use. Abuse is no excuse for non-use (or something like that).

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/27 19:49

Quote:
-----I wouldn't want to overemphasize this aspect. I have watched shepherds in Romania. Their main role is to guard the flock and leave them to get on with it.

I'm still wondering what (if any) lesson can be learned by the walled in pastures in Scotland and England. Years are spent making walls then the latter generations don't have to shepherd any more. :-(

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/27 20:00

I wonder if we can return to this passage:

Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth. (Proverbs 17:24)

I have been giving a lot of thought lately to just how effected I have been by TV preachers having so-called mega ministries. There is a sense in which so many men of past generations were mightily used of God and yet I have somehow felt that I needed to attain to that.

Surely I should concern myself with just doing what the Lord lays on my heart and that alone? I think this is one of the things that contributed to such terrible burnout in my life. Trying to do too many ministries to change the world when I needed to just do what God laid on my heart to do. Where did I get the idea that I needed to be doing all this stuff?

Where did the notion come from that somehow I am responsible for the world? I think about Mike Compton's post earlier in this thread. It is a true saying, I think. But why would we not think that way all along? there has to be some influence that we are trying to attain to. Were the men and women of old 'conscious' that they were making an impact like they did or were they just doing what God called them to?

Re: Holiness in the end. , on: 2008/12/27 20:32

This thread is rich, and important. We can only be healed when we realize our sickness and blindness. "I looked for my enemy, and I found myself."

The Laodicean Church had to come to grips with that. We may know of the reformers, but the reformers lived repentance. We, also must return to sola scripture, and be courageous enough to live it, and to lay down our Earthly crowns, no matter what they may be. This comes in the face of the greatest, and or the "qualified", and transfers into the pocket of the "called and chosen."

So were the 12. "Ignorant and unlearned" did the leaders say of them. The earlier church was probably a group of house Churches, that met now and then corporately. This model probably transferred into the dark ages, out of necessity, as Rome became the dominate persecutor of her. . It is very similar in China today. Yes, there are elders, but they are real shepherds, and there is no professional ministry. The benefits aren't that good anyhow.

Also the form, or structure has nothing to do with the occupant. we can have perfect order, absolute integrity, but if the Lord doesn't build the house, it just doesn't get built; and what works in Romania, may not fly in Cleveland. This is one message we can derive from the 7 churches. They were independent, all a little different, yet the same as a temple of God!

Robert W., Funny thing about walls. The same walls built to define property and keep the wolves out, and the sheep in, will often keep error and coldness in, and new sheep out. The church has one analogy in Scripture as a river, flowing from the Throne. Always changing, always moving, always giving life. Ponds and lakes become stagnant, but not rivers. I appreciate your insights and radical thinking to dare to venture upstream against the status quo.

Tom.

Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2008/12/27 23:10

Hi BrotherTom...

Quote:

-----Robert W., Funny thing about walls. The same walls built to define property and keep the wolves out, and the sheep in, will often keep error and coldness in, and new sheep out. The church has one analogy in Scripture as a river, flowing from the Throne. Always changing, always moving, always giving life. Ponds and lakes become stagnant, but not rivers. I appreciate your insights and radical thinking to dare to venture upstream against the status quo.

Good point(s)!

It has been my experience that there are many, many would-be prophets and apostles who claim to "hear God's voice" - which they then force upon their congregations. Anyone who thinks, feels, learns, or discerns otherwise is simply "wrong" and is often cast out from the fold. In a way, it is "their way or the highway" -- giving no room for prayerful searching, because these men preach the "umbrella authority" message and claim to "hear God for us."

I used to know a guy who would talk about having "heard God's voice" about nearly everything. He would then judge other believers by what he thought (or claimed) that he "heard from God." Most of the time, he would just reiterate things that are entirely clear from Scripture. Yet often, he would stray into all sorts of doctrines that aren't clear. For a while, he dabbled into the charismatic prosperity "health/wealth" message. He would even tell sick people who didn't receive their healing that they must be in hidden sin...or simply be "faithless."

I finally asked this brother, "Brother so-and-so, have you EVER told someone that 'God told me...' and later have found yourself to be incorrect?" I explained that this could be a "personal message" received from God about himself, someone or something, or a supposed supernatural knowledge regarding the interpretation of a particular doctrine. He admitted to this, but said that he simply and sincerely "missed it." I explained that this made him a person who bore false witness against God Himself...and that this was no different from a false prophet from the Old Testament! He thought that I was "judging" him, but later thanked me for the reproof.

Today, one of the problems that I see in the Church is that we (the Body of Christ) allow men to pour out their interpretations for us. Much of what the modern Church teaches or believes has simply been passed down by preachers attending another preacher's message (at church, from books or from a seminary). Sometimes, nonsense comes in waves like a passing fad (ala "holy laughter") while other times it has taken root for over a thousand years (the "Church" format as taken from pagan Roman traditions). Regardless, we are in a mess because we easily adhere to what we are taught.

We need to be Bereans in ALL THINGS. We should trust no man...even those dear preachers that we admire. We all have one thing in common: We aren't entirely perfect and are wrestle against our flawed humanity. We should listen to teachers and test each and every thing that they pass on to us. This is true of anyone -- from those charismania "prophests" to beloved men like Leonard Ravenhill.

When I met Brother Ravenhill shortly before he died, he told me that this would be the most important thing that I would ever learn. He told me that the Church of God is in such a mess because it operates through flawed doctrines and practices that were easily believed when handed down by our "leaders." He instructed me to remain passionate for intimacy with God, to "test everything" that I have ever learned or been instructed (even those things that I was sure of) and to "hold on only to that which is good." He reminded me that "there is none righteous" enough to teach us without us proving his words.

One of the big problems that I find in the Body of Christ today is not just from those who are willing to believe silly things (like the extreme ends of the prosperity message), but from those who are willing to believe "hard" messages without truly searching them out. There are so many guys who teach as if their messages are beyond reproof -- that they feel that anyone who thinks otherwise must be in "gross error" (sincerely, at best).

God help us to remember our flawed humanity enough to even question ourselves and the things we think to be true! God help us to remain so closely intimate with Christ that we realize just how unlike Him we are...even though we try. May we instruct others to question our words and the words of others through the light of God's Word! May we realize that the condition of the Church (not individually, or in truth, but that vast "body" that claims to be part of the body of Christ when gazed upon as a whole) reflects the inability of each of us to search out the Word of Truth and only hold on tenaciously to that which we are completely assured to be truth!

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/28 8:06

Quote:

-----May we instruct others to question our words and the words of others through the light of God's Word!

Amen. I was thinking about this topic earlier as the potential for false or wrong things may come forth at any given time theoretically. But I also think that 'personal prophecy' is not exactly the same as 'the word of His grace'. It may function the same, but it is not what I would be looking for specifically.

Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. (Proverbs 11:14)

The wonderful thing about authentic church life is that most people come to the meeting ready to wait on the Lord and offer their oil to our Great High Priest. Since so many are really seeking God I think Proverbs 11:14 automatically comes in to play. I think it provides a safer environment than most churches where the people come to service expecting to spectate with their mind and heart in neutral.

The wonderful thing also, is the *gentleness* with which direction is to be maintained. You will notice that right in the middle of all those passages in I Corinthians on the gifts of the Spirit is the love chapter (13). The gifts in operation are expressions of God's love and grace to the people. I think that folk who come to a meeting with an ax to grind are of the wrong spirit already.

One does not have to be 'prophetic' to be of the wrong spirit. I think any message of repentance that does not flow from a heart of compassion is not of God. Typically it was the religious hypocrites that badgered the people that received the harsh words from our Lord. Those that were in sin and needed to repent there was an underlying compassion for them that *drew them near* to Him that He might change them.

So any 'word' or contribution that comes forth that is not of grace and seasoned with salt may well be earthly, sensual or devilish. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. A word of rebuke from a critical spirit is not the same as a rebuke that is carried on wings of compassion and desire for restoration and reconciliation.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/28 8:50

Very much good in this thread, yesterday night i listened to a Zac Poonen sermon from the book of Daniel. And he spoke briefly on building the body of Christ, the church and building babylon.

The verses that stuck with me in my thoughts were these.

Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

1. Mans Plan
2. Mans Power
3. Mans Glory

How much church building is it today, not buildings but the church. Is built like this, with mans power and wisdom instead of Gods spirits power and wisdom that is layed down in scripture.

As looking at the pastor dominion in the church where one man practically runs the show, some is undoubtedly very godly men and do a good job in what they do, but is this Gods intent and will for the church? or has God in his wisdom another plan that is foolishness to men?

Looking at most churches they sadly is run like any worldly company, where the main interest is really to make the church go around, financially. Instead of "to God be glory in the church"

What my own experience is that for some years my only participation was to sit in a pew, and give in the collection box. The thing that struck me was that i was just going to church, it was a relatively large church, and i noticed that if someone was missing no one would notice. And I look at the picture we have in the word that we are a body. Have any woken up and been missing a leg or an arm and not noticed?

I believe the intimacy and fellowship is of most importance. Yet we have large churches, and it would be an interesting poll to take in a church how many feel lonely.

another thing that i noticed from moving to norway and a new setting in church is that everyone is more involved when a church have elders instead of a pastor. Everyone has something to offer instead of being forced to listen to a pastors doctrinal convictions, right or wrong.

And how the sharpening of our love for each other to see maybe two brothers that maybe not share the same convictions can go up and speak a word if they feel led. To see people come up the next meeting and confess the word I shared last Sunday was not a true word from God.

And how there is a "recipe" if you will in doing things other than we so often been brought up in, and how God's ways have "hidden" things that when it is done purges and cleanses out in many other areas. And most important I think it rings the saints together. The sad tragedy of today's church is that many go to church, most people, when we suppose to **be** the church.

But also, we can have the print of a church, like we can have a model of the tabernacle in the desert, we can rebuild an exact replica of that tent, and yet God's glory won't be there, we need be careful we do not make the same mistake when we build the church.

And most sadly much of Christian work today are just a copy of another "successful" ministries. Successful men looking at attendance, economy or conversions. Or having a right doctrine.

But Jesus never said any of these things.

Jesus said when they see how much you love one another.... is your church bringing you to that? that you can love your fellow church members with a heavenly love? ever increasing and growing and put into practice.

People often ask my church do this, we have this doctrine we do this, or we don't do this and we don't do that.

The question should be

do you love one another?

I have really appreciated Art Katz messages on community life and God's intent with the church, and how vital it is with fellowship.

As far as I myself am from this at the moment I am more and more convinced as Art says ;

Next Sunday might be too late.....

But I am very glad to see and hear that many are allowing God to work in them and leading them forward to the church as it should be. I think this thread shows more than we realize that God is working in these last days.

Eph 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Eph 3:9 And **to make all men see** what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Can all men **see** the what is the fellowship of the mystery? that has been hid but now is revealed?

and reading that passage and seeing how the church is a testimony to the power and darkness, and seeing the grand finale here

Eph 3:18 May be able to comprehend **with all saints** what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

Eph 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Eph 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Eph 3:21 **Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.**

I would suggest it is robbing God of His glory to "do" church the wrong way, at least we limit it.

just my thoughts on this huge subject and very important one

Christian

Re: , on: 2008/12/28 17:47

Heard a wonderful sermon by Vance Havner last night called "Desperation in Prayer".

He quoted Evan Roberts.

Evan came to the pulpit and said - *"Wherever two or more are gathered in My Name - there am I in the midst of them"* ---
Do you believe that ?"

And all the people said "Amen"

He asked "Do you really believe that?" and all the people shouted, "Amen, Alleluia."

So he answered, "Then you won't need me." and he walked out.

the necessity of prophetic input in the local church - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/29 11:53

Quote:
-----I'm still wondering what (if any) lesson can be learned by the walled in pastures in Scotland and England. Years are spent making walls then the latter generations don't have to shepherd any more.

:D I ought to have known that those miles and miles of dry stone walls would have their impact. It is an interesting thought but it is probably more complex than it seems. It was the elimination of the predators that made it possible for the shepherds to sleep in their beds. The dry stone walls had a double consequence. Gathering all those stones from the field made the pasture more accessible and putting them into walls was a good place to get rid of them.

I would like to return to the meeting of Paul with the Ephesian elders...

Paul had spent 3 years laying the foundation and had 'kept nothing back'. The church in Ephesus had 'elders' and a level of maturity. The gospel had gone out throughout Asia Minor from this centre. This was a vigorous and vital church but in his extended absence Paul 'commits' them to God and to the word of his grace'. This notion of 'committing or committing' is interesting; the word is often used of setting a meal before someone. Paul is placing before these men the way forward, through acute dangers, for the church at Ephesus... his recipe is 'God and the word of His grace'.

I am drawing attention to this with regard to the correspondence with Taylor. The foundations were in place but the ongoing step my step journey would be possible only as they depended upon 'God and the word of His grace'. The constant incoming 'word of His grace' is not an alternative to the solid foundations that Paul had laid but is the way forward.

I want to be sure that I am being understood here. Where I speak of prophetic input I am not equating that to what often passes as 'prophecy' in many of our gatherings. These usually begin with the phrase 'Thus saith the Lord, I know...' I am not mocking this but I think the prophetic gift in the gathering of the saints is much more comprehensive than this. I think we need to take a look at 'prophecy' alive and well in the Corinthian church.

In this context prophecy is not to be confused with teaching. Sometimes a man may exercise these gifts with such frequency that the man becomes identified with the gift and is recognized as 'a prophet' or 'a teacher'. Prophets are seen 'on the move' in the earliest inter-church connections. In Acts 11:27 a company of 'prophets' from the church in Jerusalem visited the 'church in Antioch'. The context makes it very plain that a considerable amount of teaching had already taken place through the ministry of Barnabas and Paul. Why then this perceived need for 'prophets'? Why was the 'teaching' not sufficient in itself?

Robert quoted the phrase 'the answer to abuse is not non-use but right use' and the abuse of so-called prophetic ministries

es in our modern day cannot be cured by 'non-use' but must be disciplined into 'right use'. This topic is one of the main topics under discussion in 1 Cor 12-14.

Re: the necessity of prophetic input in the local church - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/29 13:22

Quote:
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I think we have a good picture of what prophetic and holy spirit lead teaching will do, it will allow the spirit to speak in the church.

I think this is an amazing passage in scripture, concerning the Spirit and the church.

Act 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.
Act 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
Act 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

i would be very grateful if you people shared your thoughts on this passage. No doubt it is very rich in many different aspects.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/29 14:35

Quote:
-----i would be very grateful if you people shared your thoughts on this passage. No doubt it is very rich in many different aspects.

Some have thought this implies that the 'prophets and teachers' were 'ministering to the Lord' on their own, separate from the body of the church. I don't read it so. I think this is just a way of identifying the presence of these 6 men whose gift was recognized by all.

Prophets and teachers are clearly distinguished and this is important to our discussion. They are clearly distinguished in the 1 Cor 12-14 section too. In that section women are clearly expected to 'pray and to prophesy' but there are definite restrictions upon the prospect of them 'teaching'. (we have discussed them frequently on sermonindex, so perhaps we can leave this thorny issue to concentrate on the matter in hand.)

The Holy Spirit said... what a wonderful statement. This expression can surely only mean an 'utterance' which came into their midst as they 'ministered to the Lord'. This is NOT a committee meeting to make decisions about future mission. Barnabas and Paul were part of this gathering and no doubt seen as indispensable to the future of the church, but God had other plans. He wanted Barnabas and Paul for another purpose and needed them to be 'severed' from the church. This is interesting language; they were part of the body in this place. This word for 'separate' is the word that Paul uses to describe the cutting of the umbilical cord in Gal 1:15.

Most versions say that the saints there 'sent them away' but this obscures an important truth. Darby captures the distinction by translating it 'they let them go'. This is the word for 'release'; they released them and so cooperated with the word of His grace that had come into their midst. Verse 5 shows who did the sending; and they being 'sent forth by the Holy Spirit... The Holy Spirit said 'severe them for the task I have for them', the church 'released them' and the Holy Spirit sent them. I think the way in which God waits for the 'consent' of the church here is very moving. The word for 'sent' is a word used in Greek of the day to describe the 'export' of goods. The Holy Spirit is in the export business!!

This has great significance in the linkage of churches later. Antioch is often referred to as 'the sending church'. It was not; it was the releasing church. We have no record that Antioch ever supported Paul! I am not recommending 'non support', I am just making the comment that the church at Antioch did not have any 'organizational' responsibility towards Barnabas and Paul.

Just notice how spontaneous all this is...

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/29 15:03

Quote:
-----Ron's: This is interesting language; they were part of the body in this place. This word for 'separate' is the word that Paul uses to describe the cutting of the umbilical cord in Gal 1:15.

So there is a sense in which the Holy Spirit prepares folk and matures them to function in some sense independent of the 'releasing' church. If we follow this metaphor on would it be reasonable to assume that the church may have in some sense continued to 'nurture' (for lack of a better word) Paul and Barnabas until they could fully fend for themselves? (financially, etc?)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/29 15:10

Paul was 'called an apostle' from the moment of his arrest on the Damascus road. This was simply the fulfillment of that predestinating word. These events in the church at Antioch are at least 14 years after the Damascus road. I have no doubt that much of that time was preparation but a large part of that period we have no record of what Paul was doing.

I think Paul would have been very able to provide for himself 'financially' long before this.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/29 15:21

Quote:
-----I think Paul would have been very able to provide for himself 'financially' long before this.

This may be a topic of a different thread, but is it the normal pattern in Acts and the NT overall that ministers were able to provide for themselves? I know Paul made tents and told others to 'work with their hands the thing which is good', but were there full-time salaried ministers in the New Testament?

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/29 15:39

Quote:

RobertW wrote:
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This may be a topic of a different thread, but is it the normal pattern in Acts and the NT overall that ministers were able to provide for themselves? I know Paul made tents and told others to 'work with their hands the thing which is good', but were there full-time salaried ministers in the New Testament?

This is not scripture, but some interesting quotes from the early church.

If a prophet desires to abide with you, and if he is a tradesman, let him work and eat. However, if he has no trade, according to your understanding see to it that as a christian, he will not live with you idle.

Didache

Attend to your employment with all appropriate seriousness, so that you will always have sufficient funds to support both yourselves and those who are needy. In that way, you will not burden the church of God.... some of us are fishermen, tentmakers, and farmers, so that we may never be idle.

-Apostolic constitutions

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/29 15:48

Quote:
-----This may be a topic of a different thread, but is it the normal pattern in Acts and the NT overall that ministers were able to provide for themselves? I know Paul made tents and told others to 'work with their hands the thing which is good', but were there full-time salaried ministers in the New Testament?

I am under the impression that all rabbis were required to have a manual skill by which they could earn their living. Part of the reasoning here was to emphasize the dignity of work.

The early church may well have followed this pattern. Paul tells us, in 1 Corinthians, that God has ordained that those who preach the gospel should 'live of the gospel'. As far as I know there is no record of how this principle was implemented.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/29 15:55

Quote:
-----If a prophet desires to abide with you, and if he is a tradesman, let him work and eat. However, if he has no trade, according to your understanding see to it that as a christian, he will not live with you idle.

Didache

The Didache, or the Teaching of the Twelve is a very early document dating to the very beginning of the 2nd century i.e. the early 100s. Although it is not scripture it is probably authentic and while its instructions are not 'scripture' it does give a fascinating insight into the patterns of church life in the period which comes right at the end of our New Testament period.

We still find 'apostles and prophets' itinerating among the churches and absolutely no trace of a single elder/pastor or the territorial 'bishop'. It is powerful evidence... but as you say 'not scripture.' Neither is there any evidence of the organizational linkage between the churches.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/29 17:14

Quote:
-----Although it is not scripture it is probably authentic and while its instructions are not 'scripture' it does give a fascinating insight into the patterns of church life in the period which comes right at the end of our New Testament period.

Then it is safe to say that as long as a person was able they were expected to work. I think of the passage, "if a man does not work neither should they eat."

The link I am looking into is the obstacle to genuine church life being so many full time pastors and leaders needing a source of income. I'll get the helmet. :-?

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/29 17:33

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RobertW wrote:

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The link I am looking into is the obstacle to genuine church life being so many full time pastors and leaders needing a source of income. I'll get the helmet. :-?

You better leave that thing on then you won't have to go get it all the time :-P

In my church, that don't have pastors all who are elders have work, many of them have large families also five, six and even ten children. How they find the time to organize and do what they do I guess is an enablement from the Lord and sacrifice from their part. But what I think is a key is the fulltime pastors are so busy because they do ALL the work that others should be maybe divided up in the church among the members of the body. Imagine a hand doing all the work in the body, it wouldn't work. The heart does something, the eyes something and the legs something. The head organizes everything into harmony.

And maybe our lifestyle also keeps us in such a grip we need a very high income. Maybe we should settle for less so we can work and still have time for the Lord's work in the church?

Re: A death knell to the professional and hireling!, on: 2008/12/29 17:38

As I have stated in this thread, and others, I believe that the "Professional" ministry class must be torn down before we see true glory in our communities and meetings. The sad facts are that our current Clergy centered church model just does not allow for body ministry, or any other ministry outside of their approval or control. This class basically deems itself worthy, and only themselves worthy of being supported, as well as capable of ministry. The Ephesian model and Romans model of each joint supplies, and "one has a word, one a teaching, one a testimony, and prophecies one by one as others judge",,,,is entirely abolished, in favor of a more qualified and singular voice.

"DIDACHE"....in this instance, "he will not live with you idle...", can be found rooted in many scriptures, in particular ACTS 20, when Paul lifts his hands up, expressing his model of self support, self sacrifice, and the mercies of giving and supporting OTHERS as an ELDER, or shepherd...all equal.

He also brings into play the words of Jesus; "It is more blessed to give than receive.!"

"If any man..... does not work, HE SHALL NOT EAT!"

If you think these truths out to their logical conclusion, they spell out a death sentence to the one man show, and to the professional, suit wearing ministry. When man controls, the Holy spirit loses control. True worship, and body ministry is quenched. The church is a loving group of brothers and sisters, who live under one roof with their Father as Head of the Table.

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Quote:
-----If a prophet desires to abide with you, and if he is a tradesman, let him work and eat. However, if he has no trade, according to your understanding see to it that as a christian, he will not live with you idle.

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The Didache, or the Teaching of the Twelve is a very early document dating to the very beginning of the 2nd century ie the early 100s. Although it is not scripture it is probably authentic and while its instructions are not 'scripture' it does give a fascinating insight into the patterns of church life in the period which comes right at the end of our New Testament period.

We still find 'apostles and prophets' itinerating among the churches and absolutely no trace of a single elder/pastor or the territorial 'bishop'. It is powerful evidence... but as you say 'not scripture.' Neither is there any evidence of the organizational linkage between the churches.

"THE KINGS AND LORDS OF THE GENTILES EXERCISE LORDSHIP OVER THEM....AND THOSE WHO EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THEM ARE CALLED BENEFACTORS, BUT IT SHALL NOT SO BE NAMED AMONG YOU. ...
.....ON THE CONTRARY".....

We are blood washed and equal, even unto the least of the brethren. There is no clergy class, but there are those who are called to oversee, teach and preach. There are those gifted with the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, and all of these are served up from down under, as a brother first, and a foot washer. It is about impartation of Heaven as a slave to the body, with the weak first. "Until we all come to the fullness and unity in Christ."

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs? - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/29 17:47

Here is an excerpt from a short article/testimony from Zac Poonen. I think its a great encouragement and a proof of it is possible to leave the system of paid pastors.

Financial support for workers: In the New Testament, the Lord's workers were supported financially in two ways: Some were supported by the gifts of believers, while others like Paul supported themselves. But in India, almost every Christian worker was either a salaried worker of a church or supported by gifts from believers. So we saw a great need for some workers in India to support themselves and thereby demonstrate the second method of support found in the New Testament - and thus restore the balance. So I decided to support myself and to serve the churches in India freely. I also decided that I would not receive any royalties for my books and audio-tapes that our church published. I encouraged my fellow-elders also to follow my example. The amazing miracle we have seen is that we now have more than 70 elders in the churches in India, who have been serving the Lord freely for many, many years. And some of them are serving in India's poorest villages.

(<http://www.cfcindia.com/web/mainpages/articles.php?displayarticle31>) New Testament pattern

Re: balance - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/29 21:22

The word of God says a workman is worthy of his wages, and teachers are worthy of double honor, and not to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn and.....etc. You get my drift.

So there is no doubt that scripturally there are some Levites--if you will--- who are to live off the free will offering of the temple as it were.

The problem I see is this 1) to many pulpits have minister in them who were never really called. According to a Gallup Poll done in the late 90's only 58% of minister believed that the bible was inerrant and divinely inspired and 13% didn't accept the virgin birth of Jesus the messiah. They tell me that that number has risen significantly since then.

2)As I have said most pastors jobs are really to stand in the gap for their flocks and to create an atmosphere of safety(boundary without stifling the creative move of God in the midst), and to teach healthy doctrine in order that the sheep can discern right from wrong not only in the great assembly but also in their day to day fellowship/lives.

I can't go into some of the abuses I have seen from the pulpit but even that hasn't jaded my understanding as to the whole issue of support for full time ministers.

Re: The Candlestick - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/29 22:32

I've been following this thread with great interest. I'm very encouraged by what's being shared.

If I can go back a ways, Robert W mentioned early on that some may need to gather together and seek God about "reestablishing a local church that is a true light in the community."

And he said also, "The gates of hell will not prevail against a church in which the Lord is tending the candlestick."

I think we are entering days when we are going to see the Lord of the church bringing forth this "candlestick" type of church structure, that is, church as HE has intended it.

...Meaning that in each locale according as He determines, there shall be a Candlestick type of church shining forth the true Testimony of Jesus Christ into the darkness.

...That Candlestick in each place will "mind its own business," and be subject to the heavenly Headquarters alone, that is, Christ Himself at the Right hand of God. I believe, as we seek Him, He will bring us into a powerful awareness that the churches are HIS... and we are to walk in obedience doing only what He bids us do.

We must come to this deep awareness that the church whether locally or universally is ALL His own responsibility, and ours only as we are in union with Him, doing just that portion that He calls us and graces us to do.

I was thinking about the candlestick recently, and reread the passage in which God gave Moses its pattern. It was to be made of one solid piece of gold, "all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold" (Ex. 25.36).

It seemed so clear to me upon reading this that the kind of unity we see being pushed so often these days, with denominations coming together in an ecumenical kind of unity, yet still maintaining their denominational identity... this is not the c

andlestick God has in mind.

The candlestick was not a bunch of pieces of metal, somehow held together with wire, or whatever. It was one solid piece of pure gold. This is the kind of unity that must be the characteristic of the church God has in mind.

I believe we are going to see this, although it is going to take great shakings to bring it into being.

And great suffering. ...One solid piece of gold "of beaten work." There is cost involved, and suffering, in this kind of church coming forth.

I feel so stirred about this. I want to see this kind of church.

...I read of Paul ministering in the churches. Oh, the reverence he had as he walked among the churches, I suppose you could say with his shoes off. He knew deeply they were the Lord's churches, for His own holy purposes. He never considered them his own. He never tried to bring them under his own dominion. He was a servant to the churches, doing His part as God commanded and enabled, and ultimately leaving them to God's own care. God was well able to keep them Himself, with "the word of His grace."

He is the One who is responsible for the churches. There was never in the heart of God this hierarchy kind of thing church has become (and became very early on, actually).

I read in Frank Bartlemans' book on Azusa Street a quote by the Reformation historian D'Aubigne. He said, "The church was in the beginning a community of brethren, guided by a few of the brethren."

How beautiful. So simple. We have gone far away from this simplicity that is in Christ. May the Lord help us to return to it.

Thanks to the different ones who are sharing on this thread. May we all be encouraged to know God will yet have the desire of His heart.

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/29 22:46

I think Daryl raises a good point here. There is no doubt that the scripture teaches that those that labor in the Gospel should live of the Gospel (I Cor. 9). There are people that are not called serving and there are abuses.

The point I am trying to flush out is, does the one pastor type church pose an obstacle to shifting to an elder based church because of the full time support (often a salary and housing) of that one pastor? To what extent does today's salary package and home allowance type model compare to the New Testament?

Regardless, I read an article from the Southern Baptist Convention that mentioned that 50% of their present pastors will be out of ministry by 2020 due to age related issues. There are few replacements. So even the salary packages are not luring pastors.

Could this be God moving the churches back into an elder based model with genuine church life?

Re: , on: 2008/12/29 23:22

Quote

"It seemed so clear to me upon reading this that the kind of unity we see being pushed so often these days, with denominations coming together in an ecumenical kind of unity, yet still maintaining their denominational identity... this is not the candlestick God has in mind."

Quote

"I believe we are going to see this, although it is going to take great shakings to bring it into being. And great suffering. ...One solid piece of gold "of beaten work." There is cost involved, and suffering, in this kind of church coming forth.

I feel so stirred about this. I want to see this kind of church."

Amen brother. In order for this to occur we will have to lay down and abandon the established order, the Catholic model of "one man in charge." The Priest, the Pastor, the Minister. This is a model that goes back even to the "mystery religions." So, it looks like we are going to be starved into the right model. When we are hungry enough, when we are so thirsty that we are almost going to die, then we will gather where the water is, just as the deer panteth for the waterbrooks, so our souls will eventually longeth after Him. And we will seek Him in a manner that is pleasing to Him, and He will, perhaps see us coming from a long way off and run to us.

Re: , on: 2008/12/29 23:36

Hi brother Dohzman

It is interesting that the "muzzle the ox," that is often time quoted always seems to end at that sentence. This sentence is sandwiched in between two teachings. Paul spent time, in the previous chapter, establishing his right to eat meat as the idols they were sacrificed to did not exist. Yet, he would not exercise this right if it led his weaker brother into sin. In the beginning of chapter nine, he again establishes the right to be supported then he says ...1Co 9:15 But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it is good for me rather to die than that anyone nullify my glorying." Paul of course, had to share the Gospel, it was in his bones and if money somehow tainted that, then he would have none of that. We live in a day and age where money has tainted everything it seems, from televangelists, to crooked pastors. It would seem like the perfect time for ministers of the Gospel to follow Paul's lead. Also in Scotland, we have a saying "Whoever pays the piper calls the tune." Can we really expect ministers to "bite the hand that feeds them?"

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 4:58

Quote:
-----The link I am looking into is the obstacle to genuine church life being so many full time pastors and leaders needing a source of income. I'll get the helmet.

I don't think this is necessarily so. It is not the income but the expectation of the 'pastor' role which narrows the possibility of the church hearing 'the word of His grace'. For many these two issues cannot be separated. The 'pastor' is 'economically sanctified' to a special 'office' in the church's life. If this is the perception then I think such 'economic sanctification' is counter productive.

As a young man I was inducted as full time pastor of a local church and one of the elders would often use the phrase 'economically sanctified'... meaning a paid pastor. :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 5:08

Quote:
-----I can't go into some of the abuses I have seen from the pulpit but even that hasn't jaded my understanding as to the whole issue of support for full time ministers.

Quote:
-----"Whoever pays the piper calls the tune."

I believe that it is a gospel ordinance, God has ordained, that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. Paul chose not to exercise this right but never imposed his own choices on any one else. In fact in his letter to Timothy he seems to be encouraging Timothy to accept such support.

The real question is 'how do you do it'. Does the church set a salary? If it does it will almost certainly want to set an agenda too. (As Apollus writes in the quote above.) I recall encouraging saints in the church in evangelism and pastoral visiting. At the end of the service one man came to shake my hand at the door and said 'but Pastor, isn't that what we pay you for?' This is the problem that when people pay a salary they expect some accountability from the person receiving the salary; this accountability usually results in a job definition. As Apollus writes 'the piper will think he has the right to call the tune'. So the payment is for 'successfully' doing a specific job, rather than being 'economically separated' to the work of the ministry. Notice I said 'the work of the ministry' not the 'office of the ministry'. i.e. the function not the role.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 5:14

Quote:
-----I was thinking about the candlestick recently, and reread the passage in which God gave Moses its pattern. It was to be made of one solid piece of gold, "all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold" (Ex. 25.36).

It seemed so clear to me upon reading this that the kind of unity we see being pushed so often these days, with denominations coming together in an ecumenical kind of unity, yet still maintaining their denominational identity... this is not the candlestick God has in mind.

The candlestick was not a bunch of pieces of metal, somehow held together with wire, or whatever. It was one solid piece of pure gold. This is the kind of unity that must be the characteristic of the church God has in mind.

This is an important observation but I want to apply it in a slightly different way. The churches of Asia in the Revelation are separate entities; the church of Israel was a single entity. The church of Israel has one physical location and one place where the foot of the lampstand touched the earth. The NT concept is very different. There is a total disregard of the nation state and the locality is the focus, consequently we have many lampstands each with its foot on a particular piece of land and each one entirely separate, other than in the mixing of their lights, one from another.

These individual lampstands may indeed be of beaten work and from a single piece of gold, but they are not organically connected as were the seven branches of the lampstand in the church of Israel.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/30 7:02

Quote:
-----The real question is 'how do you do it'.

How and who? I guess I wonder what individuals are to 'live of the Gospel'? Elders, deacons, pastor/teachers, apostles, prophets, evangelists? Typically the individuals that 'live' of the Gospel or are somehow compensated are pastors, youth pastors and praise and worship leaders.

Who biblically should be on that list of *sanctified financially*?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/30 7:09

Quote:
-----Also in Scotland, we have a saying "Whoever pays the piper calls the tune." Can we really expect ministers to "bite the hand that feeds them?"

I think this point is essential to this thread because I have heard of folk getting upset at what individuals shared in a meeting and pressure the pastor to shut them down. When the situation got hot enough a rule came down that no one could share anything in the service before they sang, etc. because it got the service going 'this way' and 'that way' and other undesired directions.

When this happened a death set in and there has been no real recovery. It is believed to have stemmed from high tithe payers upset that they were being challenged by the comments. Eventually they left the church anyway, but the betrayal was complete.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/30 7:16

Quote:
-----Ron's: I recall encouraging saints in the church in evangelism and pastoral visiting. At the end of the service one man came to shake my hand at the door and said 'but Pastor, isn't that what we pay you for?' This is the problem that when people pay a salary they expect some accountability from the person receiving the salary; this accountability usually results in a job definition.

This is a facet of what I was driving at earlier. If everyone comes to meeting with their oil ready to share and everyone has a heart to visit the afflicted and downtrodden. If everyone feels the need to evangelize and keep up their own calling, what distinguishes the paid pastor from those that do all those same things and yet work full time also? In fact, a few may actually minister as much or more than the paid ministers. Some paid pastors have enough time on their hands to actually work part time jobs on the side and yet still they receive a salary.

So I can see how that if folk go into a real church life mode the need for full time pastor may almost vanish. Am I missing something? I still have the helmet on :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 8:01

Quote:
-----So I can see how that if folk go into a real church life mode the need for full time pastor may almost vanish. Am I missing something?

I'd like to make sure we are playing the ball here. This is a soccer metaphor. To play the ball means to go for the issue. To play the man is a foul and is punishable. There are many godly men who function in the standard expectation of pastor. They give themselves to prayer and the word and that 'sanctification' will be of great benefit to the saints if the 'minister' is walking with God. Paul says that those who labour in word and teaching ought to receive double honour and the context makes it clear that he does have 'finance' in mind. I can see a scenario here where the time given to prayer and study would make it difficult for this man to earn his living at the same time. It could well limit the time he has available and stunt his career choices simply because his real focus is to edify the saints.

I am not part of a 'pastor bashing' brigade. I don't actually believe that a change of system alone would effect very much. When I left the role of formal pastor I became one of the leaders of a house church. I banned the use of the word pastor but I was still the second man at all the births and deaths in the church; this was because of the relationship I had with the folk. This continues to some degree. Some people have known me for half a century; they are more likely to trust me and to want to confide in me. That is the role that a formal pastor would normally have. What I am saying is that you can have that function without that organizational shape.

In the church of which I am part there has never been a 'full time pastor' nor a 'full time elder'. There have been elders w

ho have given themselves entirely to the work of God and have been full-time but their role was not perceived as 'full time elders'. Some of the elders have exercised ministries outside the local church and some of their time has been given over to that. We have a pastoral function in the church but not a visible 'pastor'.

Here is another feature and I may need to borrow Robert's helmet for this... we do not have the concept of 'elders' wives'. This is the 'minister's wife' concept where the spouse functions as part of the 'pastoral team' or is recognized as a 'pastor' in her own right. There is no biblical basis for an 'elders' wife'. Our elders are blessed with godly wives who function fully as part of the church but there is no 'pastor's wife' role for them; they just function as any other sister in the church would function.

I have sometimes felt that some of the protests of the 'house church' movement have been likely to create just another hierarchy. They would eliminate the local pastor but replace him with an itinerant pastor with the same hierarchical role. The rule simply passes from the local man to the traveling man or his team. i am not convinced that this is an improvement.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 8:03

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2008/12/30 9:02:39
Who biblically should be on that list of sanctified financially?

Are you going to label these people?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/30 8:22

Quote:

-----Quote: RobertW on 2008/12/30 9:02:39 Who biblically should be on that list of sanctified financially? Are you going to label these people?

Touche'. I got confused for a moment. What I should have asked is, what qualifies a person to be 'sanctified financially' biblically? Is the qualification based simply on their whole life being dedicated to prayer and the word?

Btw, I also want to sign out of any notion I would be anti-pastor. In trying to play the ball as Ron says I am really trying to examine some of the pitfalls to genuine church life in hope of finding some future solutions. It's that whole, "but those days are now gone" thing. I think it is imperative that I come into an environment of real church life and that will take either some major corrections or major changes.

But, I feel like I am belaboring the point on compensation here so we may need to just move on. :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 8:37

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2008/12/30 10:22:09
what qualifies a person to be 'sanctified financially' biblically? Is the qualification based simply on their whole life being dedicated to prayer and the word?

I would have thought at least the recommendation of the elders to the saints. The 'how do we do it' becomes hazardous when we ask are we providing this 'economic sanctification' from the church accounts or are we recommending the church as individuals to 'care' for these men.

The only reference to a 'collection' in the NT seems to be a collection for a specific need which was the need of the poor saints in Jerusalem. From later church history, and even some clues from the NT, it seems that there was a separation between the responsibilities of the 'deacons' and the 'elders'. The 'deacons' had responsibility for caring for the needs of needy saints in the local church, particularly the widows and orphans. But as far as I am aware there is no reference to

church funds being used to 'economically sanctify' those who laboured in word and doctrine.

Re: Adisciple....shadow boxing, on: 2008/12/30 10:15

Wow: Adisciple! What a beautiful Word!

Quote:

----- This should be taught to every new Believer.

ADisciple wrote:

I've been following this thread with great interest. I'm very encouraged by what's being shared.

If I can go back a ways, Robert W mentioned early on that some may need to gather together and seek God about "reestablishing a local church that is a true light in the community."

And he said also, "The gates of hell will not prevail against a church in which the Lord is tending the candlestick."

I think we are entering days when we are going to see the Lord of the church bringing forth this "candlestick" type of church structure, that is, church as HE has intended it.

...Meaning that in each locale according as He determines, there shall be a Candlestick type of church shining forth the true Testimony of Jesus Christ into the darkness.

...That Candlestick in each place will "mind its own business," and be subject to the heavenly Headquarters alone, that is, Christ Himself at the Right hand of God. I believe, as we seek Him, He will bring us into a powerful awareness that the churches are HIS... and we are to walk in obedience doing only what He bids us do.

We must come to this deep awareness that the church whether locally or universally is ALL His own responsibility, and ours only as we are in union with Him, doing just that portion that He calls us and graces us to do.

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And great suffering. ...One solid piece of gold "of beaten work." There is cost involved, and suffering, in this kind of church coming forth.

I feel so stirred about this. I want to see this kind of church.

...I read of Paul ministering in the churches. Oh, the reverence he had as he walked among the churches, I suppose you could say with his shoes off. He knew deeply they were the Lord's churches, for His own holy purposes. He never considered them his own. He never tried to bring them under his own dominion. He was a servant to the churches, doing His part as God commanded and enabled, and ultimately leaving them to God's own care. God was well able to keep them Himself, with "the word of His grace."

He is the One who is responsible for the churches. There was never in the heart of God this hierarchy kind of thing church has become (and became very early on, actually).

I read in Frank Bartlemans' book on Azusa Street a quote by the Reformation historian D'Aubigne. He said, "The church was in the beginning a community of brethren, guided by a few of the brethren."

How beautiful. So simple. We have gone far away from this simplicity that is in Christ. May the Lord help us to return to it.

Thanks to the different ones who are sharing on this thread. May we all be encouraged to know God will yet have the desire of His heart.

AD

I, too feel stirred and inspired, and almost like I can accept nothing less than this type of Body....like I am driven.

God is doing this, on His own, even now. "I have reserved 7000 that have not bowed their knee to Baal." I am amazed that this is even being discussed, and the willingness of some to receive it.

"Out of yourselves men shall arise, grievous wolves, drawing away disciples AFTER THEMSELVES."...ACTS 20.

Can the spirit of Rome, and preeminence be in Protestantism? It is, and strong. Will Pastors that dominate there be able to lay down "their" Churches and positions, and become just a Brother? They must, or in my opinion, be left out. Will they be able to accept a fisherman or a farmer as their shepherds?

Most will fight tooth and nail not to, or at least leave an open door in the form of compromise.... "A leader among equals kind of doctrine, that ensures them preeminence, power, along, of course with a salary.

We are being beaten, molded, purified in the fire, for the Lord Himself has promised and prophesied "A pure and spotless Bride, without blemish." A candlestick lit shines into the dark, and a man or woman in the fire suffers, but in the suffering they learn not to think all that much of their leadership and "their" anointing and calling, but in their corruption.

"I fell down at HIS feet at a dead man!"...

This is the heart of brokenness and purity, but we have a part in it, and it is deeper than obedience. It is a willful act to obey, yes, but to obey in the fire, to diminish as He is exalted, no matter the cost. This is the affect of the candlestick, and the molding that produces brotherhood. This is the energy that produces one Bread...one body.

I think of Pentecost, and those smaller flames of fire that appeared above and around the heads of the 120, visible to all. Where was the boasting then? where was the division then?...Who was Pastor, and who was sheep? One day we will leave our bodies, and very, very shortly in Heaven's span and comparison of time. When those many small flames gathered they burst into a fire storm, a tornado of fire, and the Lord was present among them, speaking through whoever He chose.

I believe that this is where we are returning. An undivided burning Flame...one body, equal Love and unity. The poor, the weak and the widow, will be honored as much as the chief speaker. Then we will have a common goal, and it won't matter who carries the money bag.

Brotherhood

ps: I have felt desperately alone in this fight, for many years....almost like I was shadow boxing. I'm stunned that some are with me.

Re: Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs?, on: 2008/12/30 10:15

Quote:
-----The key point I am trying to make is that, biblically, the unit of responsibility is 'a church' not 'the church'. To blame 'the modern church' for conditions as we find them is a mistake. There is no such thing as 'the church' in this sense. There is an entity that we can call 'the church' and the one responsible for it is its head, Jesus Christ. To suggest that anyone else has any responsibility for 'the church' is either arrogance or biblical ignorance.

This is a great post. This view of the "church", which I agree with and believe is entirely biblical, really simplifies things and, most importantly, takes the focus off of men and puts it onto Christ.

It also negates much of the prophetic utterances that have gone out, especially on this site and from preachers on this site, and it brings things home to our own houses and to our own local churches.

I know for myself, I have been unnecessarily moved, at times, by the "words from the lord" of men in pulpits that seem to be speaking to everyone but those people sitting in the seats in their own church.

I think many young preachers have taken their cues from preachers who think it is their duty to preach to the nation instead of the local flock that God has given them.

Philologos, I can't tell you how excited I am about this post. I really think you have hit the nail on the head. On a side note.... I am not sure if you are aware, but this theological view of the church is very much in agreement with Reformed Theology, specifically Presbyterian.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/30 10:45

Quote:

philologos wrote:

These individual lampstands may indeed be of beaten work and from a single piece of gold, but they are not organically connected as were the seven branches of the lampstand in the church of Israel.

Yes, each of the seven lampstands John saw in The Revelation is an autonomous church responsible to the the Lord Jesus Christ in the Heavenly Headquarters.

I am just saying that in each locale (and I am not clear what governs the boundaries of a locale) all the true saints of the Lord are to be part of that one lampstand, and not, as now, scattered among various denominations with some earthly type of headquarters.

In a certain city, say, City X, for example, there may be a number of groups gathering here and there in different homes or whatever... but they would all integrally a part of that one lampstand.

I said I am not clear on what governs the boundaries of a locale. Perhaps it is simply an area where people are able to get together easily, practically, for fellowship?

Any thoughts on that?

AD

Re: , on: 2008/12/30 11:02

Quote

" Notice I said 'the work of the ministry' not the 'office of the ministry'. ie the function not the role."

I think Ron makes a great point here. This discussion is not about doing away with Pastors, I believe, nor is it anti-clerical. There is a role within the churches for pastors obviously. Again and again it seems to come back to the "Elders." If you were to make the case for anyone being supported, it would probably be for the elders, some of who may be pastors, or teachers or whoever. In the one man system, you have a lot of pressure on that man. If the large tithers pay the bills and his salary, then, by human nature, he will be influenced, to one degree or another, by this. I think part of the problem may be that when the widow put her mite in the collection, she did not add her name and address for future tax purposes. The Lord saw what she gave. In this realm, given what commonly occurs in churches then, proportionate to what she gave, she should have the greatest influence. Anyway, I think the story Robert told, for rules being changed because large tithers complained, is the practical outcome of the system we currently have in many churches.....Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/30 11:10

Quote:

BrotherTom wrote:

ps: I have felt desperately alone in this fight, for many years....almost like I was shadow boxing. I'm stunned that some are with me.

That's why I too have been so greatly encouraged by this thread. I believe we are in the dawning of a new day. We are going to see the kind of churches that are going to bring "the world" down. Needless to say, they will not be popular.

It seems we fall prey to the hierarchical kind of church order so easily. Even in China it has happened. The house church movement in China (not that they were trying to have a movement) has been such a testimony all over the earth. Over the years I've been much encouraged with what I heard was happening.

Yet more recently, in my reading I would come across things like, "...So and so, who heads up a house church of so many thousands of members in China..."

I came across words to that effect three or four times. And I grieved upon hearing of it. Why? Why? Why do we fall prey to this pattern so easily?

And what is it going to take for us to resist the temptation?

Please understand I have an immense respect, even awe, for what has happened in China over the past few decades. The selfless, sacrificial walk of the many saints there is a testimony second to none.

But I think it is a weakness, and not God's will, when church starts to take this hierarchical shape. (I'm suspicious it happened in China because of western influence.)

I think I recall reading, Tom, that you have spent time in China. Any thoughts on this?

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/30 11:24

Quote:

appolus wrote:

So, it looks like we are going to be starved into the right model. When we are hungry enough, when we are so thirsty that we are almost going to die, then we will gather where the water is, just as the deer panteth for the waterbrooks, so our souls will eventually longeth after Him. And we will seek Him in a manner that is pleasing to Him, and He will, perhaps see us coming from a long way off and run to us.

I appreciated your words, Appolus. Just because we feel we have some understanding as to what is the right and scriptural pattern does not mean we can set about to manufacture it. It's been tried, and it fails.

Only God can do it. Those who are hungry enough will be drawn together to seek Him earnestly. If we seek Him with all our hearts we will find Him. Find GOD. What a thought.

A body can be a perfect body, but with no life in it, it is dead.

You can get all the scriptural things in place for a correct new testament church, and still find it dead.

Only The Life can cause the Body to take shape around its bones.

There will be no Light in the lampstand without the Oil burning in it.

How we must come before Him, and let the Lord of the Church have His Way.

AD

Re: Descending into hierarchy in China., on: 2008/12/30 13:42

I had a very brief stay in China... I did encounter the true "underground Church" which was persecuted and hunted, cautious of outsiders, and somewhat fearful. The consequences, or cost of their being caught, especially with me, an American, were staggering. They may lose their jobs, and thereby children...and they could go to prison. There have been reports of executions that I have heard of, but I could not verify them.

Understanding the strategy and political objectives in China may help you understand the Church, and the double standard that exist there. The Red Chinese created industrial and capital juggernauts after the model of Hong Kong throughout China. These are called "economic zones", where full blown capitalism is encouraged, and the cities there are not unlike any in the west. Freeways, high rises by the mile, restaurants, bars, immoral businesses, Walmart and Starbucks.

There are at least 5 of these zones. The idea is that China cannot be changed unilaterally, so the govt. reduced industry, boiled it down, into a manageable vessel. There may be less than 100 million people that are allowed in these areas, but are forbidden to the average citizen, who needs something akin to a passport to travel there. This is China's cash cow, where salaries generally are about 1 to 8 or ten of the west. These are the manufacturing cities where the world's and America's commodities are made, at a bargain.

There is an underground Church, or one that calls itself that in these areas. This is the theoretical underground church, that may be mildly harassed by the Chi-Coms, and that, in my opinion, kept up as a ruse for the world to believe that there is no real political persecution...and if so, only mildly. Most of these "persecuted churches" meet somewhat openly, and are supported by the naive of the west that believe they are helping the cause of Christ. My feeling was that many of these Pastors were of the "YOUR BEST LIFE NOW" ilk, and supported by such.

I met one of these so called leaders at a huge high tech swimming pool at his luxury condominium. It was luxurious. He promptly identified himself as part of the "underground" church. It was grieving to me. He supposedly oversaw several churches. I left.

This leaves about one billion plus people on the outside. there are, in affect, two "underground churches"....one false, in the economic zones, and the real one, that is hidden, and where there is no news or publicity about them. It is somewhat like our "dark ages", where any thing against Rome was repressed. It is a totalitarian rule there. You can be arrested for anything. This is where the true "underground church" is prominent.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/30 13:52

Thanks, Tom. Yes, that is helpful.

I knew of the "Three Self" church in China, the government sanctioned and controlled church. But I didn't there was also a counterfeit house church thing, like the one you've described.

AD

Re: , on: 2008/12/30 14:37

Quote:
-----Just because we feel we have some understanding as to what is the right and scriptural pattern does not mean we can set about to manufacture it. It's been tried, and it fails.

But there is a pattern, and its not that men have tried it and failed...its that men (we) forsake the pattern and get distracted with other things... Jesus gave us the pattern:

Quote:
-----Go therefore and(Y) make disciples of(Z) all nations,(AA) baptizing them(AB) in **the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them(AC) to observe all that(AD) I have commanded you**

Pretty simple...

I have some questions about some statements that seem a little ambiguous:

Quote:
-----Only God can do it. Those who are hungry enough will be drawn together to seek Him earnestly. If we seek Him with all our hearts we will find Him. Find GOD. What a thought.

What if we have already found God...in the person of Jesus Christ? I do apologize for my directness, but statements like this frustrate me about as much as the term "revival"...it seems as though we are always waiting for something....like U2 " I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For..."

Has not God revealed Himself perfectly in Christ and according to Jesus Himself, He is found in His written Word.

So as long as a local church is preaching Christ in all the Scripture, then they are a true Church and are a light in their community.

Quote:
-----A body can be a perfect body, but with no life in it, it is dead.

Again please forgive the directness, but where do we get this life? or rather...where is this life found?

In Him...was Life...in Christ..and Christ is revealed in the written word.

Quote:
-----Only The Life can cause the Body to take shape around its bones

And Ezekeil was commanded to prophesy to those bones so that they should live. He was commanded to proclaim the Word of the Lord. That Word is Christ, and He is revealed in the written Word of God.

Quote:

-----There will be no Light in the lampstand without the Oil burning in it

Who is the oil. The Holy Spirit...and He said the when He comes he would not speak of himself, but of Christ...the Word. Where do we get the oil to keep our lamp burning....to keep our candlesticks burning....in the written Word of God.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 15:28

Quote:

----- beaten work

As iron sharpens iron :-> Trouble is we generally don't really consider each other as really family, not to the point where we would lay our lives down for the brethren, that is why we are so easily offended. I was reading the account of Joseph in gen... and realized that he was just excited but in his excitement he had caused an offense that cost him dearly. I think that it takes a very special man/woman at the helm to patiently oversee any group of people in wisdom.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 15:36

Quote:

----- I think this point is essential to this thread because I have heard of folk getting upset at what individuals shared in a meeting and pressure the pastor to shut them down.

The function of visiting ministers in many cases is that they will address issues that many pastors will not, for whatever reason. The trouble is here too, that many churches will not have guest speakers anymore because of the cost and or out of fear that the guest speaker will leave a spiritual mess that the pastor will have to clean up. The church in the USA is also in such a decline that most churches no longer have services on Sunday night or even a Wednesday night service.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 15:46

without a vision the people perish. The primary role of any pastor is to help the people learn to discern between good and evil and to lay a good foundation in the thinking of those sheep so that when the Lord does move with vision, the sheep are ready to move into whatever God has called them to.

To use your soccer example, leadership needs to be willing to pass the ball and allow teammates to score a goal or at least shoot the ball, regardless of the outcome, and that takes not only discernment but great faith and trust.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 15:51

Quote:

-----Just because we feel we have some understanding as to what is the right and scriptural pattern does not mean we can set about to manufacture it. It's been tried, and it fails.

Oh, this is such an important point. I have been part of a church which believed almost all of these things... as a principle. It was not until I became part of the church where I am now that I actually saw it in action.

The difference lay in 'faith'. It was not just the grasping of a concept but active faith in Jesus Christ to lead his church.

I have a short quotation which I always transcribe into the back pages of my Bibles. It comes from a man called Anthony Norris Groves... it reads.

What a blessing it is that the Lord's heart is so large, that He can help wherever he sees some good thing; whereas man withdraws whenever he sees some evil thing, which is generally found to mean something that wounds his own self-love in the little scheme he had set up as perfection.

I write it in my Bibles because as a Bible teacher it is my most persistent temptation. One day when I am able I plan to write a book on 'spiritual authority in the local church' I have a working title ready; I shall call it 'little schemes of perfection'!

I do pray that in all these discussions God will prevent us from creating another little scheme of perfection. Nevertheless we are honour bound to try to understand God's ways and to ensure that our ways are consistent with the inspired architecture.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 15:54

Quote:

-----I think I recall reading, Tom, that you have spent time in China. Any thoughts on this?

I have strong links with China. You are right in what you have described. Not that it is universal but there are strong authoritarian models at work in some of the house churches.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 16:05

Quote:

-----I think that it takes a very special man/woman at the helm to patiently oversee any group of people in wisdom.

Now there's an interesting word!

and God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, **governments**, diversities of tongues. 1 Cor 12:28

that word 'governments' is from a Latin word 'kubernesis'. It means a 'helmsman'. It is also the word we get 'cybernetic' from which is a 'steered machine'.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 16:21

interesting. Who was that took all the gold and silver statues of the roman church and melted as tax payment, and commented that they would put the saints into circulation?

I believe that most Christians are waiting to be used or at least feel that it is alright for them to be expressions of the work of Christ in a way that they would be used. Here too many that I talk to only see 2 dimensional ways to edify or help in the churches, things like nursery workers or washing and painting, basically the stuff most full time pastors will not do, and so they feel beneath the ministry. This has been very hard to break through in people's thinking, even in my few speaking engagements. To get people to become an expression of Jesus in life and within the church. And to move out in faith believing that they can in deed hear from God for themselves.

The Didache - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 16:32

Mention has been made of The Didache and I found this website which might interest some.

(<http://www.scrollpublishing.com/store/Didache.html>) The Didache

Go to Chapter 11 and read how to handle itinerant apostles and prophets! This is a fascinating document. Not scripture but a document which gives an amazing picture of life in the churches at the turn of the 1st century.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 16:38

Quote:
----- Nevertheless we are honour bound to try to understand God's ways and to ensure that our ways are consistent with the inspired archive.

Everytime I hear of the purity of Jesus Christ, it arrests my thinking and takes me back to something that happened to me and an understanding I had from the Lord into His nature and very character, where I saw His purity as Him not having any ulterior motives when He approaches mankind outside of the best good for any individual outside of anything it would or could do for Him. He needed nothing for the good that He did toward us.

Re: The Didache - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 16:43

Wow, what a chapter! I have read it before but forgot all about it. That might stop many a visiting ministers these days :-(

Re: Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/30 16:54

I wanted to add a little more to the mix.

The Ephesian letter is different to (English usage!!) any of Paul's other letters. He had spent 3 years in Ephesus and yet there are no personal greetings as with his other letters. There are manuscripts of 'Ephesians' which omit the word 'Ephesus' and have a space where the word could be inserted. This has led some Bible students to suggest that Ephesians was a circular letter and we 'happen' to have a copy of the one which was sent to Ephesus.

It may even be the letter to the Laodiceans which is mentioned at the end of Colossians. Col 4:16

This led some of the early Brethren teachers to suggest that 'the church' under discussion in Ephesians is NOT the church in Ephesus but rather the Universal Church which spans the generations and has its members in both heaven and earth as well as those who will join it in future times.

Why all this introduction? Well, to suggest that the functions spoken of in Ephesians 4:11 are 'gifts' given to the whole church and not to a local church. The interesting thing to note is that we know that 'apostles, prophets and evangelists' were itinerant roles in the New Testament era. So what about 'pastor-teacher'? Was that function 'itinerant' too? and if the 'pastor-teacher' was itinerant what are we to say about the modern pattern of having a 'resident pastor-teacher'?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/30 20:28

I want to combine a couple thoughts here from Ron and Daryl:

Quote:
-----Ron's: Was that function 'itinerant' too? and if the 'pastor-teacher' was itinerant what are we to say about the modern pattern of having a 'resident pastor-teacher'?

Daryl's: The function of visiting ministers in many cases is that they will address issues that many pastors will not, for whatever reason. The trouble is here too, that many churches will not have guest speakers anymore because of the cost and or out of fear that the guest speaker will leave a spiritual mess that the pastor will have to clean up.

I think of a situation the Lord was in:

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?

And they were offended at him.

But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching (Mark 6).

I understand that the role of 'prophet' is different than pastor-teacher, but would the phenomena the Lord experienced here be any different than what resident teachers and preachers experience? It has been my experience that I could teach or preach in my home church for years and not get the response I have gotten by driving 300 miles to another state (and spoke a very similar message).

Who was it that said *familiaritas parit contemptum* (familiarity breeds contempt)? If the people were able to write-off Jesus, how much more would they write me utterly off? So it seems to me that an itinerant role is necessary to combat some strange human behavior that tends to give ear to strangers.

I think this also squares with I Corinthians 14:

In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

Here we have a people refusing to 'hear' even after God sends them strangers, and more than strangers, even folk that did not speak their language!

Could this be why these functions (pastor/teacher) are itinerant?

Re: appolus - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 22:11

Quote:

----- "Whoever pays the piper calls the tune." Can we really expect ministers to "bite the hand that feeds them?"

Hey bro!! I can't answer for other church affiliates, but I can tell you that the Church Of God (Cleveland Tenn.) bases the salary of the pastors on church membership. That has been abused and tainted from the top down. They have made an idol out of their numbers in order to gain bigger and bigger salaries and to protect their little kingdoms. That's why they are in decline, I believe the idol of membership numbers which don't exist is their god. Once you join a church and are on the rolls you are a member for life, even if you attend there no more. That way they keep their numbers high and their salaries high too. There are other shady practices too in the way they conduct business and monies, but I won't go there. The bottom line is that they dance mostly to no man's tune and have become fat and self-willed.

Re: Frank - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/30 22:19

Quote:

----- I think the story Robert told, for rules being changed because large tithers complained, is the practical outcome of the system we currently have in many churches.

In some churches I can see this. There was a survey done in the AG (assemblies of God) some years ago and the average pastor only stayed at any given location for 6 years. I think that's telling. I believe Wilkerson's church serves as a positive example of a large church, I'm sure with some really big givers, and yet these men give a hard message that I believe is from the very heart of God. So I do believe that much of the local church condition is tempered by the leadership disposition and integrity, or lack thereof.

Re: Response To Mahoney's Questions - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/30 22:49

Hi Mahoney.

I hope you won't mind if I respond with one general answer to all the questions you asked me.

First, just to review what you yourself say is the answer to these things... that we have the written word, and all we need can be found there. In the written word. You said this a number times.

I believe this has been spoken to in earlier posts on this thread, particularly the one in which the following scripture verse was emphasized.

"He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Take note. This verse is in the written word.

I love the written word of God very deeply. I respect the Scriptures deeply.

And the Scriptures tell us that the Scriptures themselves are not enough to enable us to walk in the whole counsel of God.

We must have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ the Lord of the Church in order to walk in the full will of God.

We must walk in the Spirit, be led of the Spirit, obey the Spirit of God.

This will often mean, perhaps always mean, leaving all that's written in the written word in the hands of the Spirit to fulfill, as we humble ourselves and walk in obedience to the Spirit.

At the same time, this kind of walk does not mean a total disregard to what is in the written word. If we are walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit we will always be in harmony with the written word. (I don't think I need to press this, it's been covered in other threads on this site.)

Just as an illustration. The Son of God Himself had the whole of the Old Testament before Him. He knew all that was in the written word concerning Himself. But did He try to fulfill it all? No, He simply walked in union with the Father, and all that He was supposed to fulfill in His days here on earth came to pass.

On one occasion-- the time when He read in the synagogue at Nazareth-- he stopped right in the middle of a sentence, and then said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Lk. 4.21).

But what about the rest of the sentence (about the Day of Vengeance of our God)? Wasn't that in the written word, too? Yes, but He was sensitive to God's timings. He would yet fulfill that part of the verse also. In its time. (And its time is very close now, in my estimation.)

The same goes for the verse generally known as "the great commission," which you called the pattern. But the early apostles didn't immediately set out to fulfill that commandment. They waited on God. They tarried in Jerusalem for a time. They went forth in obedience to the Spirit of God.

(And in fact, I think James and no doubt others never did "go into all the world to preach the gospel," but stayed in Jerusalem. Were they disobedient to the great commission? No, they were being sensitive to the leading of the Spirit of God. They recognized His Lordship in the church.

This is what I meant by saying we can know the pattern of true church to some degree, yet still be unable to manufacture a true church. Only the Spirit of God can do this.

Philologos mentioned (after your post) his own experience with this. Knowing the principles doesn't enable us to put the principles into practice.

We must walk in faith. And faith is totally the province of the Spirit of God alone. We must walk in the Spirit, giving Him His total lordship in the church in all things, before we can be given the testimony that we are walking by faith.

...Just one last comment. I mentioned in my post that if we are hungry enough, and seek God, we will find Him.

Your response was, "What if we have already found God... in the person of Jesus Christ?"

What can I say but that I too found Him... some years ago. But now He is way, way bigger than when I first found Him. And way deeper, and way higher... and I am so much smaller than back then.

And now I have a hunger in my heart to FIND HIM in such an intimacy of fellowship that God shines forth from my life in a way that those who meet me meet HIM. As it was with the Son of God, who said that those who had seen Him had seen the Father, those who had met Him had met the Father.

I won't settle for any lesser testimony than that... because the written word tells me this is the very thing for which He called me... unworthy as I may be. But to HIM be glory in the Church...)

Thanks for your comments, Mahoney. I hope this is helpful.

AD

Re: , on: 2008/12/30 23:33

Quote

"What can I say but that I too found Him... some years ago. But now He is way, way bigger than when I first found Him. And way deeper, and way higher... and I am so much smaller than back then.

And now I have a hunger in my heart to FIND HIM in such an intimacy of fellowship that God shines forth from my life in a way that those who meet me meet HIM. As it was with the Son of God, who said that those who had seen Him had seen the Father, those who had met Him had met the Father."

Amen brother, my Spirit definitely witnesses with that. I was driving from Kansas to Colorado(if I was still a Catholic, this would be a form of purgatory) and after almost nine hours of driving, there the mountains begin to rise up from the horizon. I could put my finger up and block their view. The closer I got, the higher they got, until I could not see around them or above them. The closer I get to God, the bigger He becomes, the smaller I become. Yet praise God, this vast God who is beyond knowing, says in His Word that I can be "filled with all the fullness of God." He is beyond knowing, yet He makes Himself known to us and He fills us with His fullness. This God that all the universe's combined does not contain, He contains them, who holds all the nations in the palm of His hand and they are like mere dust in the scales, deems to fill us with His fullness(a mystery no more)

When the saints seek the fullness of God, when the saints walk in the awareness of God, when the saints walk in His presence, then we will see what the Lord can do with a handful of men.....brother Frank

Re: Thanks, on: 2008/12/31 0:26

First I want to thank you for your response and if, you would permit, I would like to continue the conversation.

Quote:

-----He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And it was Jesus who spoke in the previous verses. It was something very specific to each church.

Quote:

-----And the Scriptures tell us that the Scriptures themselves are not enough to enable us to walk in the whole counsel of God.

The only place I can think of that might suggest what you are saying is John 5:39, but in no way was Jesus saying that the scriptures were not sufficient. All he was saying was that they were searching the scriptures for anything but Him.

And that was pretty much my point. I agree with you that we should not look at the Word as merely principles to follow. The Word of God is all about Jesus Christ...He said as much in Luke 24 and the Spirit's purpose is to reveal Christ to us in the scriptures

Quote:
-----This will often mean, perhaps always mean, leaving all that's written in the written word in the hands of the Spirit to fulfill, as we humble ourselves and walk in obedience to the Spirit.

And this what I meant by vague and ambiguous. The purpose of the Spirit of God is to reveal Christ and His work. It says as much in John 14 - 16. I'm sure you would agree that the entire Word of God is about Christ and His redeeming work. The Spirit of God will speak of Christ, I cannot know Christ without Him.

Quote:
-----But what about the rest of the sentence (about the Day of Vengeance of our God)? Wasn't that in the written word, too? Yes, but He was sensitive to God's timings. He would yet fulfill that part of the verse also. In its time. (And its time is very close now, in my estimation.)

First off...we are not Jesus, and I am sure you would agree that He is far more than an example for us. As you stated.... He is the Son of God.

Is it really being "sensitive to God's timing" or is it just the reality of the fact that in the history of redemption and the plan of redemption, that part of the prophetic Word will not be fulfilled until the second coming of Christ. Which I know by the Spirit as we study His Word.

Quote:
-----The same goes for the verse generally known as "the great commission," which you called the pattern. But the early apostles didn't immediately set out to fulfill that commandment. They waited on God. They tarried in Jerusalem for a time. They went forth in obedience to the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God had not yet come. When he did come all that Jesus taught them made sense which is why they glorified God. They understood the Cross. They understood their redemption. They would not have been able to fulfill the great commission because they would not have been able to teach anybody anything.

Look, I agree with you that we are to be led by the Spirit and we are to live in the Spirit...but what is that if it is not living by the revealed Word of God. In Him we live and move and have our being....in whom....Jesus Christ...The Living Word.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/31 7:43

Quote:
----- I know for myself, I have been unnecessarily moved, at times, by the "words from the lord" of men in pulpits that seem to be speaking to everyone but those people sitting in the seats in their own church

Wow!! didn't think anyone else saw that, I call that the user friendly church. Very accurate point .

Quote:
----- I think many young preachers have taken their cues from preachers who think it is their duty to preach to the nation instead of the local flock that God has given them.

You hit the nail on the head here too, I think the Word of God calls it selfish ambition.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/31 8:15

Quote:
-----Quote: I think many young preachers have taken their cues from preachers who think it is their duty to preach to the nation instead of the local flock that God has given them.

Daryl's: You hit the nail on the head here too, I think the Word of God calls it selfish ambition.

I agree with this and observe further that young preachers do not understand that the local body is to be *edified*. So many times (and I count myself formerly in the number) young preachers think it their job to correct every 'wrong' thing they see.

But the challenge is to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith and to speak those things that are good for the use of edifying. It is odd that those called to edify are in 'tear down' mode (lessen what is good, down play positives, weaken overall) more than 'build up' mode. :-(

Re: Ron/Robert or anyone else who would respond? - posted by dohzman (), on: 2008/12/31 10:48

I have read that the letter to eph. may have been a letter that was circulated before, but what I seem to see when I look at the churches in Asia was that each one seemed to be set up a little differently from each other in structure as well as basic function, while at the same time leaving room for the itinerant ministry that was in place from the apostle down. How do you see the churches in Asia as to structure and function one to the other?

What the church seems to want these days is a published speaker who is well known and who can gain them a crowd and produce a move of God like say someone like a Kathrin Kulhman (sp?) and all that on a \$50.00 dollar budget :-o .

My question is this: Why are the churches in America so closed, even though what they are doing is failing? (most do not use the itinerant any longer except once a year for a 2 or 3 day revival or camp style meeting and once a year for a visiting missionary)

It also seems that the church runs today so much like a secular business that they try to sanctify their business dealings in the name of God! but they refuse to do things by the "BOOK" of God. Why is it we seem to feel that we can just use Jesus a blanket cover for all our local church failings? and operate things as normal or status quo?

Re: When the "Word of His Grace" is no longer sought after... - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/31 11:55

Quote:
-----Daryl's: My question is this: Why are the churches in America so closed, even though what they are doing is failing? (most do not use the itinerant any longer except once a year for a 2 or 3 day revival or camp style meeting and once a year for a visiting missionary)

This is a great question. I have wondered and thought about it often and more and more as I see numbers in my circles dropping tremendously. I have seen youth groups drop from about 30 to 1 or 2 simply because of a location change. I have watched churches that once ran 200+ now running in the teens. Etc. etc.

I think that the problem is an unwillingness to change and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, but a willingness to change

e and follow some *other* thing that is less threatening. The cloud and fire have moved but the tents never followed. But the same individuals responsible for leading spent their time in books and even on sermons that were dead in the water to put breath in the carcass. I number myself in that group.

I think also a combination of fears from false revivals, fallen ministers, money issues, etc., fear of offending folk and the ongoing influence of TV and radio ministries has caused (contributed to) the problem.

I'm going to get in trouble here, but ministers need to be careful not to lean too heavily on vintage, revival and repentance based sermons from well respected ministers. These men have some great points to make but we need to make sure that we are allowing God to speak to put things on our hearts to share that are designed to edify according to the present need. Otherwise we end up answering questions no one is even asking (so to speak). And treating phantom diseases and conditions that are not relevant today. It may be 'fun' to talk about- but what does it have to do with where we are right now? It may be a wonderful series on apologetics or some doctrine, but is it edifying the body? Is it what the body needs right now?

Only the Holy Spirit can build a Church that the Gates of Hell will not prevail against. If man builds the work- the enemy has and will continue to prevail. We have to decide on this. What are we going to do? Continue dying or get ears to hear *what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" To choose rightly is to live- to choose wrongly will certainly spell total disaster, I think.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/31 12:09

Hi again, Mahoney.

Sure, let's continue the conversation.

But let's bring it back into the context of this thread about responsibility for the churches.

When Paul gave his farewell message to the church of Ephesus in a little gathering with the elders of that church at Miletus, there are two things he didn't do.

One, he didn't tell them he would send to headquarters in Jerusalem, or Springfield, or wherever... and have a new minister sent down to look after the helpless flock.

Secondly, he didn't pass around Bibles to them all and tell them, "All you'll need is right here."

What he did do was, again, two things:

One, he exhorted the elders of that assembly that it was to be their responsibility "to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over the which (in which) the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, to feed (shepherd) the flock of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20.28).

Secondly, he "commended them to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified" (vs. 32).

And so, to apply this to our own day, it's clear that God would have local assemblies grow in strength because of the provision of the word of His grace in their midst, instead of having them kept in a kind of chronic immaturity that requires pastor after pastor to feed them all the days of their life.

This "word of grace" should be alive and well in the assembly of the saints, each one walking in a close relationship with Christ, and contributing to the well being of all by faithfully ministering their portion of grace.

To my mind, the word of His grace includes all aspects of the word of God. Teaching, prophesy... all of it.

I understand where you are coming from, and in no way minimize the importance of the written word. But I think in our day, with our abundance of Bibles, God sees we are weak in the area of this "ministry of the Spirit." This is indispensable to the church, and I believe God desires to alert us to our weakness in this area, and get us seeking Him for His provision to change the situation.

Jesus did not say, when He went away, that He would see to it that the disciples had the written word to guide them when He was gone.

What He did say was, "It is expedient for you (better for you, to your advantage, your profit) that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you..." (Jn. 16.7).

And so, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, would be in the church as the Son of God Himself, when He was here.

He, the Spirit of truth, is to be the Lord and Minister in our assemblies, guiding, teaching, prophesying, praying... just as if Jesus Himself were here in the flesh.

...I think you are in agreement on what I am saying (if I understand you), for you said at the end of your post that we are to be led of the Spirit and live in the Spirit... and that is, to quote you, "living by the revealed word of God."

And we have the written word to keep us on track and help us watch out for those areas where, thinking we are being led of the Spirit, we are going down the garden path with you-know-who.

...What you said is right: we are not Jesus. But we have the Spirit of Jesus. We are not the Son of God. But "God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

And so by His Spirit, we are to have the same kind and quality of walk with the Father that the Son of God did.

...As to that passage in Isaiah where Jesus broke off in the middle of a sentence, you are right that Jesus understood that at the latter part pertained to something that would be fulfilled later down the road in the plan of redemption. But that is my point. He was sensitive to God's timings. He didn't say, "Look, it says this right here in the written word, so I am going to do this."

He was led of the Spirit. The timing for the rest of that verse had not yet come.

Thanks again for your comments, Mahoney.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2008/12/31 12:50

Quote:

appolus wrote:

The closer I got, the higher they got, until I could not see around them or above them. The closer I get to God, the bigger He becomes, the smaller I become. Yet praise God, this vast God who is beyond knowing, says in His Word that I can be "filled with all the fullness of God."

When the saints seek the fullness of God, when the saints walk in the awareness of God, when the saints walk in His presence, then we will see what the Lord can do with a handful of men.....brother Frank

Good word, Frank. And a very apt illustration of the mountains growing bigger as we get closer to them. The mountains don't grow; they are always the same size. But the closer you get to them, the bigger they get. It is an awesome thing to get right up against "the rocks," so close that you have to look almost straight up to see sky. And you see the wild goats way up there, perfectly at home.

It seems so formidable to us, but there are those wild goats up there... perfectly at home (Ps. 104.18).

Now... if only I had hinds' feet!

...It is a very awesome prospect that God intends us together (ye, with all saints) to "be filled unto all the fulness of God." From this present distance I scarcely comprehend what that means. But as we get closer to Him...

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/31 16:44

Quote:

-----How do you see the churches in Asia as to structure and function one to the other?

Let's think 'family' rather than 'media centre' or even 'preaching centre'.

This is one of the underlying problems we shall face when we begin to try to understand the patterns of church life in the New Testament era. What is our concept of 'the local church' and 'what is its prime purpose'?

Re: Let's think 'family' rather than 'media centre' or even 'preaching centre' - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/1 1:12

Quote:

-----What is our concept of 'the local church' and 'what is its prime purpose'?

I always thought the purpose of the local church was to raise up missionaries to reach the lost around the world, but I see that as being a very shallow and narrow understanding of the local church these days. The trouble is that I've personally been involved in too many, what I would call Para-church organizations which specialized in certain aspects that should be part and parcel in the regular local church. Like street evangelization or out reach to the needy or poor.

The local church --as Robert put it--seems to stay in a self protective mode, they guard their resources and their reputations. While parachurches seem to have a few Christians who give their all in resources, time, and talents. Now I have had a hard time reconciling the two together. I hate to sound fleshly but they don't feel the same and they definitely don't function the same. I do know they are all family in the sense that Jesus is Lord, but it gets difficult to see the two churches as being supportive of one another, since in many cases they are not.

And so to your question which has followed me all day and begged for an answer, that's something I'll need to prayerfully work out because I just don't know. :-(

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/1 5:31

Quote:

-----What is our concept of 'the local church' and 'what is its prime purpose'?

I recall from my studies in Jewish roots (:knockedout:) that synagogues were mini expressions of the Temple meant to be a light in that community. I understand that they were to be built on the highest hill of area of the town or city so as to be easily visible to strangers coming into town that might need help.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, *but on a candlestick*; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

ouse.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5)

I think that the local church with its candlestick serves as a light first among the gathered believers and second to their community and then the whole world. It seems that the body being rightly edified will make increase of itself. This edification serves to cause the truth that is in Jesus to become the truth that is in us. And as a result you get:

the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4)

I see here increase in the body being the natural consequence of that body functioning properly and healthy.

Re: church-para church-house church o my:(- posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/1 10:11

I think that's the ideal, and like so much of what we see in life as it reflects or works out in the church verses scripture it seems to fall way short. I see para churches verses churches. The para church seems to stand in a bold contrast against the status quo of the church which is really nothing more than a safe place to go with your family on Sunday morning. A place where the testimony is : "they are good and moral people", but that's about it. In the world's eyes the JW's and the Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists....etc...are the same. That's why I said Ron's last post has some real radical and deep implications if thought out to its conclusions. Even in the house church movement, when he says Family, that really changes the whole dynamic especially as it pretains to practical helps and love one toward another set within the context of edification. In that context "the Word of His Grace" really takes on a different meaning. Don't you think?

Re: - posted by psalm1, on: 2009/1/1 11:29

Question;

Just who IS responsible for this state of affairs?

ME!

But seriously as I read through the thread I remembered what a buddy of mine said in prayer as he was angrily protesting to God about the church.

He said to the Lord "where is the God of Elijah?"

The Lord answered "where are the Elijahs?"

Part of the answer could be in the example of Moses, Joshua, and the crossing of the Jordan,

.

We got across alright, and are gathered together.

Along with Moses and Joshua.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/1 11:49

Quote:

philologos wrote:

I have been part of a church which believed almost all of these things... as a principle. It was not until I became part of the church where I am now that I actually saw it in action.

The difference lay in 'faith'. It was not just the grasping of a concept but active faith in Jesus Christ to lead his church.

Please enlarge on this for us. What does "active faith in Jesus Christ to lead his church" involve?

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/1 12:13

Quote:

philologos wrote:
...the functions spoken of in Ephesians 4:11 are 'gifts' given to the whole church and not to a local church. The interesting thing to note is that we know that 'apostles, prophets and evangelists' were itinerant roles in the New Testament era. So what about 'pastor-teacher'? Was that function 'itinerant' too? and if the 'pastor-teacher' was itinerant what are we to say about the modern pattern of having a 'resident pastor-teacher'?

I think this is right. All the throne ministries, including pastors and teachers, are gifts to the whole church.

At the same time, they would be part of a local church, elders in a local church, and they would go out as the Lord led.

As at Antioch. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers..."

AD

Re: Man's effort after knowing God - posted by JoanM, on: 2009/1/1 14:22

With many others I have greatly appreciated the conversation and various wrestlings here. I have been following this thread as I study through Exodus, which might help explain what follows.

There IS something about man that wants to understand the order of things. Moses wanted to. He asked to know God's way, to know Him, to find grace (imparted enabling) in light of the fact that these people were the people of God (not his people). Having found grace in God's sight (enabled to bring forth God's people), Moses needed this grace. Look at what had just happened (the idol). How could that possibly fit with what Moses knew of God? . What is going on here (what is God doing)? How is Moses to proceed? What is the unseen order here? On a personal level we ask about the death of loved ones, Godly leaders used of God etc.

And again, there IS something about man that wants to understand the order of things. Those that asked for an idol also needed some understanding of the order of things. With no leader to fix on, they went to fixing on an idol thing, their stab at making "an order of things". This helps explain to me why sometimes we might still fix on a leader as "a thing": namely, in an effort to establish an order of things; and why congregations decide they need a different pastor, or individuals decide they need a different church.

And again, there IS something about man that wants to understand the order of things. Nothing lies outside of His power and authority. All of the Old Testament was required in filling up time (all those kings and prophets and captivity) and 400 years of silence. And in this New thing, man still wants to understand the order of things (even here on this thread). There are thousands of examples. Liturgy has to do with the order of things. What about "Roman Catholic Church," Fox's martyrs, Lakeland, etc.?

"And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory." We often can see God in history, after-the-fact (from behind) such as when we see, in retrospect, His hand on us before we are born again and begin to know Him. We seek God's way in things so as to go that way.

As an example to add balance to this thread, I noticed (https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id26687&forum45&2) this 12/30/08 posting: "Christianity as an institution has long been occupied with things: churches, clergy, teachings, doctrines, religious things. The 'house church movement' is similarly engrossed in the dynamics of how to meet, where to meet, and what to do when meeting. The 'charismatic movement' is obsessed with alleged manifestations and spiritual gifts. The 'prophetic movement' is absorbed with what they think God is saying, doing, or about to do. **Paul was preoccupied with a Person,**"

In revival God makes His way known "up-close", makes Himself known, shows us his Glory "in-the-fact" or as close to

o "in-the-fact" as maybe we might hope for and live. And of course, like Moses there is all the "after-the-fact" seeing of His Glory in revival (Ex. 34:6-9).

In all of this there is encouragement:

1. God desires to make Himself known to man.
2. Although we cannot see Him and live, we can hear Him and live.
3. We have some praying ground in common with Moses (Ex. 33:12-13).

Edit: bold

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/1 16:00

Quote:

-----Please enlarge on this for us. What does "active faith in Jesus Christ to lead his church" involve?

It means not putting your trust in a principle but in Christ himself. Several times in Hebrews in one way or another we are enjoined to 'consider Him'...'we have such an high priest'. See how the writer focuses on the person of Christ in all his 'offices'.

Christ as personal High Priest interceding is a familiar point, as is the seated High Priest reigning but Christ as the High Priest walking among the lampstands.. there is much less spoken of. And yet we all pay lip service to the notion that Christ 'is in the midst' but do we really believe it?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/1 16:02

Quote:

-----But seriously as I read through the thread I remembered what a buddy of mine said in prayer as he was angrily protesting to God about the church.
He said to the Lord "where is the God of Elijah?"

Did you know that God forbids 'angry prayers'? 1Tim 2:8 ;-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/1 16:04

Quote:

-----At the same time, they would be part of a local church, elders in a local church, and they would go out as the Lord led.

As at Antioch. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers..."

but if you read the earlier chapters you discover that they all appear to be 'imports' and possibly temporary imports?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/1 16:22

Quote:

-
1. God desires to make Himself known to man.
 2. Although we cannot see Him and live, we can hear Him and live.
 3. We have some praying ground in common with Moses (Ex. 33:12-13).
-

As you read Exodus -Deut each time you read of Moses say to your self 'the mediator of the covenant'. I think you will find it instructive. :-)

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/1 16:29

Quote:

philologos wrote:
but if you read the earlier chapters you discover that they all appear to be 'imports' and possibly temporary imports?

Yes, I agree that's likely the case here.

But does this mean all who have a "throne-room" ministry have no local church where they are considered to be a member of the body there?

Lets say a pastor or a teacher (or a pastor/teacher, as some hold) lives in Ephesus, and has a family there, and a job. Is n't he a part of the lampstand in Ephesus? He's one of the elders at Ephesus, likely.

And when the Lord of the church calls him to go to, lets say, Smyrna, for a season, he is still minding his own business. He teaches there for a season as the Holy Spirit directs, and then goes back home.

Meanwhile back at Ephesus while he is away, the poor little flock isn't floundering helplessly in the absence of their pastor, but continue to function vitally.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/1 16:33

Quote:

-----dohzman on 2009/1/1 3:12:31
I always thought the purpose of the local church was to raise up missionaries to reach the lost around the world,

When Paul wrote to Timothy he said it was so that Timothy would know 'how to behave in a church, which is a house of God'. This is not 'the church' in the Universal sense but a local church and Paul calls it a house of God.

What is a house for? It is a place to live. Who lives in Daryl's house? who lives in Ron's house? What is the purpose of 'God's house'?
;-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/1 16:37

Quote:

-----But does this mean all who have a "throne-room" ministry have no local church where they are considered to be a member of the body there?

I don't mean itinerary in the sense that he needs to be constantly on the move. Philip was home long enough to have quite a family! Acts 21:9

Re: , on: 2009/1/1 18:09

Sister Joan quotes from a previous thread....

Â“Christianity as an institution has long been occupied with things: churches, clergy, teachings, doctrines, religious things. The "house church movement" is similarly engrossed in the dynamics of how to meet, where to meet, and what to do when meeting. The "charismatic movement" is obsessed with alleged manifestations and spiritual gifts. The "prophetic movement" is absorbed with what they think God is saying, doing, or about to do. Paul was preoccupied with a Person,Â”

If all of us were as preoccupied with a person, the person of Jesus and His presence it would all be a lot more simple. W

e have a need to explain and understand all things, typically ego driven. Endlessly discussing and debating about how things should be, and then, suddenly, God is in the midst. God is in the midst. And then we know that we really do not know anything, and that in His presence is the essence of all things. How do we enter into His presence? What is His presence? Whether you meet in a Cathedral, or a strip mall or a conventional church or a house or someones's basement or out in the field, it would not matter if He was there. If this were our grand obsession, if we were pre-occupied with His presence, with walking with Him, then the rest would not matter. I think Enoch may have known this...brother Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/1 19:09

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Quote:

-----Please enlarge on this for us. What does "active faith in Jesus Christ to lead his church" involve?

It means not putting your trust in a principle but in Christ himself. Several times in Hebrews in one way or another we are enjoined to 'consider Him'... 'we have such a high priest'. See how the writer focuses on the person of Christ in all his 'offices'.

Christ as personal High Priest interceding is a familiar point, as is the seated High Priest reigning but Christ as the High Priest walking among the lampstands.. there is much less spoken of. And yet we all pay lip service to the notion that Christ 'is in the midst' but do we really believe it?

I've been thinking of the following verse in the context of this thread.

"For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18.20).

As you said, "Do we really believe it?"

This is a function of the candlestick, isn't it? The Light of the world shining in the candlestick, whether it be two or three, or some larger gathering.

It is Christ who is the Apostle, the Prophet, the Evangelist, the Pastor, the Teacher... And not just way up there on the Throne of Heaven, but right here in our midst by the Holy Spirit.

And so any apostle or prophet or evangelist or pastor or teacher must minister in union with, and as an expression of, Christ (the Apostle), Christ (That Prophet), Christ the Evangelist, Christ the Pastor, Christ the Teacher... so that their ministry is a manifestation of Christ Himself walking among the lampstands, tending, trimming the lamps.

We certainly need an awakening to this, so that more and more, He who is "in our midst" isn't there just secretly, somehow, but shines forth and is seen, and recognized.

What an awesome prospect.

I have been thinking, and hoping that this thread is more than just an academic consideration of an ideal. Are we laying this to heart? There's a cost involved.

But if we lay it to heart, and seek Christ about this, it is going to cause change.

It is certainly going to bring a cross into the lives of those who take this seriously.

AD

Re: - posted by psalm1, on: 2009/1/1 20:58

Did you know that God forbids 'angry prayers'? 1Tim 2:8

And drunkenness?

"13Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine"

Acts 2;13

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/2 4:57

Quote:

-----by ADisciple on 2009/1/1 21:09:33

Amen, Amen, Amen

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/2 5:39

Quote:

-----ADisciple's: It is certainly going to bring a cross into the lives of those who take this seriously.

Amen. One of the things I experienced in the UK was the love of God and the grace of God in the 'word of His grace'. I am so used to hearing a high octane, "thus says the Lord" type utterance that purports to speak for God but is somehow coming off as anything *but* meek and mild.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (James 3)

This passage requires that a person be in unity with Christ when they speak. There is no way to fake this. But so often when prophetic utterances come (in my experience) they are not easy to be entreated. You have the sense that you are being force fed something. This is not always the case, but in the UK I found a gentleness and meekness that didn't make me feel like I was under the arm of an angry father with a belt or a rod in His hand.

And I am coming to wonder what it is about men of God that want to present God in a way that thrashes and thunders when Jesus said:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11)

Moffatt translates "easy" as "*kindly*." That is the meaning in the Septuagint for persons. We have no adjective that quite carries the notion of kind and good. The yoke of Christ is useful, good, and kindly. (Robertson's)

How refreshing is that? Why is Jesus depicted in other ways than this? Perhaps because of the book of the Revelation. But there must be no contradiction here. Christ is either offering an easy yoke or He is not. And even after all of the Majestic and fearsome ways He is presented in Revelation we still read at the end:

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22)

That is a precious thing. "I Jesus" as if to remind us that in Him there is no shadow of turning. Jesus Christ the same yes

terday, today and forever. He is still meek and lowly and offering a kindly yoke.

So we see then what God will bless. He will bless a *right* representation of His Son. We should ask ourselves why we do not receive Revival when we ask for it. Is it because we ask amiss that we may consume it upon our own lusts? In other words, could it be because men have allowed their own wrath to color the person of Christ and God refuses to 'sign off' on that depiction of Christ by sending revival? We ask and we receive not. I truly believe that when a decision is finally made to rightly represent Christ we will see God's hand of blessing. We have already had a John the Baptist.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/2 7:33

I Jesus

That moves me! your commentary on the yoke of Christ agrees with AD. in his last post. What a refreshing look at something known but somehow forgotten over the years. God Bless bro. daryl

Re: Local church - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/2 8:43

Hi Brother Frank,

I have been following this thread since it's start and thought I would enter as a late sub (to follow Ron's analogy of soccer - 'playing the ball' et al)!

Regarding the point made by appolus about the local church structure, I think this is an important point. During my Christian life I have been involved in / with a variety of church structures ranging from the very 'un-structured' house church with no pre-planned worship or message to the more formal hymn/prayer sandwich with a 40 minute sermon at the end.

Although I have some quite definitive beliefs about church structure and government, I have concluded that it does not necessarily matter which format is chosen (even if it is the most biblical) if there is no living, dynamic relationship with our living head (our Lord Jesus Christ) then all that will be ministered amongst the body will be dead religion at best and the philosophy of man at worst.

You can believe all the right things and structure the church to be in-line with biblical standards (to the best you can understand) and it can still have no life. Conversely you may have a church structure that is less than ideal (say a one man Pastor leadership model), but the 'Pastor' and members are 'abiding in the vine' and producing fruit from the life giving sap flowing through them.

I feel such a strong desire at this time to want nothing but to fellowship with my 'Living Head' and have His life flowing in reality in me and to fellowship with others (local church) who are also living in this flow. I have to confess that much of the time I myself fall far short of this position, but it is my heart's desire. Also I understand that my brothers and sisters will always fall short, but let us all at least have this desire and strive to experience that 'it's no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me'.

I had the privilege of being at Greenock and was so blessed with the fellowship of other believers from such different church structures, but who had a heart for knowing our God. Coming back afterwards into the local church is hard and can be frustrating (not trying to be critical) as so much emphasis is on things not of eternal importance.

Re: , on: 2009/1/2 10:54

Hi Dave....you write

"I had the privilege of being at Greenock and was so blessed with the fellowship of other believers from such different church structures, but who had a heart for knowing our God. Coming back afterwards into the local church is hard and can be frustrating (not trying to be critical) as so much emphasis is on things not of eternal importance."

God bless you brother. Your heart's desire to seek after a "living, dynamic relationship touches my heart. This is where it will start. For over 20 years I was a builder. The most important part of any structure is the foundation. It is also the most difficult part to build. The excavation can be unpredictable, sometimes hitting rock or old sewers or whatever. All of this has to be overcome before you can ever start thinking about building. And the greater the structure, the deeper the foundation

ation.

One would have to have been involved in the organisation of the Greenock conference to know that there were many sacrifices made by people. One had to surrender, in certain aspects, dearly held beliefs and traditions. I am not talking about essentials of the faith. That is why the focus of the prayer was three-fold. The first night we approached the walls of the stronghold on our knees. The stronghold was multi-faceted, but mainly denominational division. We were directed to assault this wall with prayer. The second night we had the breakthrough, there was a breach in the wall. The third night we rushed the breach and entered the stronghold.

I believe this to be a pattern for every city or region. If the stronghold of divisiveness is left intact, there can be no "one accord." This is a centuries old problem. One of the greatest problems, in my opinion, is a cynical disbelief that this can be achieved. Usually this disbelief comes from people who have been in the ministry "for a long time." Well, there is a generation arising that is tired of following this old leadership, tired of wandering around in a desert, tired of looking at the promised land and listening to people scoff and say "there are giants in there."

In Greenock, we dared to cross over the river and assault the walls of Jericho. I think we proved that those giants, with willing participants, can be overcome. Was it perfect? Nooo. Did it go according to plan? No. What battle ever goes according to plan? Yet, wars are won by people who are willing to engage.

The one unifying force that brought the greatly diversified disciples together was Jesus Himself. As it was then, so it is now. I believe that there is a reformation coming brother, and it will be led by people like yourself, people who are tired and very thirsty, having wandered in the desert for long enough. Will the old guard scoff and laugh? Yes. If you have been in leadership for decades and the spiritual landscape is bleak to say the least, then you bear some responsibility for that. How many leaders walked out of the desert?

If one seeks the presence of the Lord, and this is his primary aim and he pursues this at all cost, then the excavation has begun. The foundation is Jesus Himself. Find His presence, and the structure will be built, according to how His decrees . I think "gathered in my name," should be more closely considered. If not, one is in danger of a Cain's spirit.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/2 12:48

This is a challenge and can be a fearful thing for many, as this will challenge many traditions that are held dear and considered to be foundational truth.

The only foundation is Christ and the doctrines of Christ and the Apostles. May God in His grace reveal to us any foundations that are not this, but just traditions of man or our own prejudices.

I don't want to be mis-understood about this. I am not saying put aside truth, as the revealed truth is something we must contend for in these days of deception. However we need to be sure that which we hold so dear is really biblical truth?

I consider that Ephesians ch.4 tells us there are two aspects of unity. Unity of the Spirit (because we are one in Christ) and unity of the faith (the doctrines of Christ) which we are all coming into. We are told to keep the unity of the Spirit (v.3) until we come to the unity of the faith (v.13). This is accomplished by the ministry of the whole body (in a local setting?), who are equipped by the various ministry gifts such as apostles; pastor/teachers; prophets etc. (v.7-12).

I think this turns us back towards Ron's original point.

By the way (as it is relevant), although I am also from Reading, UK I am not at the same church as Ron B and we only met for the first time at Greenock even though we are local to each other! Hopefully we will meet up again as I will probably visit his (local) church at some point soon (advanced warning Ron!).

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/2 14:43

Quote:
-----That is a precious thing. "I Jesus" as if to remind us that in Him there is no shadow of turning. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever. He is still meek and lowly and offering a kindly yoke.

This is good to read but the Jesus of the Revelation is no teddy-bear. Part of the description is that a two-edged sword proceeds from his mouth. This word for 'sword' is not the sharp two edged sword of Hebrews which 'pierces' this is (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg4501&tKJV>) Strong's G4501 - rhomphaia. It is the Thracian 'slaughter weapon'. It is essentially a double edged sword on a long handle, designed for disembowelling. No wonder John passed out. :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/2 14:49

Quote:
-----You can believe all the right things and structure the church to be in-line with biblical standards (to the best you can understand) and it can still have no life. Conversely you may have a church structure that is less than ideal (say a one man Pastor leadership model), but the 'Pastor' and members are 'abiding in the vine' and producing fruit from the life giving sap flowing through them.

This is absolutely true, hence my little comment about 'little schemes of perfection'. This is why ultimately labels are irrelevant but sometimes can be a distracting irrelevance, similar to the labels we put on the front of our buildings!

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/2 15:01

Quote:
-----" Well, there is a generation arising that is tired of following this old leadership, tired of wandering around in a desert, tired of looking at the promised land and listening to people scoff and say "there are giants in there."

I am afraid this is the language of the Manifested Sons of God, The Call and so many other. In the true church of God there is only one generation. Paul stood against Peter because he was creating a schizophrenic 'body' of a Jewish church and a Gentile church. The same thing happens when we refer to 'yesterday's church' and 'tomorrow's church' or when we tell the young people that they are 'tomorrow's church'.

I really do plead with you to abandon this 'generation-ism'. We are in this together for better or worse.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/2 15:06

Quote:
-----Hopefully we will meet up again as I will probably visit his (local) church at some point soon (advanced warning Ron!).

We'll shake out the red carpet. :-D

Re: , on: 2009/1/2 15:21

Quote

"I am afraid this is the language of the Manifested Sons of God, The Call and so many other. In the true church of God there is only one generation."

Just because strange groups of people use certain language, does not nullify the point. Just for clarification, the reference to generation is not age based, its just simply the reference to a group of hungry and thirsty believers. Its not really all that helpful to conjure up images of the worse excesses of the Charismatic movement and then align that where it does not belong. For further clarification, I believe that the younger generation is in most jeopardy. They are in jeopardy because of some of the groups mentioned by Ron, soulish groups at best. They are in equal danger from dead denominations.

Again, its all about the presence of God and a focus on Jesus, actually Jesus. When men spend their time seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then the nuts and bolts of how we should gather will fall into place.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/2 19:36

Quote:
-----It is the Thracian 'slaughter weapon'. It is essentially a double edged sword on a long handle, designed for disembowelling. No wonder John passed out

:o Well, I'm trying to get balanced I guess. For so long I have been so far on the passed out side that I couldn't see the meek and mild. I suppose as long as we are in Christ we have no need to fear that.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/2 19:45

Quote:
-----I really do plead with you to abandon this 'generation-ism'. We are in this together for better or worse.

This type language is easy to pick up because so many Pentecostal and Charismatics use it. Reading through (<http://mp3.biblebase.com/details.php?file73>) the Generation of Jesus Christ will be quite helpful.

Re: By whose authority? - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/3 12:41

I thought we ought to take a look at the nature of authority in the New Testament. Accountability and authority are obviously going to go hand in hand. If God has not given authority he will not hold that person accountable. This is a simple statement but vital to understanding the nature of spiritual authority on the personal and corporate level. This is why I asked the question 'just who is responsible?' The simple answer is 'that one to whom God gave authority'.

In business management there is an old saying. If you give someone responsibility without authority all you are giving them is blamability. It is easy to 'blame' 'today's leaders' but are they really responsible? Have they actually been given authority over the areas in which they claim to 'rule'?

What is the 'job definition' of 'today's leaders' and who authored that 'job definition'? What are the Bible's parameters of spiritual authority? Paul's instruction to the 'elders' from Ephesus is surely a critical passage in this quest.

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God* which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28

The NKJV corrects a serious KJV mistranslation but using the word 'among' rather than the KJV's 'over'. These are 'elders'. They have a God-given authority and hence responsibility. These men are genuinely 'blamable'. They are those who must 'give an account'. Just what are elders?

These are the first references to Israel's 'elders'.

Exd 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and that which is done to you in Egypt:

Exd 3:18 And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

Exd 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

Exd 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to

o your families, and kill the passover.

Just who are these men and where have they come from? To understand the concept of biblical eldership we are going to have to start from the very beginning. Are you ready to make a start?

Re: , on: 2009/1/3 13:57

It depends on a person's eschatology.

Jesus said, "that generation".

The Revelation speaks of the "overcomers" having "the testimony of Jesus" which is, according to Rev 19 - "the spirit of prophecy".

If one believes that they are in "those days" - then one would believe that they need to strive to live out "those days" as an overcomer and with the chance of living out without anyone's hand to hold.

The "authority" can come upon a babe in Christ - if need be - because that authority is 'at the moment' considering the need of the hour, at that moment. Say, in a concentration camp, or prison, like our brothers in China and elsewhere.

I personally would love that the overcomers have that relationship with GOD - that if a time shall come - which it will - when there is no "leaders" around - that they have what it takes to overcome alone - as we all will die alone regardless. No one can usher us into HIS presence, so it appears we're all on our own, to make our walk with HIM or waste it. Dependence on men may be a stumbling block.

Seems best to point to John 10's description of HIS Sheep and John 16:13, 14 and the such for Whom to depend on - to build up the Body - as mentioned in Eph 4 in the verses following the 5 callings.

Thank you for bearing with another dumb sheep sincerely.

Bless HIS Body.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/3 15:31

You wrote 'Just who are these men and where have they come from? To understand the concept of biblical eldership we are going to have to start from the very beginning. Are you ready to make a start?'

I think this would be an interesting subject to look into as there is so much tradition in the churches regarding leadership and much misunderstanding as to the New Testament model of church leadership. Note I am using the word leadership as a convenient word for church government, but it is probably not the best term.

I wait with interest Ron's and others views on this.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/3 16:21

Quote:

-----Jesus-is-GOD on 2009/1/3 15:57:42

The "authority" can come upon a babe in Christ - if need be - because that authority is 'at the moment' considering the need of the hour, at that moment. Say, in a concentration camp, or prison, like our brothers in China and elsewhere.

Authority for what? We all have a personal responsibility for ourselves under God and God will surely give us the grace necessary for each trial as it comes. However, we are not really speaking in this thread about those personal responsibilities; we are speaking about 'corporate responsibility' in the sense of those who bear responsibility for the 'corps' - the body.

God will always give leaders for his saints. The nature of that leadership and the way in which it is exercised may be part of our studies here, but there will always be 'leaders' of some kind.

Re: , on: 2009/1/3 16:34

Quote

"It depends on a person's eschatology."

I believe that this is a good point. Much depends on where one believes we are, right now. In America, there are many that believe that it is business as usual. These may be the so called "sleeping church," or the ones that Ian Paisley is referring to in his opening clip on "revival hymn." He says "wake up you sleepy Christians."

Most people who are looking for revival, are not looking for a restructuring of the church, they are looking for "God to come down." They know that it has to start there. If there is a fire in the house, you get the people out first before you start to sort them out. There has to be life first before anything. If that leads to a restructuring, then so be it. Of course one may disagree and believe that the right "leadership," has to be in place before God will come down.

In a recent Barna poll, it was stated that most Pastors in American churches believed that the spiritual health of their congregation was good. The purpose in Greenock was to call a "solemn assembly." Solemn because of the state of the church. We were to cry out to God and seek forgiveness for the state we had allowed the church to fall into.

2Ch 7:14 if My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Perhaps I travel in small circles, but I simply do not see the humility from present day 'leadership,' that would acknowledge that they have failed, that they have come to the end of themselves, that their knowledge and experience has not been enough. I believe that the people, just regular Christians, are and would be more willing to humble themselves before a Holy God and acknowledge that they are on a wrong path.

Again, I think the most important aspect is whether you believe that Jesus is "at the door," in an immediate sense. Whether He is or is not, it seems that the imperative would be to "humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways." Now what does that look like?.....brother Frank

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/3 16:36

Quote:

-----Heydave on 2009/1/3 17:31:05
I wait with interest Ron's and others views on this.

Let's play Sherlock Holmes. Why did the dog not bark? :-)

In other words, let's ask the question, "why were there no elders before this time?" I suggest... because they were not needed. This may give us a real key to much of the way in which God works.. necessity.

We have a fascinating record of 'necessity' being the pre-condition for a provision of God in the choice of the Seven in the Acts. These men are usually called 'deacons' although they are not so designated in the scripture. The point is that these men were not appointed until the necessity arose; then God provided. Is the reason that God apparently 'does not provide' because there is really 'no need'?

How about this astonishing promise...

So shall they fear The name of the LORD from the west, And His glory from the rising of the sun; When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. Isaiah 59:19

..do you see how the necessity provides the setting for God's provision?

So let's rephrase the question... "why was there no need for elders before the time of the Exodus"?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/3 16:42

Quote:
-----appolus on 2009/1/3 18:34:50
In a recent Barna poll, it was stated that most Pastors in American churches believed that the spiritual health of their congregation was good. The purpose in Greenock was to call a "solemn assembly." Solemn because of the state of the church. We were to cry out to God and seek forgiveness for the state we had allowed the church to fall into.

Barna is so committed to the 'unstructured house church' movement that his findings always need to be taken with a pinch of salt.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/3 18:09

Egypt. There was already in place a specific type of social structure or law.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/3 21:15

Quote:
-----Daryl's: Egypt. There was already in place a specific type of social structure or law.

And before this was not the patriarch or *pater familias* (Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.) essentially the ruling authority? Job almost acted as the priest of his family making offerings on their behalf to God. So we see then a connection between a man that fears God and God given authority.

Where people congregate there has to be an authority structure. Francis Schaffer pointed out that the ancient world struggled to maintain law and order because they had no foundation to set their society on; that is, they did not have God as the law giver. So when God is made the basis on which authority is established the whole dynamic changes.

It is interesting that Israel wanted a King, but God desired to direct the people through the Judges and Prophets. When the Rabbi's were ready for total self-rule they made laws that disregarded anything prophetic. This is quite a lesson to consider. The Pharisees took the Law and created Rabbinic Judaism and locked God out by giving the authority to the Rabbi's.

Re: , on: 2009/1/3 21:40

Tozer writes....

"" for the scribe tells us what he has read, and the prophet tells what he has seen. The distinction is not an imaginary one. Between the scribe who has read and the prophet who has seen there is a difference as wide as the sea. We are overrun today with orthodox scribes, but the prophets, where are they? The hard voice of the scribe sounds over evangelicalism, but the church waits for the tender voice of the saint who has penetrated the veil and has gazed with inward eye upon the wonder that is God. And yet, thus to penetrate, to push in sensitive living experience into the holy Presence, is a privilege open to every child of God." - (The Pursuit Of God by A.W.Tozer page 40.)

What do we hear today? The weary voice of the evangelical scribe? The scribe indeed will tell you what he has read and what he thinks about what he has read and some of it will be fine, much will be an expression of his ego. Scribes cannot lead the church. We live in the age of the scribe. Tozer is correct, this penetration behind the veil is open to every child of God and from those who do, they will speak the word of His grace and they will speak with "Katanusso," power. There is such a hunger and thirst for the presence of God. The scribe could speak and the one who moves in this power can speak the exact same words. One will penetrate the hearts of men, will agitate, will pierce, the other ?....brother Frank

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/4 3:54

Quote:

-----So when God is made the basis on which authority is established the whole dynamic changes.

Robert and Daryl are making similar points. Robert introduces a word here that I had meant to move onto... dynamics. What we are witnessing in the record of the scripture is the way God works within 'group dynamics'.

Egypt did have a social structure; it was a nation. The group dynamic of a nation is quite different to the group dynamic of a 'family'. I would not use the label 'pater familias'; that is an expression of Roman family dynamic and law and very different to what we find in the Old Testament. (the pater familias 'owned' the whole family and had the power of life and death over each member. It is the underlying dynamic of the Roman Catholic church and the Mafia.)

We actually see Egyptian elders functioning in the last chapter of Genesis. There are two groups identified; the elders of Pharaoh's own household and ALL the elders of the land of Egypt. Their function here is instructive and we will return to it later; they are functioning as 'official representatives'. They are the official representatives at Jacob's funeral. Gen 50:7. So yes, there was a group dynamic and a social structure already operating in the larger 'group' of a nation or a royal household. There was no need for representatives from the Hebrews, everyone attended the funeral with the exception of the very young. Gen 50:8

So if the Hebrews did not have 'elders' at this time what did they have? They had heads of 'houses'; twelve of them and originally Jacob/Israel as the patriarch; father-ruler. In other words they were functioning as an extended family.

When the Hebrews moved to Egypt they moved 'with their households' in line with Pharaoh's original invitation. Gen 45:18. It is important to remember that all who went down to Egypt were not blood descendants of Jacob/Israel. When the book of Exodus opens it explains that each son of Jacob went 'with his household'. These households would have comprised family and servants; we are not told the total number of souls who comprised these 'households'. However in the next verses we are told that the 'blood descendants' of Jacob who finally settled in Egypt numbered 70. Ex 1:1-5.

Abraham's household was able to supply 318 fighting men when the need arose. These 'households' are likely to have been quite large although probably not as large as Abraham's. Any estimate would be sheer guesswork but we are almost certainly talking about 'hundreds' rather than 'tens'! The Exodus takes up the story with Jacob/Israel gone and the 'group dynamic' is shifting.

In the story of the Exodus (including Lev - Deut) we find different labels used and the problems is really trying to see how these labels relate to each other; we have references (even before Aaron) to priests, to elders, to officials, in Numbers to 'princes' of the different clans. How are we to understand these roles?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/4 5:53

Quote:

-----(the pater familias 'owned' the whole family and had the power of life and death over each member. It is the underlying dynamic of the Roman Catholic church and the Mafia.)

Now this helps me understand the work God did in my heart in the UK. I no longer have a fearful sense that the family of God is like the Mafia in which God is ready to bludgeon a family member that gets out of line, but a loving family in which God comes alongside and brings change by grace.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/4 8:03

Quote:
----- In the story of the Exodus (including Lev - Deut) we find different labels used and the problems is really trying to see how these labels relate to each other; we have references (even before Aaron) to priests, to elders, to officials, in Numbers to 'princes' of the different clans. How are we to understand these roles?

I never really gave it much serious concentrated thought but what I see here is a complete structure with in a community . Here is how I see it at work. Level one is family i.e.>>>elders
This was a direct means to the individual tribes of Israel, each elder would have spoken the language of thier specific tribe and I'm sure there were stories past down about each of thier "heads" as it were as well as the over all heritage past down about the patriarchs Abraham, Issiac, and Jacob. Which would help each group keep thier individual distinctive while at the same time hold them together as a nation.

While in the NT the priest is to be the head of the household, much like we see in Jobs witness, as it relates to church structure and the working of the priesthood. This would serve as a constant reminder to bring a nations attention always back to the One God who had brought them forth by election/redemption as a chosen people. That would give them purpose. But I'm not really sure how this system would transpose into today's "christian church" on a local setting.

Princes would almost have functioned as heads of state on a national setting and in the USA most local neighborhoods have councilmen and women who represent the concerns to each neighborhood. I see princes as though who represent. The trouble here is that when I hear the word prince I think in terms of authority which is often oppressive. So it's not elected authority but almost like birthed into authority, the silver spoon so to speak. I have NO idea how this would play into the local church setting, not even a clue

:-o

blessings, bro. daryll

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/4 12:25

Quote:
-----dohzman on 2009/1/4 10:03:05
Here is how I see it at work. Level one is family i.e.>>>elders
This was a direct means to the individual tribes of Israel, each elder would have spoken the language of thier specific tribe and I'm sure there were stories past down about each of thier "heads"

I am having a little difficulty following your line here. It was at least four generations before we read of elders in the Hebrew community in Egypt. Now that brings in another concept 'community'. I won't try to define the idea but let's try to hold the general idea of 'commune' hence common. These groups are larger than family but they have a sense of belonging; they have things 'in common'. (Not in the Acts sense) These communities have a level of 'leadership' which is wider than the patriarch; I don't read or get the sense that a particular tribe had its own particular elders. The elders had a wider area of responsibility.

The 'princes' do seem to have had tribal or clan connections as each tribe has its own 'prince'. It is not helped by the fact that the KJV uses the word 'prince' to translate several different Hebrew words and it is really quite a task to separate them out. I think the words tend to have a military feel and this is certainly the case in Num 1 where the 'marshalls' of Israel were one from each tribe/clan.

But that is running ahead of our story. The families had 'family type' leadership, the 'fathers' and this kind of structure could be called 'patriarchal'. It is when the whole nation is in view that we seem to get the use of the word 'elder'. One NT verse which this brings to mind is Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God* which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28

...which specifically refers to the responsibility of the Ephesian elders for 'the whole flock'. These elders do not represent groups within the church but are to 'shepherd' the whole flock.

I think we need to take our time in defining these terms. The danger is that because 'elders' are not the way we do our society we will try to interpret the role in language that is familiar to us. For example, we must not think of 'elders' as some kind of board of directors, or a committee or any of the patterns with which we are familiar. We have to find out by usage just how these roles functioned. The Latin for elders, for example, is senator but you folks over there are going to have to clear the word out of your minds before you begin to understand its use in the classical world.

We do have the use of similar words in many languages, senator, elders, aldermen, presbyters, but the word use will have changed over the centuries and we cannot use our modern conceptions of these words. This is why you should never use a modern dictionary to try to understand biblical words.

Re: Ron - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/5 6:49

Quote:
----- It was at least four generations before we read of elders in the Hebrew community in Egypt

We may not read of the family distinctives but surely they existed long before we read of them, I mean Moses didn't just show up and tell them "hey guys, you dudes over there, you're now Levites, and you guys over there are from the tribe of Judah or Gad etc... When you read of the account in Numbers you can see a very well maintained family structure. This sure didn't happen at the point in which we read of it here, This was generations of accounting. I see the elder for each tribe as possibly the oldest living son to the original head of the tribe, Like the tribe of Judah had an elder who was as close as possible a direct descendant of the man Judah and so forth.

It is true that American english is often times a hinderence to understanding some of the words found in the bible, BUT , that's why God placed gifts in the church to help us understand so of these words :-)

Question: wasn't the word shepard used more in the sense of government leader in the OT?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/5 10:52

Quote:
----- dohzman on 2009/1/5 8:49:37
I see the elder for each tribe as possibly the oldest living son to the original head of the tribe, Like the tribe of Judah had an elder who was as close as possible a direct descendant of the man Judah and so forth.

I may be mistaken but I don't think we have any record of 'the elder of Judah'. This is the point I am making. Elders seem to have a wider brief than that of the clan 'princes'. When I say 'wider' I don't mean 'greater' or more important. It's just that 'elders' don't seem to be 'locally positioned' in the way that the 'princes' are.

and yes, the word shepherd does relate to rulers in the OT but then we have to work out which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

Rulers are called 'shepherds' because that is their responsibility and God holds them accountable to what he has entrusted to them. However, we need to be careful that we don't run that equation backwards. ie 'shepherds' are not automatically 'rulers', although there is clearly a 'ruling' role that operates.

The book of the Revelation tells us that...

Rev 2:27 And **he shall rule** them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

...the word translated here as 'rule' is the verb

(<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg4165&tKJV>) to shepherd. It is a word with a wide appli

cation as these verses will show.

There is an article on the word by Trench which is a bit technical but which might give some insights. Trench was a brilliant linguist and his work is always informative. You will find it (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/trench/section.cfm?sectionID25&lexicontrue&strongsg4165>) here.

edit

It has occurred to me that there is another little piece of evidence which shows that elders were not tribe-related,

Exd 24:1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.

That expression 'of the elders' means that this was a selection of 70 out of number that was larger than 70. Again there is no link to specific tribes here. Nor again at

Num 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

I think these 'elders' are 'senior' (another word meaning older!) people in the community. They represent the whole community and not specific tribes. When they wanted people to represent tribes, as in the 'spies' they chose individuals quite specifically who WERE tribe-related. What do you think?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/5 11:47

When I traced back the OT word for Elder I came to Genesis 1

God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; (Gen. 1:16 NASB)

It seems that this should be relevant because great and greater is also translated as *Elder*. And if this is the first use of the term, what can we learn about what it means to be an 'elder' based on this passage? It looks to me like the governing was a natural consequence of being a great light.

Re: Ron/Robert - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/5 12:12

I can see that about the seventy elders now, how would that relate to what Robert posted from Gen 1:16 and how does that work out in the flesh so to speak? You know when the apostles in the book of Acts told the early church to search out for them seven men full of the Holy Ghost and faith to take care of the widows. They gave qualifications but it seems that there was a lot of room for mistakes because it doesn't seem as if the Holy Spirit picked these men out in the same way. He set apart Paul and Barnabas for His specific work. So on a local level how are elders picked? Age? or am I looking at 2 different things?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/5 14:14

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2009/1/5 13:47:00

When I traced back the OT word for Elder I came to Genesis 1

God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; (Gen. 1:16 NASB)

It seems that this should be relevant because great and greater is also translated as Elder. And if this is the first use of the term, what can we learn about what it means to be an 'elder' based on this passage? It looks to me like the governing was a natural consequence of being a great light.

I think we may have got our wires crossed. The Hebrew word for elder in the references we have been discussing is (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsh2205&tKJV>) Strong's H2205 - zaqen.

The word for 'great' in Gen 1:16 is (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsh1419&tKJV>) Strong's

s H1419 - gadowl. It is translated as 'elder' on a few occasions but it really means 'the great' or 'greater'.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/5 14:50

Quote:
-----They gave qualifications but it seems that there was a lot of room for mistakes because it doesn't seem as if the Holy Spirit picked these men out in the same way He set apart Paul and Barnabus for His specific work.

The choosing of The Seven is very instructive but these are not 'elders' and I am not sure they are even 'deacons' as the term is used in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. These men were chosen to accomplish a particular task rather than given general responsibility.

Act 6:3 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.

See how they were 'appointed' by the apostles to be in charge of 'this business'. They were given the responsibility of caring for the Greek speaking widows. It is interesting that each of the names of The Seven is a Greek name; these men had a natural link with the Greek speaking Jewish community.

I think we do need to move on to the way in which 'elders' were 'appointed' in the New Testament. But I want to be sure that we are getting a sense of who elders were. They are men of 'stature' in the community. They are already held in regard by their community; they are not imposed on the community from outside.

Num 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

This is a very interesting instruction where God says you are to choose from the whole company of elders, 'seventy who you know are elders'. It appears that just as all Israel are not Israel, all elders are not elders! I think this is telling us very plainly that not all 'older man' are 'elders'. But from among the older men there were some who Moses would know were 'real elders'.

This is a clear choice of men from a larger company. These men are going to 'share' the Spirit that is on Moses. They will receive special empowerment to enable them to function as 'elders' for the whole community. These men will be like the community elders but with a special ingredient; a unique enabling of the Spirit. These men would function as the 'elders of the church in the wilderness'; the assembly of God, Israel.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/5 15:49

Quote:

philologos wrote:
This is a very interesting instruction where God says you are to choose from the whole company of elders, 'seventy who you know are elders'. It appears that just as all Israel are not Israel, all elders are not elders! I think this is telling us very plainly that not all 'older man' are 'elders'. But from among the older men there were some who Moses would know were 'real elders'.

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Pr. 16.31).

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/5 16:03

Quote:

----- I think we do need to move on to the way in which 'elders' were 'appointed' in the New Testament.

I look forward to seeing how you develop this in the NT church.

Re: Did you know that The Internet had elders? - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/5 17:17

This is just a gentle excursus but it is with a purpose. I came across this article some years ago and was taken with the way it tried to explain something.

The first meme above was created by Clark at a 1992 IETF meeting and is now informally known as the IETF Credo. This maxim can not be read as stating that Internet culture has no authorities. Individuals of respect and standing play an important role in the aggregation of individual preferences and development of consensus within the community. **Internet rulers can be most likened to Elders: those who through merit, contributions, and experience became or built institutions that affect the Net. Elders are citizen engineers who built wonderful things.** Examples of Elders include Tim Berners-Lee, ("Father of the Web"), the late Jon Postel (IETF RFC Editor and IANA Director), Linus Torvalds (creator of Linux), and Larry Wall (creator of Perl). Amusingly, Guido van Rossum, the creator of the Python, is often respectfully referred to as BDFL (Benevolent Dictator for Life). (In Web years, it need not take much time to establish oneself as an Elder, nor discredit one's self amongst one's peers.)

It comes from a (http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/archived_content/people/reagle/regulation-19990326.html#_NoKings) Harvard Law Thesis and is trying to find a way to explain how the internet is 'governed'.

The reason I repeat it here is because I think it captures something of an almost universal concept of the 'village elder'. The problem with our modern society is that we don't have this instinctive sense of what a 'village elder' is really like or what they do. By virtue of their longer experience they have become the archive of 'community wisdom and lore'. They hold their position on merit. It is not an hereditary or elected role; folks just know who the elders are and when another is added to the number.

I am not trying to say we should follow this pattern in the church, just that this concept of a group of men who by mutual community consent are sought out for advice and guidance is an instinctive concept for much of the world. Our modern patterns of democracy and authority have made it difficult for us to understand this other pattern of authority.

But this simpler pattern of authority lies behind the whole concept of 'eldership'. It is authority by consent and its power is moral. It cannot take refuge in legal authority and ecclesiastic or denominational law; it functions at a different primal level.

This is where we are going to struggle. Our whole concepts of authority are based on Gentile power structures.

Mar 10:42-44 But Jesus called them, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

This pattern of Gentile power structure, of power over people, is almost built into our genes. It will take grace and real mental effort to see the pattern of true spiritual authority. But if we can make it we may begin to see a whole new world of spiritual truth.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/5 19:43

Quote:
-----Ron's: But this simpler pattern of authority lies behind the whole concept of 'eldership'. It is authority by consent and its power is moral. It cannot take refuge in legal authority and ecclesiastic or denominational law; it functions at a different primal level.

I keep thinking of the word 'respect'. When I take the entire post together I can't help but think of 'earned respect' for a person based upon something they have accomplished that sets them apart. An unspoken recognition of 'authority' that is based on the fact that they are highly respected and in that respect they are the 'authority'. There is a saying that- respect is not something that is *given* it is *earned*.

When I think of respect I think of things like:

1. One with vast experience
2. One known for their faithfulness
3. One in reputation for being upright
4. One that has stood the test and prevailed
5. One in reputation for moderation and wisdom
6. One with a gentle, but strong disposition
7. One that rules his spirit well

Out on a dirt road ;-)- posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/5 20:20

Quote:
-----Ron's: I think we may have got our wires crossed. The Hebrew word for elder in the references we have been discussing is Strong's H2205 - zaqen.

I kind of took a different route to look at the word. I found the first English reference for elder and then traced it back with an Englishman's to Genesis 1:16.

And unto Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, to him also were children born. (Genesis 10)

I find it interesting that there is a link between being older and greatness. I believe this is where the Hebrews trace their ancestry? This is also the word used for 'High' as in 'High Priest' who had recognized authority even in Paul's time. David's three 'elder' brothers were certainly not greater than David, but yet they were 'older' and seemed to try to boss David around. God totally bypassed this power structure and gave it to David the man after His own heart.

I guess what I am seeing here is that God raises up folk (as in David's life) to prepare them to have a heart to rule by their dependence on God and not on their age, size or some other outward thing.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/6 0:00

The only snag I see in the whole of eldership in what I'm reading is that most churches in America don't really operate their eldership this way. Also how does authority flesh out in a church where the eldership is based, as it is in most churches here, on private business success, or young and available (usually in their mid to late 30's), or someone with a certain charisma about them, you know what I mean (especially in churches like the AG and the COG), they wear the right clothes and say the right things etc... At what point does authority matter if a true elder is never recognized since most of these men would rather stay in a secluded place out of view and recognition. To what extent can or should they exercise authority? And when you say authority, could you define what you mean? Thank you.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/6 4:33

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2009/1/5 21:43:32

1. One with vast experience
2. One known for their faithfulness
3. One in reputation for being upright
4. One that has stood the test and prevailed
5. One in reputation for moderation and wisdom
6. One with a gentle, but strong disposition
7. One that rules his spirit well

I like this list. Did you notice you have described character rather than gift?

Re: Out on a dirt road <img src='https://www.sermonindex.net/images/smilies/icon_wink' - posted by philologos (), on:

Quote:

-----I guess what I am seeing here is that God raises up folk (as in David's life) to prepare them to have a heart to rule by their dependence on God and not on their age, size or some other outward thing.

I think in the Hebrew we are plugging into a concept which is regarded as very odd today, namely, that 'older is better'. Of course, there are exceptions but it is informative that one of the descriptions of God is The Ancient of Days. (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsh6268&tKJV>)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/6 5:03

Quote:

-----dohzman on 2009/1/6 2:00:24

The only snag I see in the whole of eldership in what I'm reading is that most churches in America don't really operate their eldership this way.

Nor on this side of the water! But this is why I have tried to stick to the 'revelation' rather than to our current experience. When we find that in personal experience many 'Christians' do not live as the New Testament believers lived what are we to say? "Well, this is all there is and we are stuck with it" or are we brave enough to take a long cool look at the biblical principle and then ask "Is there anything that we ought to change?"

When people like William Wilberforce set himself to see an end of slavery the British establishment could not conceive of the possibility. Their whole economy was based on the 'fact' of slavery. Wilberforce's opponents said it would mean disaster for Britain and all other nations would profit from Britain's too sensitive conscience. It took Wilberforce his entire lifetime to see just the beginnings of change. The practice of slavery is not ended even now but the doctrine of slavery has received a death blow.

Luther used to say "teach before you change".

One of the ways we may progress is if we have eyes to 'see' through the outward expressions of things to an true, inner, reality. Just as in the local church we see tares but the eye of faith can also see the wheat and is not discouraged. It may be that some of the 'current management' are 'true elders'. I recall the admonition of the Lord to those he had commanded to 'see the harvest'....'pray ye therefore... One of the first responsibilities of revelation is prayer.

Quote:

----- To what extent can or should they exercise authority? And when you say authority, could you define what you mean? Thank you.

Again we need to begin with the scripture rather than current experience. There are two words in the KJV which are translated as 'power'.

Act 1:7,8 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own **power**. But ye shall receive **power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

1. the first 'power' here is (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg1849&tKJV>) Strong's G1849 - exousia which is the kind of 'power' that a policeman has to stop a truck. It is delegated responsibility, entrusted to him.

2. the second 'power' here is (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg1411&tKJV>) Strong's G1411 - dynamis; this is inherent ability. This is the kind of power the world's strongest men have when they pull a truck!!

Exousia can be understood as 'a right' but it is a given right not a deserved or earned right. All exousia is God given, even secular exousia.

Jhn 19:10-11 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/6 5:35

Ron wrote:

'But this simpler pattern of authority lies behind the whole concept of 'eldership'. It is authority by consent and its power is moral. It cannot take refuge in legal authority and ecclesiastic or denominational law; it functions at a different primal level.'

'This is where we are going to struggle. Our whole concepts of authority are based on Gentile power structures.'

This I think is the whole essence of the issue of Eldership and church government and so rare today. The problem is not just that our concept of authority being wrong, but the that our 'flesh' and ego wants power and recognition. I think even if we get the right church structure in place with this pattern we will still have to struggle against the ego and flesh wanting its head.

I guess that is why character is the all important credential when recognising who are elders and not talent or gifting. Do you think that it is possible for those who are gifted (as say teachers or evangelists) can still operate in these gifts, but may not be considered elders due to character weaknesses?

One scripture I think of in regard to laying down of ego is Phillipians 2v5-6.

'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.'

The phrase 'not consider robbery' as I understand means 'NOT SOMETHING TO BE TAKEN BY FORCE OR GRASPED HOLD OF'. This in essence means that although Jesus knew who he was He did not have to HOLD ONTO IT BY FORCE, He did not have any problem humbling Himself to be a servant and even allowed Himself to be mis-understood and mis-treated as if he were the lowest of all men!! He did not assert His authority at this time (although He will when He comes back).

May God give us leaders like this and may we all strive to have this attitude. I don't know about you, but just when I think I am making progress in walking with God in a right attitude to Him and others, my flesh suddenly exposes its ugly self in one way or another. I am then reminded that we are so so dependant upon His life lived out in us by His Spirit.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/6 6:58

Quote:
-----Ron's: Exousia can be understand as 'a right' but it is a given right not a deserved or earned right. All exousia is God given, even secular exousia.

Since authority is given by God, how is that authority recognized in a local assembly? How does an elder know they are an elder? At what point does the exousia and responsibility come upon the person and when does it lift off?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/6 7:20

Quote:
-----HeyDave's: I think even if we get the right church structure in place with this pattern we will still have to struggle against the ego and flesh wanting it's head.

I think this is why God has brought us to these truths about church life at this juncture because He has previously taken us through the revelation that those that are in Christ are *not* in the flesh but are in the Spirit (if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwells in them).

So I see this happening step by step. Genuine regeneration first and genuine church life second. "Having begun in the Spirit" first and genuine church life second. The one baptism into Jesus Christ and His death (dead to the Law and the law of Sin, etc.) and genuine church life second.

Not as if the unregenerate cannot receive something in the meetings, etc., but rather genuine regeneration is absolutely essential among the members individually for them to be part of the process; especially as an elder.

Now I know that God can speak through a mule or from rocks, God's enemies, etc., but this is not the usual pattern. In these cases almost always the preferred pattern was missed because someone was off track.

So genuine regeneration, the receiving of the Holy Spirit, death to Sin and the law (he that is dead is free from Sin), the love of God poured out into our heart by the Holy Spirit, the spirit of disobedience replaced with the Holy Spirit, no longer in Adam- but in Christ, no longer in the body of Sin- but in the Body of Christ, grafted into the True Vine, yielding the fruit of the Spirit in place of thorns and briars, no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit, sons and daughters of God where we were once by nature children of the devil (Eph. 2). The mind of Christ has replaced the carnal mind.

Love brings joy and joy brings peace, etc. Because we are full of love then we are free from bitter envy and strife that leads to a 'wisdom' that is earthly, sensual and demonic. This ought to protect our meeting from axe grinding, ego's, etc., many other hurtful things.

I think it is like the whole of God's creation. Today it is in a state of in-utility because of Sin, but there was a time when it functioned in perfect symphonic equilibrium. God as a master composer and director leading the whole of creation into a perfect and unfathomably complex harmony. But when sin entered the picture- the whole process became compromised.

I long to see Christ stand again in the churches as a Master Director- orchestrating the meeting- with human instruments after His own heart.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/6 9:44

RobertW,

I Amen your thoughts that there needs to be a genuine regeneration and walking in the Spirit, but are you saying that a regenerate person cannot get to function in the flesh?!

There are many exhortations by the Apostle Paul to regenerate believers to 'walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh'; 'to put on the new man' etc etc.

I know this is another subject so I don't want to divert the topic, but I thought your comments needed clarifying.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/6 10:02

Quote:

-----HeyDave's: but are you saying that a regenerate person cannot get to function in the flesh?!

Well, I almost had to laugh as I brought this up because it has been one of those hot topics over the years between Ron and I. I think (and he may challenge this) that we agreed that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if so be that Christ dwells in us. But we also agreed that at times folk can act inconsistent with their new nature. To say more would be to open a whole can of worms. ;-)

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/6 10:09

Robert,

I did not know this was a well trod subject between you and Ron, so I except your explanation and best leave it here for now so the subject of eldership can continue.

Many thanks. :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/6 10:56

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2009/1/6 8:58:12

Since authority is given by God, how is that authority recognized in a local assembly? How does an elder know they are an elder? At what point does the exousia and responsibility come upon the person and when does it lift off?

In the church here we adopt a triple filter.

- a. the current eldership
- b. the prospective elder
- c. the whole church

When all three are in sync we move forward.

As regards 'lifting off' I would suggest the same triple filter although b. and c. might need transposition.

These decisions are so important that, in my view, they require absolute unanimity.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/6 10:59

Quote:
-----Heydave on 2009/1/6 12:09:47
I did not know this was a well trod subject between you and Ron, so I except your explanation and best leave it here for now so the subject of eldership can continue.

It's not a thorny subject just a project we are still working on. :-D

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/6 12:58

Quote:

RobertW wrote:
I long to see Christ stand again in the churches as a Master Director- orchestrating the meeting- with human instruments after His own heart.

So do I, Robert. And each one of us tuned to Him, and with our eyes on Him.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/6 13:34

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Quote:
-----dohzman on 2009/1/6 2:00:24
The only snag I see in the whole of eldership in what I'm reading is that most churches in America don't really operate thier eldership this way.

Nor on this side of the water! But this is why I have tried to stick to the 'revelation' rather than to our current experience. When we find that in personal experience many 'Christians' do not live as the New Testament believers lived what are we to say? "Well, this is all there is and we are stuck with it" or are we brave enough to take a long cool look at the biblical principle and then ask "Is there anything that we ought to change?"

"Are we brave enough?"

This reminds me of the days of King Josiah, who called for repair to the house of God. In the process, Hilkiah the high priest found "a book" (2 Chr. 34.14).

In my mind's eye I see him cleaning in a back room, and he comes across this scroll covered in dust.

It is a copy of the law of Moses, and Hilkiah gives it to Shaphan the scribe, who takes it and reads it to the king.

Josiah upon hearing it rends his clothes.

Hopefully something like this is happening on this thread. Maybe we aren't finding a Book-- for here in western lands we are suffocating in Bibles, as RobertW (I think it was) said in a thread some time ago.

But maybe to some degree we are discovering what the Book-- the Divine blueprint-- calls for.

Do we take it seriously? "For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD that is written in this book" (2 Chr. 34.21).

...Not that we can then bring what we're seeing into being, but we can spread the blueprints out before the Lord, hold them up to Him, and say, Lord, you read this. You are the ARCHITECT and Builder, and we want to be "workers together WITH you."

...I do pray an earnest Spirit of repentance come upon us, upon all who are reading this thread.

I know, the kind of church structure we see all around us is so entrenched that some of us have at times despaired of seeing real change.

But I see a glimmer of Light.

...To what extent, amid all the calls for revival these days... to what extent do we really want to see the Lord?

AD

What they are and what they do - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/7 9:35

When have a vague idea of the nature of 'elders' we need to move on to what they actually do. There is a word available for us but it will need a little unpacking.... overseers or as the older versions will have it 'bishops'.

The English word 'bishop' actually derives from the Greek 'episkopos'. If you say the word you can hear the similarity. Just say

epISKOPos without pronouncing the lower case letters and you will hear the link. Now what is an episkopos? Well technically the word just means someone who 'over-sees', now you know! ;-)

But the derivation of a word is only a tiny part of finding the meaning. Usage is the real key.

Re: What they are and what they do - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/7 10:58

Quote:

-----Ron's: But the derivation of a word is only a tiny part of finding the meaning. Usage is the real key.

I have been anxious to know what exactly they are responsible before God for doing. :-D

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/7 11:53

Quote:

philologos wrote:

The responsibility of the oversight is to oversee, or keep a watch, (like the Christmas shepherds.. they were 'keeping a watch over' not 'ruling over'). They are not the initiators of every move in the church but they are the safety element in the church.

Relative to what overseers do, I thought of the above quote, which I recalled having read earlier, and found again on page 12 of this thread.

This reminds me of the words the Lord said of David. "I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep..." (2 Sam. 7.8).

In other words, David was just keeping an eye on the sheep as they enjoyed the liberty of feeding in the green pastures

he led them to.

Quite the leader, who would be not in front of the flock, controlling and directing all things, but behind them...

AD

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/7 12:25

Quote:

ADisciple wrote:

In other words, David was just keeping an eye on the sheep as they enjoyed the liberty of feeding in the green pastures he led them to.

Quite the leader, who would be not in front of the flock, controlling and directing all things, but behind them...

My thoughts (for what it's worth) on this are that the 'Elder' is the position and overseeing is what he does. That is shepherding the flock. No one really should be called 'Pastor' as Pastor is the function of an Elder. It's what you do not what you are. Could this equally apply to teacher; prophet; evangelist etc?

I think that a shepherd in NT times would lead the sheep not drive them or follow from behind.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/7 13:31

Quote:

Heydave wrote:

I think that a shepherd in NT times would lead the sheep not drive them or follow from behind.

I agree, a shepherd doesn't "drive" the sheep, like cattle.

But if we understand what is meant by the shepherd "following the sheep," he is still leading them. But it's just kind of a watching over them, watching out for lions and bears, and giving them complete liberty to feed as their hunger leads them, and to grow in their own personal relationship with the Chief Shepherd.

Like Peter said. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder..." (A fellow elder, I think it means. He called himself AN elder, not THE elder) "...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight, thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock..." (1 Pt. 5.3).

So he led by example.

And notice again here, he says, "the elders which are among you..." Not over you. It's similar, I think, to the verse in Acts that has been discussed. ("Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers..." Acts 20.28).

Your comment about not being called pastor, and that it is a function of an elder, not a position, is interesting. I'll see what others have to say about it.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/7 13:49

Quote:

-----Heydave on 2009/1/7 14:25:05

I think that a shepherd in NT times would lead the sheep not drive them or follow from behind.

This is often said but there are at least two occasions when God tells David that he called him when 'he was following the flock'. I think it can be both. Sometimes they 'lead' the way to new pastures and sometimes just let them get on with it.

Did you know that God is referred to as an 'overseer'? What is man that thou (http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?bPsa&c8&v1&tKJV#conc/4) visitest him... In the Greek Old Testament that the early Christians used this is the verb for 'to shepherd' and yet if you check it out you will find it frequently refers to a 'check up' kind of a visit. The word is used in the NT quote from Psalm 8 in Heb 2:6.

'elder' is who he is 'overseeing/checking out' is what he does.

This is a linked verb (http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg1980&tKJV) Strong's G1980 - episkeptomai. Check out how the word is used from that URL and you will see the sense of 'checking out'.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/7 14:52

Quote:

-----ADisciple wrote:

But if we understand what is meant by the shepherd "following the sheep," he is still leading them. But it's just kind of a watching over them, watching out for lions and bears, and giving them complete liberty to feed as their hunger leads them, and to grow in their own personal relationship with the Chief Shepherd.

Thank's for this, I understand what you are saying and agree. I stand corrected :-)

I think it can be either way as Ron says on his post, so sorry for making it one way. Most important thing is we agree it is NOT lording over the flock, but leading by example and watching over the flock.

Thanks for your correction.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/7 15:17

Quote:

-----Heydave wrote:

Thank's for this :-)

You're welcome. I've been appreciating the things you are sharing as well. :-)

AD

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/7 16:18

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Did you know that God is referred to as an 'overseer'? What is man that thou visitest him... In the Greek Old Testament that the early Christians used this is the verb for 'to shepherd' and yet if you check it out you will find it frequently refers to a 'check up' kind of a visit. The word is used in the NT quote from Psalm 8 in Heb 2:6.

'elder' is who he is 'overseeing/checking out' is what he does.

This is a linked verb (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg1980&tKJV>) Strong's G1980 - episkeptomai. Check out how the word is used from that URL and you will see the sense of 'checking out'.

This very interesting and helpful.

In 'Vines it says that the Greek Spt OT in Exodus 3:16 the word 'Episkope' is used where it says that God 'visited' Israel in their captivity. This would mean he did not just passively visit, but looked into and checked them out! He was overseeing them; being a Bishop to them.

Interestingly in Heb 2:6 in the NKJV it translates it as saying ..'or the son of man that you TAKE CARE of him? Which confirms that visiting / taking care / checking out are all implied in these functions of Shepherd and overseer.

Re: What they are and what they do - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/7 17:39

I'm still following this thread. I haven't bailed out, but for a little while I'll be in Detroit than NY than Ok and finally Ks. I'll try to keep up in the reading.

One quick question: Overseers, do they function the same as do shepherds in the book of EZE 34? with its description of what they were to be about?

Re: - posted by ChrisJD (), on: 2009/1/7 18:26

Hi everyone,

Have been peeking in here from time to time and when I read the following I thought of Luke 19:44(KJV):

"In 'Vines it says that the Greek Spt OT in Exodus 3:16 the word 'Episkope' is used where it says that God 'visited' Israel in their captivity. This would mean he did not just passively visit, but looked into and checked them out! He was overseeing them; being a Bishop to them."

Thought I would share it with you all.

It appears as though the word translated *visitation* there in Luke 19:44 is related here?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/7 21:16

Quote:
-----Ron's: Did you know that God is referred to as an 'overseer'? What is man that thou visitest him... In the Greek Old Testament that the early Christians used this is the verb for 'to shepherd' and yet if you check it out you will find it frequently refers to a 'check up' kind of a visit.

OK. Now I'm coming off the rails a bit in my understanding. What then is the difference between elder and pastor/teacher

r? I always thought pastor and shepherd were the same? :-?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/8 6:30

Quote:

-----dohzman on 2009/1/7 19:39:27

Overseers, do they function the same as do shepards in the book of EZE 34? with its description of what they were to be about?

I am trying to distinguish, but not necessarily separate, roles and function. We, and the KJV, is dominated by the idea of 'offices'. This was partly due to the political agenda behind the KJV (which is still my Bible of choice!!). The Anglican church understands ministry in terms of 'offices' to which a person is appointed by the proper authorities. In other words it has a kind of 'org chart' in which the structure is seen in terms of CEO, CFO Chairman etc. Perhaps you have seen those org charts which had the names and 'positions' of the organization and the occasional slot which says something like 'Office Manager - TBA' i.e. Office Manager to be announced. In other words the structure is in place first and we are looking for someone to fit into this role. This is the way most people think of local church organization too so we get advertisement for 'Director of Music' or 'Youth Pastor'. We have the structure we are just looking for the personnel to put into the slots.

I wonder can we even imagine another way of doing things which is 'gift' orientated and consequently organic rather than organizational? The letter to the church at Corinth does not mention any of the 'officers' in the church in Corinth. This is not because they don't exist but because the letter is focussing on the church as a body and hence function rather than office.

Now to your quick question! ;-) Elder is the 'office', overseeing is the 'function'. All elders will have the responsibility of 'overseeing' but others may also 'oversee' who are not 'in office'. If this happens in a strongly structured local church it is likely that the 'officers' in the church will put the person who is spontaneously 'overseeing' in his place; it is not appropriate they may say for you to take this responsibility. But to 'visit/oversee the widows and orphans is a responsibility for all God's people.. see James' epistle.

elders (recognized leaders) will have to give an account of their stewardship in their overseeing of the whole flock, but each of will have to give an account of our 'overseeing' of our brother. Am I my brother's keeper or is that the elders' job?

Now look at this for the link between 'rule' and 'service'. Adam was given 'dominion' - 'rule' for all the creation but look how that plays out in the scripture..

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ESV That word 'work' is translated in various ways by different translators. The NASB has 'cultivate' and the RSV has 'till'. The KJV has 'dress'. But Young's Literal translation has another word...

And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, **to serve it**, and to keep it. Youngs Literal

Why has Young's changed the whole picture? Simply because the word (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsh5647&tKJV>) Strong's H5647 - 'abad is the ordinary Hebrew word for 'serve'. The KJV translates 'abad' as follows... AV — serve 227, do 15, till 9, servant 5, work 5, worshippers 5, service 4, dress 2, labour 2, ear 2, misc 14. The word, according to the BlueLetter website is used 290 times. The real sense of the word is 'to serve'. This is God's version of an eco-friendly humanity. Man was placed, great word, into the garden in Eden in order to 'serve and guard'. That could almost be a definition of 'eldership'.. someone who is placed in a specific position/role in order to 'serve and guard'; you may notice the conspicuous absence of the word 'rule'. We have to re-educate ourselves as to what God originally meant by rule... he meant have delegated authority to serve and to guard.

Others may serve and others may guard but the specifically delegated responsibility for this in the local church is the eldership.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/8 6:35

Quote:
-----RobertW on 2009/1/7 23:16:07
OK. Now I'm coming off the rails a bit in my understanding. What then is the difference between elder and pastor/teacher? I always thought pastor and shepherd were the same?

Are we talking verbs or nouns? :-D

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/8 7:12

Quote:
-----Are we talking verbs or nouns?

I suppose both. :-? I can see how the elder has the task of oversight. But I also thought that pastor/shepherd had the task of oversight also. Are these basically the same function- only one is local and the other itinerate? Is it proper to think of pastor/teacher as shepherd?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/8 7:27

Quote:
-----Ron's: Man was placed, great word, into the garden in Eden in order to 'serve and guard'.

This is quite a link. If we play this out then we find that Adam failed in his eldership by allowing Sin to enter. This may also give us a picture into what our accounting will someday look like. God called for Adam and began to question him with questions as *if* He didn't already know the answers.

So the elders job primarily and that which Adam failed at is to keep Sin and Satan out or at least seek to prevent his infectious influence. I immediately think of I Cor. when the man was taken in the great sin of fornication. It seems that Paul reprimanded them for not putting him out; hence, for not protecting the local church from the little leaven that could have leavened the whole lump. He said they were puffed up.

Now, it seems to me that the elders (I suppose with the consent of the assembly) would have had the responsibility to deal with the man with 'sufficient punishment' that brought him to repentance while at the same time protecting the local church. I think now of the 7 churches when Jesus reprimanded them for 'suffering' people to do things that could injure the church.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/8 8:53

Quote:

RobertW wrote:
Quote:
-----Are we talking verbs or nouns?

I suppose both. :-? I can see how the elder has the task of oversight. But I also thought that pastor/shepherd had the task of oversight also. Are these basically the same function- only one is local and the other itinerate? Is it proper to think of pastor/teacher as shepherd? The names are all interchangeable applying to the one office of Elder.

Pastor and Shepherd are two ways of translating into English the one Greek word. They are both the same as I understand it.

Elder is the name given to describe the type of person (and maybe the office) and Pastor/shepherd is the name given to describe what they do. Therefore an Elder is (or should be) a Pastor/Shepherd and an overseer.

Do you agree Ron?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/8 11:42

Quote:
-----Heydave on 2009/1/8 10:53:08
Elder is the name given to describe the type of person (and maybe the office) and Pastor/shepherd is the name given to describe what they do. Therefore an Elder is (or should be) a Pastor/Shepherd and an overseer.

Do you agree Ron?

Let me re-shape it... elders should shepherd and oversee the flock. The responsibility does not lie with the 'resident pastor' in this sense. I don't think that 'pastor/shepherd' was ever the NAME that was given to anyone, only a description.

When we read that 'Paul, called an apostle' it does not mean that they addressed him as Apostle Paul. (any more than when it says 'the Corinthians were called saints' means Saint Dave or, perish the thought, Saint Ron!!) These are descriptions not titles.

I think this may be slow going for some but I think it is important that we take our time to make sure we are understanding what we are all saying. When we are sure what we are saying we can decide whether or not we agree with it! ;-)

The normal means of addressing Paul seems to have been ...'our beloved brother, Paul'. See how frequently this form of 'address' is used in the New Testament (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=beloved+AND+brother&tKJV&sf4>) here.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/8 11:52

Quote:
-----RobertW on 2009/1/8 9:27:42
So the elders' job primarily and that which Adam failed at is to keep Sin and Satan out or at least seek to prevent his infectious influence.

Adam's job was positive and negative, constructive and destructive. The role cannot focus on just the inward or just the outward.

Quote:
-----I immediately think of I Cor. when the man was taken in the great sin of fornication. It seems that Paul reprimanded them for not putting him out; hence, for not protecting the local church from the little leaven that could have leavened the whole lump. He said they were puffed up.

Now, it seems to me that the elders (I suppose with the consent of the assembly) would have had the responsibility to deal with the man with 'sufficient punishment' that brought him to repentance while at the same time protecting the local church.

It is interesting, if we remember how Corinthians is addressed, that Paul holds the 'saints' responsible for this situation. The 'punishment', if 2 Cor is speaking about the same situation, was imposed not by the 'elders' but by (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b2Cr&c2&v6&tKJV#vrsn/6>) the majority. It seems it was the church who implemented Paul's direction. I am sure the elders played a role in counsel and guidance but the 'responsibility' is not left with

them.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/8 11:57

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2009/1/8 9:12:58

Quote:

-----I suppose both. I can see how the elder has the task of oversight. But I also thought that pastor/shepherd had the task of oversight also. Are these basically the same function- only one is local and the other itinerate? Is it proper to think of pastor/teacher as shepherd?

Please see my reply to Dave on essentially this same issue. Pastor is the Latin and Shepherd is the English. These are just two words to express the Greek word for someone who has care of a flock.

We struggle, I think, because we automatically think of 'pastor' as some kind of 'office' or 'title'; it isn't it is a description of behaviour and, perhaps more importantly, character.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/8 12:44

Quote:

-----These are just two words to express the Greek word for someone who has care of a flock.

Would it be correct to say the difference between elder and pastor/teacher is that one exists in the local church and the other is itinerate?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/8 14:02

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2009/1/8 14:44:11

Would it be correct to say the difference between elder and pastor/teacher is that one exists in the local church and the other is itinerate?

The elder does function as a specific authority in the local church. The pastor/teacher is a gift to many churches and may function in a local church and in a wider capacity. The elder has specific responsibility for the whole local church in which he serves. They have different areas of responsibility and function. These areas of responsibility can intersect.

When the 'pastor/teacher' functions in a local church I would see that function as being subject to the local eldership and not in any sense 'over' them.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/8 14:28

Quote:

-----...I would see that function as being subject to the local eldership and not in any sense 'over' them.

Certainly. Are there biblical examples of apostles and prophets also being subject to elders?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/8 14:37

Quote:

-----RobertW on 2009/1/8 16:28:02

Certainly. Are there biblical examples of apostles and prophets also being subject to elders?

Not that I know of.

When we try to understand things like this we are really creating a scenario and then asking if it fits the data. If we examine the scenario that most of us are familiar with and ask the question.. 'does this fit the New Testament data?' The answer would have to be 'no'. We are creating a best-fit hypothesis.

I am not sure that we have any biblical data for apostles/prophets and elders functioning in the same meeting. This has caused modernists to conjecture that there are two opposing models for local church in the New Testament. They claim that Paul favoured the 'charismatic' view whereas Peter and James favoured the more traditional synagogue pattern.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/8 18:02

I have been thinking about the mention in Acts 15 of "the apostles and elders."

"...They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question" (Acts 15.2).

They (the apostles and elders) are spoken of together like this in a few verses: 15.2,4,6,22,23, and 16.4.

I've been thinking about this for a few days, just wondering why it doesn't read that they went up "to the elders."

Because Peter the apostle considered himself an elder (1 Pt. 5.1).

Why then say, the apostles and elders?

But then I realized I had my wires crossed in my thinking. I should have been questioning why it didn't just read that Paul and Barnabas went up "to the apostles" about this question.

No, they went up to Jerusalem to "the apostles and elders..." showing us, I believe, the weighty place the elders had in the early church.

We do not read of a separate council of the apostles as a sort of governing body. Or of the prophets. The apostles at Jerusalem were among the elders. Once again, this reveals to us the total absence of the hierarchy kind of structure that is so written in stone in our day.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/8 18:21

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Now look at this for the link between 'rule' and 'service'. Adam was given 'dominion' - 'rule' for all the creation but look how that plays out in the scripture..

And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, **to serve it**, and to keep it. Youngs Literal

Man was placed, great word, into the garden in Eden in order to 'serve and guard'. That could almost be a definition of 'eldership'.. someone who is placed in a specific position/role in order to 'serve and guard'; you may notice the conspicuous absence of the word 'rule'. We have to re-educate ourselves as to what God originally meant by rule... he meant have delegated authority to serve and to guard.

Others may serve and others may guard but the specifically delegated responsibility for this in the local church is the eldership.

This is a precious insight.

We, the church, are God's new creation. God's garden. "God's husbandry" (1 Cor. 3.9).

And he gives "some," who are themselves part of the Garden, a "dominion" which is expressed in their serving the other plants in the Garden. They till, plant, water... do some weeding from time to time. But God giveth the increase.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/9 5:18

Quote:
-----ADisciple on 2009/1/8 20:02:34
We do not read of a separate council of the apostles as a sort of governing body. Or of the prophets. The apostles at Jerusalem were among the elders. Once again, this reveals to us the total absence of the hierarchy kind of structure that is so written in stone in our day.

Good observation. Thanks.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/9 7:11

Quote:
-----Ron's: And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, to serve it, and to keep it. Youngs Literal

What is the scope of the responsibility of the elder? Is their responsibility mainly in the meeting, or do they visit the 'lost sheep' and the sick, etc.? How does that play out typically? Or is that considered the responsibility of everyone therefore the elders have not special emphasis there?

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/9 7:28

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

What is the scope of the responsibility of the elder? Is their responsibility mainly in the meeting, or do they visit the 'lost sheep' and the sick, etc.? How does that play out typically? Or is that considered the responsibility of everyone therefore the elders have not special emphasis there?

Can I add to this question and ask how much leading and direction should Elders have over the flock in their Shepherding and oversight?

To what degree should they correct error (false doctrine) and sin among the local church which they are responsible for? Looking at some of the Epistles it would seem this is an important function, but when to step in and rebuke; warn, correct and when to hold back can be a difficult decision I think.

Are Elders responsible to give or confirm 'corporate' direction and 'vision' to their local church?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/9 10:48

Let's widen it before we narrow it.

Those who are genuinely regenerate begin to partake of the divine nature. Every true son will carry the genes of his father. Christ is variously referred to as pastor, overseer: Peter calls him the pastor and overseer 1 Pet 2:25. This itself should show us that the two terms are not exact synonyms. He is also, in Hebrews 3:1 he is referred to as the apostle. He is also the prophet that Moses promised and is the embodiment of the Good News or evangel.

If Christ is in each of us would you not expect aspects of those characteristics to be present in all the saints? In essence every saint has aspects of apostle, prophet, shepherd, overseer... What we are seeing in the descriptions 'apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher' are degrees of these aspects which have come to characterize the holders. They are not labels or job designations to be inserted into an org chart but mature expressions of the character of Christ himself which are now describable in those terms. This is not a hierarchy or org chart.

So all saints have a measure of responsibility in terms of the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic and pastoral. All have a measure of responsibility in terms of caring for the saints and watching over them.

Elders only have the authority that is given to them by those for whom they care. If I do not give a man my trust he cannot serve me as a leader. Hence the admonition in Heb 13:17 "trust your leaders and submit yourself to them for they watch for souls as those who must give account..." Eldership cannot be imposed.

Quote:
-----Heydave on 2009/1/9 9:28:10
Looking at some of the Epistles it would seem this is an important function, but when to step in and rebuke; warn, correct and when to hold back can be a difficult decision I think.

I think you are thinking primarily about Timothy and Titus? These are two fascinating men. They have no titles. They were certainly NOT 'pastors' as so many presume. They are apostolic delegates. They are carrying Paul's authority in churches in which he has had a foundational input.

I think I have said previously that I see the eldership, as a body of oversight, as having a veto in the local church. As regards...

Quote:
-----how much leading and direction should Elders have over the flock in their Shepherding and oversight?

can you see that tell-tale 'over the flock' in that question? ;-)

As the elders too are partakers of Christ and his nature they are not less responsible than any others for seeking the mind of Christ in the local church. As 'older brothers' they will 'lead by example' in shepherding and oversight but not exclusively so. They, alone, will be required to give an account for the well being of the whole local assembly. Consequently there will be times when their decisive counsel will be necessary but not as those who are required, by job definition, to 'have the vision for the church'. Oh, Lord, where did this language come from. It preshapes so much of our thinking.

In terms of discipline they will often be required to take a lead in such matters but not in any domineering pattern.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/9 11:41

Quote:

philologos wrote:
quote
Quote:
----- can you see that tell-tale 'over the flock' in that question? ;-)

Maybe a bad choice of word. Not intentional and I agree the thinking should not be about 'being over', but serving.

1 Peter 5 does say 'Shepherd the flock of God which is among you'. So you are right to make a point about it.

philologos wrote:

quote: 'have the vision for the church'. Oh, Lord, where did this language come from. It preshapes so much of our thinking'.

I deliberately used this term, not because I think it is right, but as this is a very typical way of thinking in many churches.

However what is meant by 'vision' can vary widely. Jesus has a 'vision' for His church (a glorious bride). You have a 'vision' for how a church should function. So having a vision can mean just how you see things. What I am asking is who is responsible (if anyone) for communicating and implementing how a local church should function and operate.

I think your answer will be 'everyone'.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/9 12:17

Heydave on 2009/1/9 13:41:23

Quote:

-----You have a 'vision' for how a church should function.

I am not sure that I do. I have a revelation. The problem about visions is that people try to implement them and that start the methodologies. When people speak about 'vision' they generally mean an objective.

Quote:

-----What I am asking is who is responsible (if anyone) for communicating and implementing how a local church should function and operate. I think your answer will be 'everyone'.

Who is responsible for seeing the revelation? A revelation needs to be revealed and only God can do that. The person who has the revelation has the responsibility for communicating it. But he will need real wisdom and discretion in the way he goes about it. If he is not part of the accepted/recognized leadership he will need even more wisdom and discretion.

I am sorry if I am frustrating you. :-(

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/9 13:04

Quote:

philologos wrote:

I am trying to distinguish, but not necessarily separate, roles and function. We, and the KJV, is dominated by the idea of 'offices'. This was partly due to the political agenda behind the KJV (which is still my Bible of choice!!).

Excuse me for backtracking here, but I recall reading somewhere about "the political agenda behind the KJV," but can't remember where.

Was it somewhere on this site? Or even on this thread?

Will someone please direct me to where I can look at this again?

And also give me, if possible, the instances in the KJV where this agenda is revealed?

(Hopefully nobody will take this as their cue to get into a KJV debate here. It is still my Bible of choice, too.)

Many thanks.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/9 14:09

Quote:

philologos wrote:

What we are seeing in the descriptions 'apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher' are degrees of these aspects which have come to characterize the holders. They are not labels or job designations to be inserted into an org chart but mature expressions of the character of Christ himself which are not describable in those terms. This is not a hierarchy or org chart.

I have been thinking of something that for lack of a better word I will call "among-ness."

Or maybe "in-the-midst-ness."

"...All the flock among which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers..."

"The elders which are among you..."

"Feed the flock of God which is among you..."

"...In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain..."

"I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee" (Ps. 22.22).

What I mean is that when the saints are gathered together, you don't have all the elders, or all the ministries, up there at the front on the stage as a special, separate group. They are in the midst of the congregation...

I think this cuts to the quick, or at least ought to, the artificial clergy/laity distinction so prevalent in our day, a hierarchy that cannot be justified by Scripture.

How long, Lord?

...Why are things the way they are in the church?

Better ask, why were they the way they were in the early church? What precedent did they have to go by?

None, really. But they became a precedent because the One who was on the Throne of Heaven was also in their midst by the Holy Spirit, ruling, reigning, ordering all things.

That's why they gathered the way they did. That's why they had the kind of order they did.

It was centred on Christ in their midst, with His Law governing all things: the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

They recognized-- and had the capacity to recognize-- that it was not the pastor up front, but Christ Himself, who was "the minister of the sanctuary" in their midst.

All eyes were upon Him, as He would move in their midst, in this one, in that one, speaking a word, singing a song, giving a teaching, sharing a revelation, comforting a hurting one, healing a sick one... edifying the body of Christ unto God's ultimate objective.

I know we can't manufacture this, just because we begin to see the right order.

But if we recognize how far short of it we have fallen, how far from it we have strayed, we can repent (if we have the courage to do so) and turn to Him again.

God told Ezekiel to "shew the house to the house of Israel that they may be ashamed of their iniquities..." (Ez. 43.10).

"And if they be ashamed..." ...He would then do what only He Himself can do, in enabling all this to come into being.

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/9 20:27

Quote:
-----ADisciple's: But if we recognize how far short of it we have fallen, how far from it we have strayed, we can repent (if we have the courage to do so) and turn to Him again.

I think this would be the ideal thing, but there is so much riding on a genuine change that many are stumbling. It goes back to Ron's statement about a revelation requiring wisdom to present. This type of church life will require tremendous wisdom from God to see through.

But I think that the current system of the people up front leading and the people in the pew following is not working any more. It will take time for this to be admitted by many. But surely when things reach a crisis level it is time to seek the Lord for plain direction.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/9 21:22

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

This type of church life will require tremendous wisdom from God to see through.

But I think that the current system of the people up front leading and the people in the pew following is not working any more. It will take time for this to be admitted by many. But surely when things reach a crisis level it is time to seek the Lord for plain direction.

Amen, Robert. I feel so blind these days. I've never felt a deeper need than now, for that spiritual illumination called Wisdom.

"Surely when things reach a crisis level it is time to seek the Lord for plain direction."

Amen. And this is just where we are at. We deeply need to hear "a word behind us (maybe because we've been going the wrong direction?) ...saying, "This is the way: walk ye in it..." (Isa. 30.21)...and discover that word to be a word that does more than just point out to us the right direction, but a "word of His grace" that empowers us to walk in it.

(Edited for clarity and to correct quotation from Isa. 30.21)

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/10 4:54

with reference to an earlier post I was reading in Deuteronomy today and noticed this combination of roles and functions...

Â‘Ye are standing to-day, all of you, before Jehovah your God Â— your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your authorities Â— every man of Israel;
2 and Joshua calleth for all Israel, for its elders, and for its heads, and for its judges, and for its authorities, and saith unto them, Â‘I have become old; I have entered into days;
1 And Joshua gathereth all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and calleth for the elders of Israel, and for its heads, and for its judges, and for its authorities, and they station themselves before God. Deut 29:10; Josh 23:2; 24:1 YNG

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/10 7:12

I noticed that in Titus there is a link between elder and bishop. Maybe you already covered this and I missed it. But it seems in Titus that the term elder is being used synonymously with bishop:

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; (Titus 1)

Paul seems to be calling an elder a bishop. I also noticed that they had 'ordained' elders in every church:

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. (Acts 14)

I notice also here that Paul did not yet commend them to the Word of His Grace, but just to the Lord.

I noticed also that the term bishop has a root that means to 'visit'. I found a familiar verse with that root...

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

So what is the distinction between an elder and a bishop? Why did Paul ordain elders? Would this be an apostolic prerogative?

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/10 9:19

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

I noticed that in Titus there is a link between elder and bishop. Maybe you already covered this and I missed it. But it seems in Titus that the term elder is being used synonymously with bishop:

A quick response Robert. Yes this was covered earlier by Ron and I think myself.

Bishop and overseer are the same word and we established that an Elder should 'function' as an overseer (or bishop), i.e. he should oversee the church. Interestingly it says 'a bishop must...'. Which shows that sometimes the word is used as a sort of label (I suppose a bit like the Holy Spirit is called 'The Helper' in the gospel of John, but this is descriptive of His function), but yes an elder and bishop are one and the same thing.

So maybe we cannot forbid the use of the name of bishop or pastor, as long as we understand it really is descriptive of function and not a title of position. The problem is that these titles are so fixed in our minds in the wrong way that when applied to a person we easily fall back into the established structure of church leadership thinking.

Re: The erroneous Bishop..., on: 2009/1/10 13:14

The entire model of Nicolaitan, or Clergy Laity heresies, derives its power from a "Priest Class", or "Clergy Class", or, as it is in Western churches, the "Pastor, or Ministry Class of Christian brotherhood. It, in my opinion, has done more to divide the Church, and to quench God's spirit than **any other heresy ever**.

Bishop is translated from Episkopos, which occurs 5 times in the testament.. It means Shepherd, and yes, as a shepherd oversees, Overseer.

This was always a plural and mutually equal and submitted position...Always; and unpaid, unprofessional one. Hirelings, which are prolific today, were unheard of and rejected then, as was any who usurped the "Preeminence." There were no Bishops, just a locally appointed company of Shepherds. Elders and Pastors were the same; just another outdated word that the English dubbed upon the many Sheep herders in the country side. They are still called shepherds today.

From the beginning, the Devil drove the stake that he knew would divide the church, and destroy the body. Ignatius, the heretic, in the first century, demanded complete submission to this office, as unto God Himself.

"Plainly therefore we ought to regard the Bishop as the "Lord Himself."
and...

"As the Lord presbyters."

source wikipedia

"Bishop"

The Scottish Covenanters fought a War, with King James 1, in 1539 and 1540, over unlawful assembly, outside the "LORD BISHOPS" dictate of the Church of England. This was called the "Bishop Wars". Authority in the Church meant power, privilege, and prestige, as it does today. How many times have you heard a man call the flock, "My Church!" It was never meant to be so. These are paid professionals, and when the money and benefits blow away, so will they.

Shepherds, equal and plural, were always the leadership model, not the singular and ambitious "minister" that has hijacked the meetings as the center and controlling figure in church activities. This was always reserved for the Lord Jesus alone, and the body was always equal, to the very least of the Church. John, in the one instance we have, confronted the usurper who "Loved the Preeminence". Sound familiar?

The Meeting always followed the Community, not the other way around, and the shepherds were right in the middle of the daily body life...FIRST...and as an equal counsel...not singular and all encompassing, as it is today.

1 FEED the CHURCH OF GOD!

2 PROTECT THE CHURCH OF GOD.

3 INSURE THAT JESUS IS LORD OVER HIS BODY, AND HIS HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT QUENCHED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

These are the duties of the shepherd, under the guidance and spirit of Psalm 23.

The Lords of the Gentiles are called benefactors, "BUT IT SHALL NOT SO BE NAMED AMONG YOU."

"FOR YOU ARE ALL BROTHERS, AND HAVE EVEN ONE LORD, EVEN CHRIST..."

Jesus's last words to his disciples before the Cross and his death and suffering.

The spirit of the word Bishop is distasteful to the Lord...it is erroneous.

historical sources;

Wikipedia...."Bishop"

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/10 13:16

Quote:
-----RobertW on 2009/1/10 9:12:53
I noticed that in Titus there is a link between elder and bishop. Maybe you already covered this and I missed it. But it seems in Titus that the term elder is being used synonymously with bishop:

I don't think we have mentioned it but 'yes' we are talking about the same people.

The 'same' man is an elder, that's who he is...
the 'same' man is an overseer, that's what he does.

Quote:

I noticed also that the term bishop has a root that means to 'visit'. I found a familiar verse with that root...

It's really the other way around. The Greek word for 'visit' is derived from the word to 'watch-over' or 'oversee'.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/10 13:22

Quote:
-----Heydave on 2009/1/10 11:19:05
Which shows that sometimes the word is used as a sort of label

It is used as an identifier and in that sense it is a label. but it is not a title and there is no record of anyone being called 'Elder Peter' or 'Apostle Paul' OR 'Pastor John'.

Quote:
-----So maybe we cannot forbid the use of the name of bishop or pastor, as long as we understand it really is descriptive of function and not a title of position.

I am not 'forbidding' the use of the term 'pastor' or 'elder'. It is biblical, or even 'elder'.. Peter called himself a 'co-elder' so does John.

Here is some more grist for your mill... Judas was an overseer!
Acts 1:20

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/10 13:34

Quote:
-----Brothertom on 2009/1/10 15:14:46
Bishop is translated from Episkopos, which occurs 5 times in the testament.. It means Shepherd, and yes, as a shepherd oversees, Overseer.

Bishop does not MEAN shepherd. Bishop in the KJV means Overseer. All the elders in Acts 20:28 are required to 'shepherd' the flock.

Quote:
-----Shepherds, equal and plural, were always the leadership model,

It is 'elders' which is always in the plural except for the passages in 1 Tim and Titus. We have no record of anyone in the NT who is called 'shepherd' 'pastor' other than Christ himself.

Quote:
-----The Scottish Covenanters fought a War, with King James 1, in 1539 and 1540, over unlawful assembly, outside the "LORD BISHOPS" dictate of the Church of England. This was called the "Bishop Wars".

The Bishops' Wars was really the first round of our civil war which took place in 1642. I think you have some dates wrong here. James 1 did not come to the throne of England until 1603. This article in (<http://www.british-civil-wars.co.uk/military/bishops-wars.htm>) Bishops Wars will put you in the picture.

Re: Bishops in every local assembly..., on: 2009/1/10 17:45

It was Charles not James in the bishop wars. Thanks for the date correction. However, Bishop and overseer are interchangeable. They have the same meaning and same function, stemming from the same word. My point is and was; There is no preeminence; either by Pastor, by overseer, or by bishop. They are exactly the same in title, and in function. anything other than this is Catholic, and nicolaitan, and destroys the brotherhood, as it always has.

Because the English chose the now archaic word Elder, to translate this word is irrelevant. You could call them the assembly of bishops in Acts 20, or overseers, or elders, if you so desired. My point is that preeminence did not exist among any of that ordained company. They were all equal. The Catholic power brokers introduced that, which the Anglicans and others maintained to dominate.

Ambitious men who desired it were rebuked, and the body was one. The community precedes the meeting, and this removes the sting out of those who make a living off of the back of the church, even those who exercise their superior education over the least of the brethren, and the simple, to gain oversight, control and a paid position.

These shepherds were always submitted, unpaid and unprofessional, equal, and brothers first. There is no hierarchy in any of the church in function, or in title, in that the shepherds served...and had equal oversight to Feed, protect, and see Jesus as Lord over the least. Their primary function was to see that the Holy Spirit was not quenched, and that the spirit of Psalms 23 prevailed over the least of the brethren, and throughout all of the church entrusted to them.

Brotherhood

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/11 9:30

Quote:

-----Brotherhood on 2009/1/10 19:45:16

Bishop and overseer are interchangeable. They have the same meaning and same function, stemming from the same word.

They ARE the same word originally. They are two different English translations for the same Greek word 'episkopos'. epi upon or over skopos as in 'teleSCOPE' and microSCOPE' seeing.

Quote:

-----There is no preeminence; either by Pastor, by overseer, or by bishop. They are exactly the same in title, and in function.

I don't believe they ARE the same, not all three. the elder oversees the flock and shepherds them but the word PASTOR is not directly applied to any elder; they have all the shared responsibility of 'shepherding' but no individual is 'the shepherd/pastor' of that flock. The pastor-teacher of Ephesians, I believe, had a different role and, I suggest, was itinerant.

Quote:

----- My point is that preeminence did not exist among any of that ordained company. They were all equal.

I agree that there was no preeminence but I am cautious about using the word 'equal' in that no two people are 'equal' in gift or character. I suspect that in every group you will have individuals who are more mature than the others in some areas of spiritual life.

In our own local church we have four elders but no leader. At different points in the church life individual men will take responsibility for some aspect of that church life but they are not designated to a particular authority. None of these men has a paid position in the church. There is, as you say, no hierarchy in this relationship.

Re: The Didache and the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/11 10:10

Another very early document from the end of the 1st century is the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians. You can find a translation of it (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/polycarp-lake.html>) here.

It is not scripture but gives a very clear idea of the moods of the saints around the time of the death of the apostle John. I know that everyone won't have the desire to do this but to compare this letter and the 1st letter of Clement to the Corinthians and then to compare them with the writing of Ignatius and the document known as 'the martyrdom of Polycarp' is very enlightening.

In the writings of Polycarp and Clement you will find no hint of hierarchy but when you move just a few years later and read the letters of Ignatious and others the difference is quite amazing. It is astonishing just how quickly things moved towards hierarchy after the end of the 1st century.

If you read the writings of Ignatious you will see how hard he works to convince people to recognize a single 'bishop' and to allow him to be the 'priest' of the gathering. He is working hard because he was selling a line which people were resisting, in my view.

Polycarp had known John the apostle and there is a tenderness and total lack of hierarchy which is wonderful to note. Polycarp and Clement are writing in the genuine spirit of the New Testament but Ignatious and the author of the martyrdom of Polycarp are a world away from the New Testament.

Here are a couple of paragraphs from Polycarp. In the second passage he sorrows over a presbyter who has become covetous.

CHAPTER 6

1 And let the presbyters also be compassionate, merciful to all, bringing back those that have wandered, caring for all the weak, neglecting neither widow nor orphan nor poor, but "ever providing for that which is good before God and man," refraining from all wrath, respect of persons, unjust judgment, being far from all love of money, not quickly believing evil of any, not hasty in judgment, knowing that "we all owe the debt of sin."

2 If then we pray the Lord to forgive us, we also ought to forgive, for we stand before the eyes of the Lord and of God, and "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and each must give an account of himself."

3 So then "let us serve him with fear and all reverence," as he himself commanded us, and as did the Apostles, who brought us the Gospel, and the Prophets who foretold the coming of our Lord. Let us be zealous for good, refraining from offence, and from the false brethren, and from those who bear the name of the Lord in hypocrisy, who deceive empty-minded men.

and this is the section which refers to the avaricious elder...

CHAPTER 11

1 I am deeply sorry for Valens, who was once made a presbyter among you, that he so little understands the place which was given to him. I advise, therefore, that you keep from avarice, and be pure and truthful. Keep yourselves from all evil.

2 For how may he who cannot attain self-control in these matters enjoin it on another? If any man does not abstain from avarice he will be defiled by idolatry, and shall be judged as if he were among the Gentiles who "know not the judgment of God." Or do we "not know that the saints shall judge the world?" as Paul teaches.

3 But I have neither perceived nor heard any such thing among you, among whom the blessed Paul laboured, who are praised in the beginning of his Epistle. For concerning you he boasts in all the Churches who then alone had known the Lord, for we had not yet known him.

4 Therefore, brethren, I am deeply sorry for him and for his wife, and "may the Lord grant them true repentance." Therefore be yourselves also moderate in this matter, and "do not regard such men as enemies," but call them back as fallible and straying members, that you may make whole the body of you all. For in doing this you edify yourselves.

Re: Polycarp, on: 2009/1/11 10:40

Philo: OH! for 10 men like him Polycarp today! We would take the world in 3 years.

Thank you so much. This displays the elders heart; the true shepherds.

We are in agreement concerning the equality issue. There are differences in calling and anointing. Paul set PETER straight! Who would have thought this possible a few years before?

Who could have stood but Paul? In the face of Satan himself, and all of Hell's might...he prevailed. We are his testimony.

Maybe equality in the sense that I am not over you, or anyone. Maybe equality unto the least of the brethren, or any blood washed saint on the Earth. I am not speaking about anointing, but the unclean and ambitious desire to ascend....to be preeminent...to be the chief.

I am against the professional for this reason, and the one man show. I am against wearing suits up front, as a method to prove your ministerial worth, or position. To me, it is as silly as greeting your wife and children at the breakfast table in a three piece suit to prove your love and position as the head of the house. I am against the Tithe, as a means to "run the show", and to supply the clergy....for the clergy and the saved leper are the same to me. "Not for filthy lucre!"...as Peter and Polycarp both stood for.

...AND STRENGTH...

The good shepherd lays his life down for his brothers, the sheep of God. He is their great reward.

Tom

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/11 11:44

I, too, appreciated this excerpt from Polycarp.
Thanks.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/11 11:56

Quote:

Brothertom wrote:

The entire model of Nicolaitan, or Clergy Laity heresies, derives its power from a "Priest Class", or "Clergy Class", or, as it is in Western churches, the "Pastor, or Ministry Class of Christian brotherhood. It, in my opinion, has done more to divide the Church, and to quench God's spirit than **any other heresy ever**.

Hi Tom. Through the years I've heard the term Nicolaitan used to refer to the artificial clergy/laity distinction, and myself have used it that way.

But is this actually what the Lord was referring to when using the word (in Rev. 2.6 and 2.15)?

I share your passion about this, I believe the clergy/laity division is responsible for the stunted condition of large number s of Chrsitians. But I am wondering if this is actually what Nicolaitan refers to.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/11 12:35

Quote:

philologos wrote:
Here is some more grist for your mill... Judas was an overseer!
Acts 1:20

...Or rather, an anti-overseer?

But actually, becoming an overseer was something which was there for him just potentially. When the Lord chose him (Jn. 6.70), he was not initially an overseer. He could have become one if he had walked faithfully. If he had been proven , and approved.

The "bishopruck" that was designated to be his was given to another because Judas disqualified himself, and "by transgression fell" (Acts 1.25).

AD

Re: Nicolatians - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/11 14:39

Quote:
-----I share your passion about this, I believe the clergy/laity division is responsible for the stunted condition of large numbers of Chrsitia ns. But I am wondering if this is actually what Nicolaitan refers to.

I too had been told that this reference to the Nocolatians was to do with the clergy / laity devide, but have also heard that it probably refers to the group that followed the teachings of one Nicolas who was a Gnostic. Hence the error of the Nicol atians is Gnosticism, which seems to tie in with Johns epistles dealing with this issue.

i. Irenaeus (writing in the late second century) described what he knew of the Nicolaitans: Â“The Nicolaitanes are the foll owers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrest rained indulgence. The character of these men is plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrifice to idols.Â” (Against Heresies, book 1, chapter 26. F rom the Ante Nicean Fathers Volume 1, page 352)

ii. Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus (writing in the early third century) associated the Nicolaitans with the Gnostics: Â“Th ere are, however, among the Gnostics diversities of opinion . . . But Nicolaus has been a cause of the wide-spread comb ination of these wicked men. departed from correct doctrine, and was in the habit of inculcating indifference of both life and food.Â” (Refutation of all Heresies, book 7, chapter 24; ANF volume 5, page 115)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/12 5:19

Quote:
-----The "bishopricks" that were designated to be his were given to another because Judas disqualified himself, and "by transgression fell" (Acts 1.25).

True, I was actually wanting to introduce the idea that the original apostles were given 'oversight'. If oversight is the function of an elder there is a sense in which the 12 were 'elders'. When they became more mobile and losses came through persecution others may have been added to the 'eldership' particularly resident in Jerusalem.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/12 5:32

Quote:
-----I too had been told that this reference to the Nicolaitans was to do with the clergy / laity divide, but have also heard that it probably refers to the group that followed the teachings of one Nicolas who was a Gnostic.

The idea that Nicolaitans has reference to the clergy / laity divide almost certainly comes from the early Brethren. They came to this conclusion by looking at the word's etymology.

niko (as in Nike) overcomer or conquerer
laos, people as in laity.

They concluded that we had the beginning of 'people conquerors' or clergy. I would take Irenaeus with a 'pinch of salt' here. There is no evidence as to where he gathered his information. As far as I can see he is wrong when he concludes that the Revelation says they 'practise adultery and eat things sacrificed to idols'.

Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Rev 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

I think the natural reading of this passage is pointing to two groups,

1. those who held the doctrine of Balaam (the libertines)
2. those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans

So, in fact, we have no Biblical data to identify just what the Nicolaitans did (Rev 2:6) and taught (Rev 2:15)

These Nicolaitans seemed to have had both a distinctive behaviour and doctrine. We have no real evidence as to either.

Hippolytus is probably just quoting his teacher, Irenaeus.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/12 7:38

To combine a couple of issues, how can the word of His grace come forth in an environment where a heavy handed leadership is ruling the people? What advice would you give to those that are caught in a one church pastor system- but yet desire to hear the word of His grace in that church? In your experience can you tell of any examples where the one pastor system was not a hindrance to hearing from God?

Re: Nicolaitans - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/12 9:43

I agree with you that we have no definitive biblical data to know what or who the Nicolaitans were.:-) I am not being dogmatic, but just wanted to show there were alternative thoughts on this and the often accepted view of the clergy / laity may not be necessarily correct.

As a point of interest, Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple of John. I know that does not mean that we accept his opinion as fact, but it makes you wonder if this was passed down to him via Polycarp, via John?

The 'So' at the start of v15 could be read as a link with what was said in v14. so = thus = 'in the same way'.. etc...

Polycarp and Irenaeus are quoted as being Bishops (of Smyrna and of Lyons), but I don't know if this is something that has been put on them by historians or if they were called this at the time. maybe you have some light on this.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/12 10:38

Quote:
-----Heydave on 2009/1/12 11:43:52
Polycarp and Irenaeus are quoted as being Bishops (of Smyrna and of Lyons), but I don't know if this is something that has been put on them by historians or if they were called this at the time. maybe you have some light on this.

I am sure they WERE bishops/overseers but what kind of bishop. In some ways one of the most insidious threats is when people use the same word but have changed its content. eg born again.

Have you read any of Ignatius' letters? This is a man known to and respected by Polycarp and yet, reading between the lines, their letters show very different ways of looking at 'authority' in the church.

I have more confidence in Polycarp, Irenaeus and Clement of Rome than I have in Ignatius. To my reading Ignatius has a clear agenda. The interesting thing is that Polycarp recommended Ignatius' letters and copied them for others. I wonder what we can learn from this. Does this show the respect that elders had in one place for those in another? Does this show the variety of patterns of authority even at the turn of the 1st century?

Quote:
-----The 'So' at the start of v15 could be read as a link with what was said in v14. so = thus = 'in the same way'.. etc...

In fact, the Greek word used here (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg3779&tKJV>) houtos would fully support your view. I had not noticed that. Perhaps we do have a bit of data about those Nicolaitans after all. :-D

The church in Ephesus (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg3404&tKJV>) hated the behaviour of this group. The church in Pergamos actually had members who 'held this teaching'. This is not just the behaviour but a studied commitment to this as a teaching.

...and we think we have problems in some of our local assemblies?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/12 10:46

Quote:

Heydave wrote:
...it probably refers to the group that followed the teachings of one Nicolas

Yes, I've heard that theory. But I don't know Greek grammar well enough to be able to conclude that a follower of Nicolas would be called a Nicolaitan. Is that a correct Greek grammatical construct?

It kind of seems not, to my very uneducated surmisal. It seems followers of Nicolas would be called Nicolases, or Nicolians, or some such thing. Where did the "laitan" part come in?

I've heard of the etymology Philologos says likely came from the early brethren.

I guess there's no reference to this in the early fathers along the same etymological line?

AD

Re: Nico laitan, on: 2009/1/12 11:06

If you remove all historical references or speculation, and view the word , as spoken by the Lord Jesus in Heaven, through John....you have "Lords over my people", or "Kings over my people"...."rulers over my people."

This was the spirit of the Pharisee's, who loved honor, prestige, and power. This is the crew, the Professional clergy, that Jesus hated most, and confronted most, exposing their hypocrisy. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisee's!"

These are the people that also hated Jesus the most. The despised Him, and were chiefly responsible for his murder. . They were "of their father the devil." If this word wasn't compromised, to appear in it's current mystical form, we wouldn't be having this talk. Jesus hates those who would dominate and control His Bride for their own lusts and privilege.

Jesus's word is eternal. He did not single out one heretic...There was still an Apostolic remnant to do that. This was the seal on the Entire written testimony....the Bible. He hates the dominators, the controllers, the elite ...those above the common....the Pastor class...the clergy. ...HE HATES THEIR DEEDS AND THEIR TEACHINGS! As He did then, so He does today.

The priest class today resists this truth, that we are all of one body, no hirelings allowed, as much today as then. The church has become their livelihood, and their EGO. We need loving and mature shepherds who will feed, oversee, and maintain spirit led Peace to each member, and to the least. They are NOT paid.

The LORDS of the gentiles are called BENEFACTORS, but it shall not so be named among you."

It is a brotherhood, and the service is born out of a Love, not "Filthy lucre." The "Pastor class will be purged out of the pure and spotless Bride, sooner or later. I believe it has already begun.

Saying that, without holy , anointed shepherds who will lay down their lives as a loving brother; THE CHURCH WILL PERISH...if it were possible.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/12 11:51

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

To combine a couple of issues, how can the word of His grace come forth in an environment where a heavy handed leadership is ruling the people? What advice would you give to those that are caught in a one church pastor system- but yet desire to hear the word of His grace in that church? In your experience can you tell of any examples where the one pastor system was not a hindrance to hearing from God?

Hi Robert. Your question reminds me of what you said a couple of days ago about our need for Wisdom in this hour. We so deeply need that "illumination" in the Candlestick.

Meanwhile, I recall reading a book called Titanic Warning by Casey Sabella a few years ago. (You may remember when Titanic was discovered on the ocean floor not too many years ago, and produced a lot of renewed interest...)

Anyway, Sabella likens what he calls PCC's (pastor centred churches) to the Titanic. Very big. Very confident. Considered unsinkable.

And among iceflows.

Titanic had been warned of impending peril. The warnings were ignored.

But even when their own lookout spotted the massive iceberg looming right in front of them, how do you turn something that big? They tried at the last minute... but it was too late.

And this pastor-centred hierarchy kind of church system that the world more or less identifies as Christianity in our day... it is SO big.

So what advice would I give to someone caught in a "one church pastor system?"

Find a life jacket, and put it on.

I know, that wasn't your full question. "...And desire to hear the word of His grace in that church?"

"In that church." ...I understand the predicament. Where else do you go these days?

But maybe this can be done by getting into a "life-boat" with a few others who are desiring the same. Many PCC's have home cell groups that function vitally. And while this isn't ultimately the answer, it may be the thing that saves us in the impending disaster.

And when "mother ship" goes down, the life boats are still afloat. And we discover that God recognizes the little life boat as being true church in the first place. They don't need to be tied into a PCC to be valid. "For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst..."

So, by getting together with a few, and earnestly seeking to give room to the Spirit of the Lord to have His way, instead of just going through a canned Bible study program the church has prescribed for all the Wednesday evening cell groups... But waiting on Him, looking to Him, making room for Him and the word of His grace... giving room for one another to make mistakes, and grow in grace...

But there can be no substitute for earnestly seeking to draw close to God and develop that inner faculty of hearing, so we are hearing from God for ourselves.

So that, like the five wise virgins. They developed their own personal supply of Oil "in their vessels with their lamps."

Someone once told me that in Spanish, the 23rd psalm says something like, "Jehovah is my Pastor..." That must become a reality for all of us. Pastors included.

What are your own thoughts on this?

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/12 13:42

Quote:

If you remove all historical references or speculation, and view the word , as spoken by the Lord Jesus in Heaven, through John....you have "Lords over my people", or "Kings over my people"...."rulers over my people."

No, you don't. What you have is Nicolaitans. It is only a human speculation that the word is made up of nikE and laos. No more than if you found the word 'Bailey' and decided it meant a bay tree sheltered by the wind... bay and lee?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/12 13:53

Quote:
-----What are your own thoughts on this?

Well, I'm not convinced that the true hindrance to the word of His grace is *just* the pastors (one church pastor system). I think the greatest hindrance is the liturgy of going through a program from one step to the next with no real time of waiting on the Lord with an expectation that He will speak to the people. It is an unspoken rule that things are going to happen a certain way.

So if we were without pastors I don't think the problem would be fixed. I think education has to come first. We need to be educated as to what genuine church life is. Once we get going in that regard I can see how the one church pastor system will in time fade away. There is a severe shortage of pastors in our times and in 10 years the problem will be much worse. So I see things headed towards an 'elders' base local church out of necessity. I think pastor/teachers are in such short supply that they may also be necessity become itinerate

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/12 15:09

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

"Well, I'm not convinced that the true hindrance to the word of His grace is *just* the pastors (one church pastor system).

So if we were without pastors I don't think the problem would be fixed. I think education has to come first. We need to be educated as to what genuine church life is."

Once again we come to the problem of what comes into the mind when the word pastor is heard.

The word "pastor" has been hijacked in our day (like many other words in the English language) to mean something entirely alien to its original definition.

Pastor now means (as has been mentioned earlier on this thread) "man in charge," or CEO, or something like that. There's the "senior pastor," then various pastors of a lesser sort... music pastor, visitation pastor, pastor of community... I even heard "pastor of administration" being used. Then under them the elders, then under them the deacons...

And the underlying thought in it all is a hierarchy kind of thing.

So we are not advocating church "without pastors" (and neither are you, I know). It's what "pastor" has come to mean that is the hindrance, and must go.

Further to that, you are certainly right, that a routine is in place, and this as well hinders the liberty of the Spirit. There is a long established mindset as to what a "church service" is, and most churchgoers can tell you beforehand the shape things are going to take in "the service" on Sunday.

You say education has to come first. "We need to be educated as to what genuine church life is."

I think you are right. But then, as whenever in history the sheep of God's pasture were let in on what was rightly their own heritage in Jesus Christ, expect to see a revolution.

...Just one more thought. I think it's important to make clear that-- and I can't speak for others, but I can certainly make my own feelings clear, and have been wanting to-- I know many godly pastors who love the Lord Jesus with all their heart. They are serving him to the best of their ability in a system that is all they know. It's all they know!

And so to say "we need to be educated as to what true church life is," this means all of us. The pastors too. The pastor is included. They too, need to be educated as to what true church is. But the schools train them up this other way, perpetuating the system. (But that's another topic.)

So, in all this talk about pastors, perish the thought that anybody (I speak for myself at least) is maligning pastors in a blanket kind of way. Isn't this thread (at least one intention of it) just an effort to discover what the original definition was, and seek the courage and grace to return to that? May God grant true pastors (there are many of them) the grace and the courage to seek Him earnestly as to what He really wants them to be doing.

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/12 15:58

Quote:
-----May God grant true pastors (there are many of them) the grace and the courage to seek Him earnestly as to what He really wants them to be doing.

Amen. How, other than prayer can we get this process going? Having recently been in the UK and a renewed zeal to see the word of the Lord manifest in our gatherings, I'm concerned that with time the pressing sense of seeing things change may diminish. I felt like God spoke to us in Greenock and I need to realize how that is to play out in my own experience. I have the matter on my heart and before the Lord, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety also. I just think things need to get going. :-?

Re: , on: 2009/1/12 17:04

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

Quote:

-----May God grant true pastors (there are many of them) the grace and the courage to seek Him earnestly as to what He really wants them to be doing.

Amen. How, other than prayer can we get this process going? Having recently been in the UK and a renewed zeal to see the word of the Lord manifest in our gatherings, I'm concerned that with time the pressing sense of seeing things change may diminish. I felt like God spoke to us in Greenock and I need to realize how that is to play out in my own experience. I have the matter on my heart and before the Lord, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety also. I just think things need to get going. :-?

I've been listening in on this thread and feel greatly encouraged. I believe the Lord has given you all a word and I pray he continues to use you. I think it would be a great start to have a network of sister churches and begin having accountability to one another, no matter if it's a housechurch or an institutional church with the same vision and burden. There are so many believers on this forum with the same burden but live in different parts of the world, nonetheless we are all a part of the body of Christ. You can always start small and build from there.

Re: , on: 2009/1/12 17:16

Also if you decide to start some churches can you start one in St. Petersburg, Florida? :-) I know brother Denny Kenaston, has something set up on his websight where you can call to find a local church. I was thinking about giving him a call.

Re: Those elusive nicolaitans....., on: 2009/1/12 17:54

Quote:

Brothertom wrote:

Quote:

If you remove all historical references or speculation, and view the word, as spoken by the Lord Jesus in Heaven, through John....you have "Lords over my people", or "Kings over my people"...."rulers over my people."

philologos wrote:

"No, you don't. What you have is Nicolaitans. It is only a human speculation that the word is made up of nikE and laos. No more than if you found the word 'Bailey' and decided it meant a bay tree sheltered by the wind... bay and lee?

It is a Greek word that is what its participles mean. It is NOT a mystical uninterpretable term. It is clear, and simple... and was not meant to muddy the prophesy with something uninterpretable, like a proper name that could be imagined to mean most anything.

Jesus makes as it very clear, as does John, with Diotrephes, as with Paul in Acts 20.... "not sparing the flock. drawing disciples after themselves." Those who desired the preeminence. This, along with the spirit of the Pharisee's fits...right along with the professional CLERGY CLASS of today. Nicolaitan. ...an elite ministry class.

There are very few that do not , believe that this is a "bureaucratic" word translated so. or...any greek lexicon and o r thesaurus. Conquerors of my people...or "people". It is with us today in full force.

Re: robertW...formulas and Pastors..., on: 2009/1/12 18:25

I agree with you Robert. We cannot devise a formula by having our ducks in a row. God is sovereign anyway.

I think the issue we must tackle is the one of the quenching of the Spirit, that drives away His presence. "Where the spirit of the Lord is; there is LIBERTY." God has used many, many singular men and women to shake the world for Jesus. Ambition, and the religious spirit, are an ugly thing, that are very common in our meetings today where we have a spectator class, and a ministry class. There may be good things said, but everything is planned from start to finish in such a way that leaves people feeling dry and alone.,,,, because they are.

There is such a thing as Spirit lead meetings, and they usually are derived from Spirit lead communities....people who know and love one another, who love Jesus more, and are directed to the least of the brothers. This cannot function with a Priest Class that dominates.

I believe that more than educating people on what a functioning Spirit lead meeting IS, I think we need to educate people to DO the gospel. This involves repentance toward loving God with all, and learning to love others likewise. This will develop into deeds, that will flow naturally. I do not think we can create it, and we must realize that as no two babies are alike, churches are different too.

Our biggest problem is that we do not KNOW each other, much less LOVE or CARE about one another, as is evident in most of our local churches today.

We must attain to this, or we are just fooling ourselves that we walk with God. Our meetings will flow with God, when we have unhindered, loving fellowship without ambition, selfish pride, and greed. We must also learn to DISCERN the Body. That means to equally honor the weak, and love them too, as we would any, or any of our family.

This will result in common union, or as we say...COMMUNION. One body, Lord, and one Savior. when we are clean, and unhindered, and no longer quench His intentions or mercies, He will honor us with His Presence. Until then, we will be satisfied with a form of Godliness, but deny the power thereof.

The community , the every day life of the Church, precedes the meeting. We have it backwards.

Re: AD post - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/13 4:32

AD quote:... 'Just one more thought. I think it's important to make clear that-- and I can't speak for others, but I can certainly make my own feelings clear, and have been wanting to-- I know many godly pastors who love the Lord Jesus with all their heart. They are serving him to the best of their ability in a system that is all they know. It's all they know!'

Quote: 'So, in all this talk about pastors, perish the thought that anybody (I speak for myself at least) is maligning pastors in a blanket kind of way. Isn't this thread (at least one intention of it) just an effort to discover what the original definition was, and seek the courage and grace to return to that? May God grant true pastors (there are many of them) the grace and the courage to seek Him earnestly as to what He really wants them to be doing.'

AD I thank you for these comments they really are spiritually balanced wisdom. 8-)

I am absolutely convinced of the church structure where plurality of Elders who shepherd the local flock as servants is the biblical model and NOT the Pastor/leader hierarchy set up. However we need to recognise the points made above by AD otherwise we are in danger of dishonouring those in the past that we owe so much to. I am thinking of men like Tozer, Spurgeon, Lloyd Jones, etc. Also men of today such as David Wilkerson.

As there seems to be a general agreement of the biblical structure for churches is it possible to consider what the question was at the start of this thread?

If we agree that each local church is autonomous and cared for by the local Elders, do Christians have any influence outside of their local church? I believe that they do (in fact you could say this forum proves the point). Not authority, but influence and responsibility. If there is connection to other churches and other Christians throughout the world, surely we can have an input into other's lives.

I myself get great encouragement and correction from various teaching and preaching ministries outside of my local church. I think I am not alone in this! This site is a clear example of this. Many of these ministries are itinerant, but not all and many are speaking a 'NOW' word that is applicable to many (if not all) Christians across the world.

That said I think that we have to beware of people setting themselves up as self proclaimed 'prophets' to the church thinking they should sort it out. But we do need (in my opinion) voices who 'contend for the faith' and preach sound doctrine and direction to those who will hear.

Re: , on: 2009/1/13 6:20

Quote:

BrotherTom wrote:

Our meetings will flow with God, when we have unhindered, loving fellowship without ambition, selfish pride, and greed. We must also learn to DISCERN the Body. That means to equally honor the weak, and love them too, as we would any, or any of our family.

Amen!

Re: , on: 2009/1/13 7:16

I got this off of David Wilkerson's article
(https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?viewmodeflat&order0&topic_id19038&forum34&post_id&refreshGo) The Dangers of the Gospel of Accommodation. This is what he believes is God's method of establishing churches:

".....God's Method

Certain men of God met at Antioch to send out men to preach the gospel and establish churches (Acts 13). Here is God's method:

1. They ministered to the Lord and fasted. This was their planning session—worshiping, fasting, waiting on the Lord, and calling for direction from the Holy Ghost. They did not move until the Holy Ghost spoke. There were no formulas, no surveys, no door-to-door asking people what they wanted and then serving it to them.
2. They prayed—no strategizing, no network, and not one step until the Holy Ghost spoke His mind. Then and only then did they lay hands upon them, anoint them, and send them out in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost.

Paul lived his whole religious life on religious formulas, and he said they didn't work. He gave up on formulas and said, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul boasted unashamedly, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23). He was saying, "Gentlemen (he was talking to his peers), they want us to accommodate. The Jews are looking for signs in our gospel. The Greeks want the wisdom. They want to know how to cope, but I'm not compromising. There's only one message. Our gospel has been and will be the Cross and its demands as well as its victories. As for me, I'm determined to preach nothing among you but Christ and Him crucified....."

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/13 8:01

Quote:
-----Ron's: Does this show the respect that elders had in one place for those in another? Does this show the variety of patterns of authority even at the turn of the 1st century?

I think it is important to note that within the synagogues of the Jews there was also a power struggle taking place at this time. The issue of authority came up among the Pharisees that I think may have had 'some' effect on the way the early churches viewed authority.

In Deuteronomy 30:12 the Jews found a passage with which they could overrule once and for all the prophetic voice of God in the lives of the Jews. Paul also quotes part of this verse in Romans 10. Essentially what the Jews did was say- (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Not_in_Heaven) "It is NOT in Heaven." (wiki) This meant that the authority to determine the direction of the lives of the Jews rested not in the hand of God, but with the Rabbi's.

When I studied with the Messianic Jews they noted that Rabbinic Judaism reminded them very much of Catholicism. But in reality Rabbinic Judaism took the ultra cessationist view long before Rome. So I wonder how this was influencing the churches as this line of doctrine was developing?

I think it is more than coincidence that both the Jews and the Roman Catholics essentially ended up doing exactly what Jesus told them not to do- to be called 'father' or 'rabbi' (Master) (Matthew 23:9,10). So we see then that a 'shift' took place in how both the churches and the Jews view authority. For the Jews the Rabbi's can overrule a prophet, an audible voice from God, reserve the right to interpret the scriptures and dreams that a person may have. They have locked the prophetic influence of God totally out and made the Rabbi's past and present the authority.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/13 13:02

Quote:

RobertW wrote:
How, other than prayer can we get this process going? Having recently been in the UK and a renewed zeal to see the word of the Lord manifest in our gatherings, I'm concerned that with time the pressing sense of seeing things change may diminish. I felt like God spoke to us in Greenock and I need to realize how that is to play out in my own experience. I have the matter on my heart and before the Lord, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety also. I just think things need to get going. :-?

...I really do think we are cast on God for this.

We greatly need the very thing that has been much talked of on this thread: "God, and the word of His grace."

I don't know that there is any other way than to continue looking to Him, continue seeking Him, waiting upon Him, and anticipating that He will continue to be about His Father's business, and will communicate that to us, so that our doing is no thing less than His own doing. "We then as workers together WITH Him..."

If your feeling of the "need to get going" is genuinely the urgency of the Spirit of God (and not just that restlessness of human zeal) then there should come a "quickenings" as to what He is doing. There will be a sense of "Life" about it, bearing witness that this step (whatever it may be) is springing from the Lord.

I do think we are in an hour when we may anticipate a new illumination as to His will, at least among those who are making of their lives a total burnt offering.

His message to the church at Ephesus was one calling for repentance, and a return to first love... and first works.

"Repent, and do the first works..."

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/13 14:08

Quote:
-----Brothertom on 2009/1/12 19:54:33
It is a Greek word that is what its participles mean. It is NOT a mystical uninterpretable term. It is clear, and simple...and was not meant to muddy the prophesy with something uninterpretable, like a proper name that could be imagined to mean most anything.

Hi Tom
How familiar are you with New Testament Greek? You just can't do this with words.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/13 14:13

Quote:
-----RebeccaF on 2009/1/13 9:16:05
Certain men of God met at Antioch to send out men to preach the gospel and establish churches (Acts 13). Here is God's method:

I do respect David Wilkerson but this is a misunderstanding. It is a presumption that they met in order to get their marching orders. They did not; they met to 'serve' the Lord. To give him time and worship and out of that time of intimacy came

e a 'word of His grace' which started the whole thing off.

They did not meet with an agenda of any kind; they simply gathered together into God's presence and God took it from there.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/13 16:47

Quote:
-----Ron's: They did not; they met to 'serve' the Lord. To give him time and worship and out of that time of intimacy came a 'word of His grace' which started the whole thing off.

Ron, in the UK as we went from fellowship to fellowship there was a willingness to worship the Lord in a variety of ways and songs. In some places 3 different song books were distributed to allow for a variety (Wesley hymns up to today). What can be done to foster a willingness to sing a variety of songs? I see this as a real obstacle in many circles because there is a false dichotomy between new and old.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/13 17:03

Quote:
-----RobertW on 2009/1/13 18:47:42
What can be done...

There's a familiar question. ;-)

I was thinking about some earlier comments on prayer along the same lines. I am just back from our Prayer Meeting and this thread came to mind again.

I was thinking of these two passages.

and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years,* who did not depart from the temple, but served >God with fastings and prayers night and day. Luke 2:37

and this one..

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Act 13:2

It is this notion of prayer as 'serving God' and 'ministering to the Lord' that captured my attention. This is the other wing to 'the word of His grace'; these are not prayer agendas or prayer lists but men and women 'waiting upon God' and praying as they are led.

This can begin in our 'closet'. Not working through a prayer list but listening as much as speaking and praying as he directs. I have always been taken by the phrase when God told a man that 'Abraham was a prophet and he shall pray for you'. Real prayer, like prophecy, begins with revelation.

Re: , on: 2009/1/13 17:16

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Quote:
-----RebeccaF on 2009/1/13 9:16:05
Certain men of God met at Antioch to send out men to preach the gospel and establish churches (Acts 13). Here is God's method:

I do respect David Wilkerson but this is a misunderstanding. It is a presumption that they met in order to get their marching orders. They did not; they met to 'serve' the Lord. To give him time and worship and out of that time of intimacy came a 'word of His grace' which started the whole thing off.

They did not meet with an agenda of any kind; they simply gathered together into God's presence and God took it from there.

That could be it really doesn't say. We could agree though that they definately were fasting, praying and seeking God for something.

I know for one thing I don't get on sermon index for lack of nothing better to do. We all meet here for the most part because we want revival. If I am at a revival conference and I am fasting and praying and like Hannah, even though it's not obvious what I am seeking God for God knows and answers. Typically you don't fast, pray and seek God unless it is for something.

Here the Holy Ghost just said to separate them. God doesn't always give you a huge list of things to do. He requires we act on what He gives us and it may just be one simple request.

Acts 13

1Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/13 17:26

Quote:

Heydave wrote:

I am thinking of men like Tozer, Spurgeon, Lloyd Jones, etc. Also men of today such as David Wilkerson.

I too have a great respect for these men, and others, who have ministered in what in our day is now a dying order.

I would not let an ill word about them be found on my tongue.

But I know what I am going to give myself to continue seeking.

You read in different places in Scripture that when God has things in place according to His order (which He alone brings into being, with His sanctified), then His glory comes down and rests in His House (2 Chr. 5.13,14; 1 Kings 8.11, Ex. 40. 33-35).

"...The cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (1 Kings 5.11).

"...And in His temple doth every one speak of His glory" (Ps. 29.9). That is, in His temple, "every whit of it uttereth glory," as my margin says.

Meaning to say that the home of God's glory is His House, His temple, His people. God's intention is that every single one of us from the least to the greatest be filled with His glory, and be a unique expression of His glory, and He will not, cannot, rest, till that is accomplished. "Every whit of it..."

Surely this is what Paul meant in Eph. 4, saying God gave the ministries for the perfecting(equipping) of the saints unto the work of the ministry... That is, unto the saints' work of the ministry. This-- every single saint being equipped and provisioned to minister vitally and effectively in the church which is His Body-- it's THIS that is the ministry that edifies the body "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

And all the true-hearted elders will be happy to be on their faces unable to stand, rejoicing when this kind of expression of "church" comes about.

AD

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/13 22:16

I know a brother who prays very little, mostly he sits and waits on the Lord (hours at a time), he puts it like an eagle waiting on that one air stream that will lift him upwards, I like that.

It seems such a hard concept to look at prayer as ministering unto the Lord with fasting. It would almost seem as if God sees our input (communion/communication) as a ministry from us to Him. Would that be an accurate characterization?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/13 23:40

Quote:

dohzman wrote:

I know a brother who prays very little, mostly he sits and waits on the Lord (hours at a time), he puts it like an eagle waiting on that one air stream that will lift him upwards, I like that.

It seems such a hard concept to look at prayer as ministering unto the Lord with fasting. It would almost seem as if God sees our input (communion/communication) as a ministry from us to Him. Would that be an accurate characterization?

I like that, too. (About waiting for that one airstream that bears us upwards.) This is such a good word.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted..."

Isn't this saying that, as we make our focus not the answer we so desperately need, but rather, ministering unto the Lord ... the answer we seek will be the spontaneous "by-product" of that, or the outflow of that.

AD

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/14 4:36

I have been thinking about what Carter Conlon said at the Greenock conference about our seeking revival. He said 'When God comes, He will not come to confirm our agendas or our traditions'. The point being that we must seek God for Himself and allow Him to work in His way. If we expect God to conform to our tradition, then we will miss it.

I have recently read Colin Peckham's book on the Lewis Revival (Sounds from Heaven) and what is very clear when you read the accounts is that although there was a very formal (and in some cases rigid) church structure in the form of The Church of Scotland and The Free Church, when God came down the meetings became spontaneous and a natural response of sinners responding in holy fear repentance and saints ministering to the Lord in prayer and worship all day and all night. The 'normal' church services were a small fraction of importance. It was meeting in homes afterwards, praising God on the road and in the street and at work. Whenever saints were together then God moved through 'whosoever'.

My point is that our pressing need is to seek God and have that personal and corporate revival. When this happens then God will come down and HE will build HIS church His way. So who is responsible? Ultimately God is in building HIS church, but WE are responsible to seek Him and respond to Him.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/14 4:55

Quote:
-----ADisciple on 2009/1/13 19:26:31
Surely this is what Paul meant in Eph. 4, saying God gave the ministries for the perfecting(equipping) of the saints unto the work of the ministry... That is, unto the saints' work of the ministry. This-- every single saint being equipped and provisioned to minister vitally and effectively in the church which is His Body-- it's THIS that is the ministry that edifies the body "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

this is a key truth and one which the underlying Greek brings out strongly. Darby has captured the sense well...

for the perfecting of the saints; with a view to work of ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ;

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/14 4:57

Quote:
-----ADisciple on 2009/1/14 1:40:38
Isn't this saying that, as we make our focus not the answer we so desperately need, but rather, ministering unto the Lord... the answer we seek will be the spontaneous "by-product" of that, or the outflow of that.

YES. exactly so!

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/14 4:58

Quote:
-----I have been thinking about what Carter Conlon said at the Greenock conference about our seeking revival. He said ' When God comes, He will not come to confirm our agendas or our traditions'. The point being that we must seek God for Himself and allow Him to work in His way. If we expect God to conform to our tradition, then we will miss it.

I think this was one of the most significant things said at the Greenock Conference.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/14 9:27

Quote:

I have been thinking about what Carter Conlon said at the Greenock conference about our seeking revival. He said ' When God comes, He will not come to confirm our agendas or our traditions'. The point being that we must seek God for Himself and allow Him to work in His way. If we expect God to conform to our tradition, then we will miss it.

It was a very unpopular thing to say, but I also think it was one of the soberest truths I heard at the conference. It is also a truth that will stand the test of time, I think. I believe the Lord answered with a tremendous outpouring of His Spirit during the altar service. When we are ready to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and leave off of wanting to back seat drive a revival- God has already, in my mind, shown us He will answer. I am afraid though that what God is wanting to send may not be what some want to see; and I'm afraid that is a fight no one can win.

When Phillip preached the people *received the word gladly* and with a readiness to respond. What happened? A great 'revival' broke out. Were the Pharisees blessed? No. They were so wrapped up in their tradition that they did not know God's blessing when it came. They rejected it in fact. And it all ties into this thread as the ultimate question; who is in authority? Will we follow God or are we expecting Him to follow us?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/14 15:55

Quote:
-----He said ' When God comes, He will not come to confirm our agendas or our traditions'. The point being that we must seek God for Himself and allow Him to work in His way.

At the 19:10 mark of (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?vCZISxv6AqmM&sdig1>) Q & A Session Part 2 David Guzik states that there is a danger to expecting God to do in the present what He has done in the past. The thought being, that we need God to send the revival that *His counsel* deems that we need. We need the word of His grace that is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20).

Re: , on: 2009/1/14 18:05

Quote.....

"My point is that our pressing need is to seek God and have that personal and corporate revival. When this happens the n God will come down and HE will build HIS church His way. So who is responsible? Ultimateley God is in building HIS church, but WE are responsible to seek Him and respond to Him."

Amennnn !!!! The seekers transcend denominations and church government.....Frank

Re: - posted by iamhis, on: 2009/1/14 22:14

If you define the word "church" you will find it means "called out". The church is made up of people not of wood and plaster and steel. God is not looking to dwell in a building but a heart. If we would get beyond looking at what we can do and start looking at what Christ has already done I believe that will cause us to do what God has called us out to do. That is to worship HIM in one mind and one accord. God established HIS plans for HIS body on the day of Pentecost and has never changed HIS mind about who is in charge. It is GODS good pleasure to give unto us the KINGDOM yet we grow satisfied and wait on someone else to pray us happy or sing us feel good songs when it is a individual walk we must take. What did Isiah say when the VOICE cried out who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. Individual to do GODS will. If we want more of God we have to pray, we have to cry out, we have to stand up to the devil and tell him to get behind me satan, if we want life then we must go to MASTER for HE is looking to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty to pour out HIMSELF upon those that want HIM more then their necessary food. America made their choice when they chose to legalize abortion, take GOD out of the public schools, say homosexuality is OK. They want to take GOD out of everything and what has the body of CHRIST done to prevent it. Are we sighing and crying about the abominations that are all around us. LORD help us to look to the hills from which cometh our help, our help cometh from the LORD. The body of Christ needs to work while it is day for the night time cometh. We need JESUS more than we have ever needed HIM before. One mind and one accord.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/15 4:38

Quote:
-----Heydave on 2009/1/14 6:36:08
My point is that our pressing need is to seek God and have that personal and corporate revival. When this happens then God will come down and HE will build HIS church His way. So who is responsible? Ultimateley God is in building HIS church, but WE are responsible to seek Him and respond to Him.

Thank you for bringing us back to the original question! :-D

But responsible for what? There is a mental construct among Christians known as 'the church' or 'the church in our day' or 'the church in America' or some such label. I have spent part of the time since we began this thread re-reading the earliest non-bible records of history. They have no such construct. There is passionate concern for individuals and a willingness to reach out from one local church to another. We see in it the letter of Polycarp to Philippi and of Clement to Cori

nth. There is no trace of the 'church in our day' construct.

Those early Christians had a wonderful way of writing to each other which can be found in many of their writings. I will give a couple of examples.

Polycarp and the presbyters (elders) with him to the church of God that sojourns at Philippi: may mercy and peace from God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Saviour be yours in abundance.

Polycarp is a 'high profile' Christian; no doubt a 'leader' in those days: he had sat at the feet of John the apostle. But there is no sense of any hierarchical order and he 'comes alongside' the church at Philippi and does not seek to take any responsibility for 'speaking into it'. Nor does he presume that the conditions of the church in Smyrna, where he lived, will be replicated in Philippi. His respect for the saints at Philippi breathes through every line of his letter. In section 3 he writes :

I am writing you these comments about righteousness, brothers, not on my own initiative but because you invited me to do so...

Or take the letter of Clement in Rome to the church at Corinth. Although this is commonly known as 1st Clement, the name Clement does not appear in the letter. Instead the letter begins like this...

The church of God which sojourns in Rome to the church of God which sojourns in Corinth greeting, to those who are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May grace and peace from almighty God through Jesus Christ be yours in abundance.

I am always moved by the simplicity of these opening lines from these two ancient letters. I am moved by the way they regarded themselves as 'sojourners'. It is the biblical word (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg3941&tKJV>) strangers: Strong's G3941 - paroikos. They had a deep sense of 'passing through'; this world was not their home. The church at Corinth was a band of people who were 'just passing through' Corinth and who for the time being were gathered together as the 'called out ones'; the elect or 'the church'.

The reason I began this theme was to challenge the notion that anyone can presume to tell us what 'the problem with the church of today is...'. I am not advocating a change in church government but in church understanding. Inevitably that will have an impact on church government, but I am certainly not suggesting that the answer to our needs can be met in 're-arranging the deck-chairs on the Titanic'.

However, there are patterns of church government which will more readily facilitate a free moving of the Spirit and give him easier 'access' to the saints.

My original thesis was this, that the unit of responsibility, biblically, is the local church and that to assume a responsibility wider than this is extra-biblical, false and counterproductive.

Re: , on: 2009/1/15 8:43

Quote....

"The reason I began this theme was to challenge the notion that anyone can presume to tell us what 'the problem with the church of today is...'. I am not advocating a change in church government but in church understanding."

I am not sure how this addresses the quote

Heydave on 2009/1/14 6:36:08

My point is that our pressing need is to seek God and have that personal and corporate revival. When this happens then God will come down and HE will build HIS church His way. So who is responsible? Ultimately God is in building HIS church, but WE are responsible to seek Him and respond to Him.

Is it possible that it is no more complicated than "seeking," God?Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/15 9:40

Quote:
-----Ron's: "The reason I began this theme was to challenge the notion that anyone can presume to tell us what 'the problem with the church of today is...'.

It would seem from Revelation 2-4 that the 7X command to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches is the key. Again, I have to say, I am stunned how little 'press' this 7 times spoken command gets or has ever gotten in my reading experience. I think there are few things more telling than how few this 7X command has been preached on.

I humbly and sincerely challenge anyone to do a search or whatever and find main stream sermons that are historic or contemporary that deal with this 7X command. I simply know of NO sermon I have ever heard that stresses the fact that our Lord Jesus told us 7 times in a row to hear what the Spirit is (ed. actively and presently) saying in a local church setting.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/15 10:41

Quote:
-----My original thesis was this, that the unit of responsibility, biblically, is the local church and that to assume a responsibility wider than this is extra-biblical, false and counterproductive.

I THINK I understand what you are saying and I THINK I agree with the general point, if my understanding of what you are THINKING is correct (are you confused now?) :-).

If you are addressing the problem of us worrying about the state of some undefined entity that we call 'The church' then I agree with your point. However there is an organism called The church of Jesus Christ and as you have previously said this comprises all those saints in Heaven and those saints now on earth (the invisible church).

What I am trying to reconcile is, do we have NO responsibility for the part of that true church that is currently on earth wider than our local church? If we are all part of that ONE church we cannot only have concern and influence in our LOCAL church, but as God gives us access to one another we have responsibility for ALL our brothers and sisters in THE church. Otherwise what are we doing on this website and joining together at Revival conferences etc?

Maybe I am mis-understanding the point. If so please make this clearer to me. :-?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/15 11:59

Quote:
-----What I am trying to reconcile is, do we have NO responsibility for the part of that true church that is currently on earth wider than our local church? If we are all part of that ONE church we cannot only have concern and influence in our LOCAL church, but as God gives us access to one another we have responsibility for ALL our brothers and sisters in THE church. Otherwise what are we doing on this website and joining together at Revival conferences etc?

As we have information we have a responsibility to pray and make ourselves available to God to see what he would have us pray about. What we don't have is a platform to address that part of The Church which is currently on earth. It is absolutely impossible to say 'what the church in America needs today is..' unless we have perfect knowledge of that part of the THE CHURCH which is currently living in America. It is foolish and arrogant to say 'what the church in America needs is'.

Do you ever have the problem of hearing someone say 'the church has given up the fight and we should repent', or something like that?

ething similar? When there was only one lampstand it was possible for a representative, such as Ezra, to confess on behalf of THE CHURCH OF ISRAEL but we are in a different covenant and there is not a single lampstand. Although we often hear it said it is not possible for one man to confess for the nation or 'the church in America'. Similarly it is not possible for one man to 'speak to the church in America' or to 'represent' it. It does not exist as an entity.

If I know of an individual or a local church which has 'given up the fight' I have a responsibility based on that knowledge to pray for them. I certainly don't have the right to 'speak into that local church' unless I am invited to do so. See my quotation from Polycarp.

Although there is an 'organism' called THE CHURCH there is no means of addressing it. It is certainly not the amalgam of all the evangelical churches on earth.

One of the dangers of this website and many others like it is that it creates a platform from which individuals think they can 'address' the church. Most of the saints on earth haven't got a dial tone yet, let alone broadband. We can't make a statement about 'THE CHURCH' unless it is applicable to the whole CHURCH; that will include half a dozen saints under a tree in Tanzania!

So what are we doing on the website? Sharing our hearts' desire to see God move in sovereign power. Talking to each other about how we can facilitate that, as far as it is in our hands. Trying to 'friendly help each other on' as Wesley wrote in one of his hymns. What should we not be trying to do? Diagnosing the condition of hundreds of saints and prescribing a remedy.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/15 12:36

Thanks for this Ron. I really do understand now (I know I'm a bit slow) :-) and I DO agree with what you are saying.

So I am happy to encourage, challenge and help other saints in our walk with the Lord on an individual basis as and when and where ever I have the opportunity and invitation to do so. Also to receive this in return!

Re: , on: 2009/1/15 12:37

As far as I know, and I will stand corrected, one of the major reasons for the conferences, including Greenock, was one of repentance "If my people who are called by my nameect"

If I understand Ron's objection correctly, it seems that your main objection is someone referring to a collection of saints as "the church." So, for instance, it is ok for saints from around the world to gather and listen to, , Paul Washer talk about indictments, as long as he does not direct his Indictments at "The Church?" So the question would be, just who was he talking too and what authority did he have to share what he did?.....Frank

Re: Appolus: authority to address the church?, on: 2009/1/15 13:08

I agree with you Frank. You could therefore say, in following that logic, you don't have the authority to address this Forum, for we are not the church...but a global company of believers...and then, why are you bothering posting?

The entire counsel of the Word, gives any believer the authority to stand on it, and minister it....and yes it is Global...though I do agree that there are different "personalities", flavors, in local churches throughout. There, at the place of the local Church, I do not have authority or elder ship. Paul inferred this often even to his own church plants.

Perhaps what Ron is saying is that he believes in the autonomy of the local assembly. To this I would heartily agree, however there are times when even that can be trumped.

Paul rebuked Peter, a key elder at the Mother church of Jerusalem, and his correction perhaps altered the direction of the Church Universal as much as any other confrontation. Paul had no direct authority in Jerusalem, but his stand upon sound doctrine and truth did.

Of course, it was finally up to Peter to receive this rebuke and correction. The Word of God oversees all of the

Church, and I have an obligation to stand on it, and minister it in a universal way.

There, also is such a thing as inherit authority, or manifest Apostolic authority. See Matthew 10. It can be the same today, and there are some folks out doing it now.

Quote:

appolus wrote:

As far as I know, and I will stand corrected, one of the major reasons for the conferences, including Greenock, was one of repentance "If my people who are called by my nameect"

If I understand Ron's objection correctly, it seems that your main objection is someone referring to a collection of saints as "the church." So, for instance, it is ok for saints from around the world to gather and listen to, , Paul Washer talk about indictments, as long as he does not direct his Indictments at "The Church?" So the question would be, just who was he talking too and what authority did he have to share what he did?.....Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/15 13:58

Quote:

-----Perhaps what Ron is saying is that he believes in the autonomy of the local assembly. To this I would heartily agree, however there are times when even that can be trumped.

I think the ongoing point is simply that the Holy Spirit is in authority and we need to be hearing from God on an recourse of action. It is very easy to try and diagnose problems we see here and there in the Body of Christ and then assume the problems are universal. But there are specific problems with individuals and churches and there is no blanket, cure-all answer.

By way of analogy my Grandmother used to have a concept that when some discipline was needed among the kids and no one would 'fess-up' she would spank all the children to, "Get the right one." Also it is *not* equitable or healthy to treat the whole group for a problem that only a select group needed. The Lord Jesus clearly dealt with the 7 churches *individually* and not as a group.

So I think the clear message is that the local churches need to be hearing from God. This is practical because folk simply don't need treatment for problems they don't have. There is no super message that will cure all the woes in the Body of Christ in America or in Kansas City, for example. Each local assembly has their own individual issues. What we need is the voice of God in that local congregation dealing with each and every congregation. If we had that what more need would there be?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/15 13:58

Quote:

Heydave wrote:

What I am trying to reconcile is, do we have NO responsibility for the part of that true church that is currently on earth wider than our local church?

We do read of Paul saying to the Corinthians, "What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and the spirit of meekness?" (1 Cor. 4.21).

And John, concerning Diotrephes. "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds..." (3 Jn. 10).

So these men were expressing authority regarding those assemblies, even though they were not at the time in their midst as part of the local church there. Were they then taking upon them a responsibility that was not theirs?

No. I think it helps us all to recognize that it is the Holy Spirit in the earth who is alone the vicar of Christ on the throne in Heaven, and each one of us has the liberty, and the responsibility, to be led by and obey the Spirit of God.

Jesus said (referring to His ascension), "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

And His authority (and power) at the right hand of God in Heaven is vested in One in the earth: the Holy Spirit.

And so, the seven stars, the messengers to the seven churches, are in the right hand of the One who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. I don't know where they fellowshiped locally, we are not told. But they are commissioned from the right hand of God, not from headquarters in Jerusalem (for earthly Jerusalem was never headquarters of the church).

And so when Paul warned the Corinthians that if he came he would not spare (2 Cor. 13.2), or John, in the matter of Diotrephes... these are examples of authority coming from the right hand of the throne of God, and not from the church where John happened to be, or Paul happened to be at the time, say, in Philippi, or Ephesus, or wherever.

No one church is to have any hierarchy or dominion over another. Neither any group of elders over another group.

For, Headquarters in the New Covenant is the right hand of God in Heaven. It might have been easy for the early church to look to Jerusalem as their headquarters, since the apostles were there. But the Lord quickly demolished that idea by speaking directly to those who were waiting upon Him, and ministering unto Him, at Antioch. And none of the twelve were there.

So, Paul, while he might for a time have settled in Philippi, ministering among the saints there, the local church there... he was moving out from the Throne in Heaven when he warned the Corinthians there was discipline in the books for them if they did not heed his words.

He was not taking upon himself to intrude into something that was beyond his business. He no doubt functioned in harmony with the elders wherever he happened to be, and would seek to be subject to them, as was the demeanor of all of them actually. "Be subject one to another..." But he had a liberty (and a responsibility) to walk under the direct leading of the Holy Spirit, in whatever the Lord bid him to do.

This is an important thing to recognize, lest a subtle transfer take place, and we begin to transfer to the elders of local assemblies a binding authority that would attempt to supercede the authority of the Holy Spirit to lead and direct His own, as He is bid from the Throne in Heaven. It's something that has happened in the past, and happens all too easily, depriving the saints of the liberty to be led by the Holy Spirit.

We certainly know it has happened regarding one man... and Papa becomes called the vicar of Christ. That brings tears to your eyes, but is it all that much different when something similar is set up in Protestant churches?

...Or even if a group of elders is given the same binding authority? And suddenly there is another "Sanhedrin" ruling and overruling the lives of the saints?

...I have a liberty, and will protect it-- and will seek to protect it for others-- to walk in the liberty of the Spirit of God, no man coming in between me and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the very thing-- this liberty, this responsibility-- that should be found flourishing in a church functioning with true elders in their midst.

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/15 14:16

Quote:

-----He was not taking upon himself to intrude into something that was beyond his business.

I recall in the Q & A sessions 1 or 2 that the question was asked as to how we might see revival, etc. I recall Ron Bailey answering that, "I am not a strategist. I am a foot soldier. It is my job to do as I am told."

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/15 14:37

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

(quoting Ron) "I am not a strategist. I am a foot soldier. It is my job to do as I am told."

That's a good word.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/16 7:26

Quote:

-----appolus on 2009/1/15 14:37:53

If I understand Ron's objection correctly, it seems that your main objection is someone referring to a collection of saints as "the church." So, for instance, it is ok for saints from around the world to gather and listen to, , Paul Washer talk about indictments, as long as he does not direct his Indictments at "The Church?" So the question would be, just who was he talking too and what authority did he have to share what he did?.....Frank

Paul Washer's message was interesting in that he began to try to address the criticisms of the church. It is a little time since I listened to it but I think he objected to blanket criticisms on the basis that The Church is the bride of Christ and is alive and well. I have some sympathy with that as long as we do not identify the bride of Christ with the visible church on earth (in America or anywhere else).

Paul Washer has authority to share with whoever will listen to him. He has no authority to share with me because of who he is in other people's eyes or in his own; that is not intended as a criticism of Paul Washer. I have some issues with Paul Washer's message but not on that basis and I have posted links on my own website to his message here on SI.

Those who give Paul Washer a world-wide platform have a tremendous responsibility. Again, I am not criticising PW but just drawing attention that if the purveyors of porn or fascism have a responsibility for the effects of their publishings and sales, surely the owners of websites do too. Greg carries a tremendous responsibility before God for what he allows on this website; I hope we will remember that as we pray for him. James says be not many teachers, knowing we shall receive a greater judgment. I am sure that should be drawn to the attention of publishers too.

But suppose someone who is not Paul Washer presumes to address 'the Church in America', who gave him this authority and to whom is he accountable. A rather cynical Protestant once confided in a Roman Catholic by saying 'I envy your system; at least you only have one Pope'. The Pope believes that whatever he says 'ex cathedra' he says to the whole church on earth; what arrogant nonsense. It is no less arrogant or nonsense when a Protestant attempts to do the same
.

I have heard precocious teenagers declare that what the church needs is... I have also heard them take on the spirits of Islam! We need a little dose of sanity here. I am not saying that wisdom comes with age, but a few grey hairs usually mean the owner has experienced a little more of life.. and even of church life.

If I hear someone say or pray 'we confess Lord that the church has abandoned the Bible', I cannot say 'amen' because I am part of the church and I have not abandoned the Bible. If I someone say or pray 'we confess Lord that we have not

waited upon you' I cannot say 'amen' because I am part of a local church which has and does wait on God. These generalisations are unwise and untrue. Usually when someone prays these kinds of things I just remain silent but there are times, and this thread has really been one of them, when I feel the need to say 'hold on there, brother, is that me you are talking about?'

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/16 7:30

Quote:
-----RobertW on 2009/1/15 15:58:22
By way of analogy my Grandmother used to have a concept that when some discipline was needed among the kids and no one would 'fess-up' she would spank all the children to, "Get the right one." Also it is not equitable or healthy to treat the whole group for a problem that only a select group needed. The Lord Jesus clearly dealt with the 7 churches individually and not as a group.

This had me chuckling out loud. Having raised 7 children, not churches, myself I know that you cannot generalise nor give out standard punishments. You have to treat each child as an individual; it is the way the Lord dealt with the churches of the Revelation.

A healthy dose of reality. - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2009/1/16 8:17

Quote:

philologos wrote:
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Mr Bailey I would like to shake your hand one day, though we see some things differently this has got to be one of your best posts (and there are allot).

rgds,

Re: did not know where exactly where to place this - posted by dohzman (), on: 2009/1/16 9:55

Roberts blanket spanking had me laughing too, because often times when I speak in churches I may be a tad bit disturbed about some report I hear or read of some some other part of the country or world and that often influences what I say or how I say it, so I have learned to shut out all media days before I speak and get alone and quiet before God.

Quote:

----- You have to treat each child as an individual; it is the way the Lord dealt with the churches of the Revelation.

That has made me remember something that happened along time ago. I had just came out of a camp meeting where the presence of God was exceptionally strong, as my family and I was leaving Ohio, I had to go to Indiana than it was back home, I coasted through a stop sign. I felt so convicted and grieved over it but being in a hurry I drove on. I suppose that over the next 3 years I came to some complete stops and some coasting stops, but then at a time when I was flat out broke and headed home from Mich. I coasted through a stop sign and was stopped, ticketed, and lectured by an Ohio state highway patrolman! Immediately I remembered that deep sense of grief the three years earlier and the Lord spoke to my heart,

"I declare the end from the beginning". I learned a lesson on that day not only about the why's of God but also His ways, or at least a glimpse.

I think we get the general impression that God wants us to be/do/say/act/ a certain way based on how we interpret or hear His written Word, or what we know of Him from tradition or possibly some outside influence, church preachers teachers etc... but when I saw the Lord, His holiness was unapproachable and He appeared as pure, it took me several years to understand that His pureness was in part that He does or says nothing out of SELF INTEREST. He is completely 100 % wanting our best, "I know the plans I have for you...."

Re: , on: 2009/1/16 11:25

Quote..

"For, Headquarters in the New Covenant is the right hand of God in Heaven. It might have been easy for the early church to look to Jerusalem as their headquarters, since the apostles were there. But the Lord quickly demolished that idea by speaking directly to those who were waiting upon Him, and ministering unto Him, at Antioch. And none of the twelve were there."

Amen AD. The authority comes from the right hand of God. To reject all who claim to speak to "the church," because of the many abuses, would be akin to rejecting the sign gifts because of the counterfeit. The pentecostal theologian, Fee, said that the truth invariably lies in the "radical center." If you have been hurt, or caught up in condemning, and the Lord gives you a revelation, oftentimes that causes one to swing in the other direction. If indeed someone like Paul Washer has authority to address a crowd of people from many different congregations (this authority being from the right hand of God) then it is legitimate. The only problem from that point is for the organizers of such a gathering. I am not sure, but it seems, if we follow Robert and Ron's logic, then these gathering themselves would be illegitimate. And just for the record, I simply used Paul Washer as an example, it was not to legitimize the man himself, although I personally agreed with his main points and also have it on my own website.

I would just ask the question, if the logic of this thread is followed to its conclusion, then there would be no gatherings of different denominations and church's, because no one would have the right or authority to address such a crowd. And if gatherings of different churches and denominations are legitimate, and they can be addressed by speakers to whom it is very possible "have a word," from God, then is the point one of semantics as to how we describe the gathering?.....Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/16 13:11

Quote:

appolus wrote:

Quote..

If indeed someone... has authority to address a crowd of people from many different congregations (this authority being from the right hand of God) then it is legitimate. The only problem from that point is for the organizers of such a gathering. I am not sure, but it seems, if we follow Robert and Ron's logic, then these gathering themselves would be illegitimate.

Hi, Frank.

I'm glad you say, "IF..."

"IF any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God."

There would be more fear and trembling in all of us if we laid that to heart.

...My whole point in the earlier thread was that the Holy Spirit is the vicar (representative) of Christ in the earth, and He alone has the authority to lead and send his servants as He is directed to do so from the right hand of God.

I've been very appreciative of the emphasis on the autonomy of the local churches that Philologos has been brave enough to bring forth on this thread. And I thank him for doing so. May we awaken to this. It's a perspective that has been largely lost in our day. A return to it will bring the churches a good distance along the way to the finish line.

In situations where God sends his man from his own right hand to address "the church," that man must have a word that applies to the whole church.

But I can't imagine God lumping those seven churches in The Revelation into one church called the church of Asia, and addressing them all together.

Can you imagine the suffering church in Smyrna sitting there together with the others, and hearing, "I have somewhat against thee?" No, God had no censure for them. Nor the church at Philadelphia.

Can you imagine the church of Laodicea sitting there in the congregation with the saints from Philadelphia, and hearing, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name?"

This, I think, is Philologos' main issue.

Of course there are matters that pertain to the whole church, and God at times speaks to the whole church.

And, in fact, I don't think it's wrong to grieve over things we see happening in other areas of "the church" out there these days. We Christians love God, and love His honour, and these things hurt us. We just naturally are interested in what's going on. Spiritually naturally, I mean.

So nobody is trying to be a sort of "thought police" on what Christians are feeling about it all, in their great concern for the glory of Christ's Name.

In fact, God called the man with the writer's inkhorn to set a mark on the foreheads of the men who grieved for the abominations they saw in His City.

But the thing is, if I recall the first post on this thread correctly, the concern was relative to the responsibility of DOING something about it all.

This is the thing. Primarily, this is the concern of the Vicar of the Church (the Holy Spirit). And each one of us must be i

n such relationship with Him that we recognize clearly when it is He who is speaking to us and directing our praying, or our doing... or if it's just our own zeal and presumption.

Otherwise, have we really distanced ourselves from the stand taken by "the Bishop of Rome," who has convinced the whole "Catholic" church worldwide, that his bishoprick oversees all?

What cheek.

This is the whole point. There's such a beauty in this whole picture of the different Lampstands in different places, autonomous local churches ministering unto the Lord, doing as He bids them do, and leaving, trusting, the keeping of the whole to Him.

It is a beautiful yoke, this, where it is promised we will find rest unto our souls.

I think of the post earlier in which the brother mentioned the psalm, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me..."

That's the Son of God Himself speaking, who Himself is meek and lowly of heart... minding His own business, speaking and doing only what He saw the Father speaking and doing.

We ourselves are called to take, and need to take, that same yoke upon us.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/16 14:31

Quote:
-----appolus on 2009/1/16 13:25:38
I would just ask the question, if the logic of this thread is followed to its conclusion, then there would be no gatherings of different denominations and churches, because no one would have the right or authority to address such a crowd. And if gatherings of different churches and denominations are legitimate, and they can be addressed by speakers to whom it is very possible "have a word," from God, then is the point one of semantics as to how we describe the gathering?.....Frank

Yes, there would because the local church is not the only forum for the saints to gather or be instructed but it is the only unit of responsibility, biblically. If I followed what you think is 'my logic' there would be no missionary societies, bible colleges or conventions.

The people that stage these conferences, however, will be answerable to God for the utterances that are made under their auspices. Just as the 'elders' of this site have made it plain that they will not allow self-styled prophets to declare 'thus saith the Lord through these pages'. In the local assembly the prophets are to be judged by the prophets but in this electronic platform the web owner must judge them and not be afraid to ban them.

Re: , on: 2009/1/16 17:37

Quote...

In situations where God sends his man from his own right hand to address "the church," that man must have a word that applies to the whole church.

But I can't imagine God lumping those seven churches in The Revelation into one church called the church of Asia, and addressing them all together. Can you imagine the suffering church in Smyrna sitting there together with the others, and hearing, "I have somewhat against thee?" No, God had no censure for them. Nor the church at Philadelphia. Can you imagine the church of Laodicea sitting there in the congregation with the saints from Philadelphia, and hearing, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name?"

Just a few thoughts on the above comments, again following what I believe to be the logic and I know brother that you will correct me if I am wrong. Are you saying that what Jesus spoke to the church's in Asia, through John, did not have individual and universal application to all of Christendom? That it only applied to each individual church? It seems to me, that

t the Biblical example is the Holy Spirit, speaking through John, in a role as Prophet, to the whole Church down through the ages.

And just to be correct, I am not talking about "self styled prophets," as I am sure almost all on this forum would reject. I am talking about the genuine prophet, the one who speaks where and when and to whom the Lord directs Him to speak, whether that be to an individual church, or the "whole Church," to use your own phrase. I just want to be clear that we agree that God speaks to men, gives them words to speak, and they speak. That indeed, there is still Prophets on the earth. Perhaps we do not?.....Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/16 20:19

Quote:

apollus wrote:

Are you saying that what Jesus spoke to the church's in Asia, through John, did not have individual and universal application to all of Christendom? That it only applied to each individual church? It seems to me, that the Biblical example is the Holy Spirit, speaking through John, in a role as Prophet, to the whole Church down through the ages.

...I just want to be clear that we agree that God speaks to men, gives them words to speak, and they speak. That indeed, there is still Prophets on the earth. Perhaps we do not?.....Frank

We agree. God speaks to men; there are still prophets on the earth. And apostles, too.

As to what you ask about whether what Jesus spoke to the churches in Asia has "individual and universal application to all of Christendom... down through the ages" ...Of course it does. You might as well ask that of the whole Bible.

But Jesus said that when the Comforter was come, He would "receive of Mine, and shew it unto you."

So the Holy Spirit speaks specifically to the churches what they need, when they need it. He does not speak "of Himself," that is, from Himself, but only what the Son of God in Heaven speaks. And what does that translate out to?

"He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Jesus said, concerning the whole book of The Revelation, "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (Rev. 22.16).

He didn't say, "in the church." There are different aspects of truth that apply to different churches at different times. And no doubt certain things that apply to The Church as a whole. It's very comforting to know it's all in the hands of the Holy Spirit to give what's needed when it's needed, whether comfort, or chastening... or whatever.

...I don't want to get bogged down trying to analyze this particular question, if you understand what I am saying. I am finding myself very moved about this aspect of truth concerning the different churches, the different lampstands, companies of saints in different places, with a few elders in their midst guiding... each church being individually responsible to the Throne of Heaven. This is a powerful reality. It breaks that "control thing" in man, takes it entirely out of his hands (and out of the hands of the god of this world, if I may say).

There is something so awesome about this, something of great spiritual beauty. It completely broadsides much of the "structure" of church as we know it in our day. That Babylon thing is completely demolished by this.

And in my own case, I am asking the Lord to help me see it more clearly through His own eyes. I'm getting the impression it is of great interest to Him, great importance to Him, is very precious to Him. I want to see it as He sees it.

And so I hope what He is saying and showing us doesn't get lost on us. I hope we can recognize that He is speaking to us, and gracing us with revelation.

Ron B. said earlier that revelation should bring us to prayer (something along that line). In other words, we don't just take

that revelation for granted. We get seeking God about it, so that it becomes Light we walk in, not just doctrine we know.

Abraham, whenever he had a fresh revelation from God, he built an altar there. He didn't just carry on business as usual. He saw there would be a cost to this. That he would need to present himself afresh to God a living sacrifice.

There is a danger concerning revelation. A snare. We see the revelation. Do we see the snare? For if we don't walk in the revelation being shown us, if we don't build that altar there, as Abraham did, we may think we have light. But it could well be our light is darkness to us.

AD

Re: , on: 2009/1/16 22:19

Dear brother AD...We agree on much. In fact the following quote from your reply is a good example.....

"There is something so awesome about this, something of great spiritual beauty. It completely broadsides much of the "structure" of church as we know it in our day. That Babylon thing is completely demolished by this."

I would just ask, what "Babylon thing?"

I too have no time for the structure of church as we know it. You are preaching to the choir. I am an ex-Catholic who knows first hand all about power structures of men. Sadly, I have seen this in the denominational world, the non-denominational world, the pentecostal world, this mystery religion structure where the power flows through one priest, one minister, one pastor, one man, in some pentecostal circles it has devolved into a form of gnosticism.

Yet, and I could be wrong, even calling out this "Babylon thing," would be considered meddling under the construct which is being discussed. I liked this quote from your reply.....

"It's very comforting to know it's all in the hands of the Holy Spirit to give what's needed when it's needed, whether comfort, or chastening... or whatever."

The Holy Spirit speaks truth. When the word of grace is spoken, in a church or at a gathering of churches, those that have ears to hear will hear what they need to hear. God is simply God. If you need rebuking that is what you will hear, if you need comforted you will be comforted. He is not angry one night and gentle the next, He just is. And when truth is spoken it does its work. There is no danger of the Word causing offence because it is misdirected. If someone is hurt or offended by a word that is not appropriate for them or directed at them, they have a problem which they need to deal with. If we use Paul Washer as an example it may be helpful, just since his name is already out there. When he addressed several thousand Baptist youth from many different churches several years ago, and warned them that what they have may not be salvation, would that be an offense to someone who was genuinely saved in the crowd? When Jesus addresses a wicked and adulterous generation, would that be an offence to those who did not seek after a sign? The Holy Spirit goes before His word and prepares the hearts of the hearers. When the Holy Spirit speaks through His people, it has a purpose and it hits its mark. It penetrates the hearts of the hearers, sometimes there are three thousand saved, sometimes the one who the word is spoken through is stoned, either way, it hits its mark. As long as we have Him, as long as it all starts with His presence, then we have nothing to worry about.....Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/17 11:14

Quote:

appolus wrote:

I would just ask, what "Babylon thing?"

There's much that could be said about this, a lot of which tends to become incendiary.

I've seen a lot of it too, as you said, in both "the denominational world and the non-denominational world."

There is that hierarchy kind of structure in churches; it is foreign to the Spirit of God, is not built from the divine blueprint.

But I've known people who've made a big thing about "coming out of Babylon," and lo and behold, there is another little Babylon kingdom flourishing very well.

But I'm thinking more particularly of the efforts of men to unify churches and Christians in a way that is not the Spirit of God. This is Babylon (or at least, part of a Babylonish world order).

As I mentioned in an earlier post, the candlestick was of one whole piece of gold, beaten work. It was not a bunch of separate pieces of metal artificially held together.

And so, I believe it is God's will that in a certain locale, all the true believers become joined together in a unity that is integral. In one candlestick. They are one body, one flock, with one eldership among them, and the Lord Himself in their midst.

When you see things like "ministerial associations" in which the pastors and priests of all the denominations in a certain city come together to try to work together... This is Babylon. It's not the unity Jesus spoke of in His high priestly prayer "that they all may be one, as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in us..."

Or, you hear of "coalitions of apostles." That's Babylon, for sure. Such a thing is alien to the Spirit of God, and the Kingdom of God.

This is why it is so important, this matter of recognizing that the Lord Jesus Christ wants local churches to seek to walk in relationship with Him as head of the church... and leave the greater, the larger picture, to Him. In this way, as we submit to this, and give the Spirit of God His lordship, He will bring forth a unity that will cause the world to believe (Jn. 17.21).

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/17 12:57

Quote:
-----Are you saying that what Jesus spoke to the church's in Asia, through John, did not have individual and universal application to all of Christendom? That it only applied to each individual church? It seems to me, that the Biblical example is the Holy Spirit, speaking through John, in a role as Prophet, to the whole Church down through the ages.

Did you listen to my session at Greenock?

I made reference, I think, to our portrait in the Revelation. I reject the progressive eschatological interpretation that concluded we are now in the 'Laodicean' age. I think this interpretation has blinded us to the real significance of these passages.

I believe that all scripture is God breathed and all relevant but we have a great need to interpret and apply the scripture in the right way. First we take the simplest interpretation that these 'messages' were directed to individual local churches and that the description of those individual churches and the messages given is very specific. However, there is an application to every individual and not just to the local church messengers; he that hath ears to hear let him hear what the Lord says to the churches. That is to say although these are church specific messages every hearer is encouraged to listen to what the Lord is saying to the churches.

I see in this passage of scripture all the elements, a kind of identikit palette, of various conditions. I think that every church

ch will find its portrait here, not in the crude 'this church age is Pergamos' or 'this church age is Laodicean' . If we listen to what the Spirit is saying He will put his finger on the conditions that make up an individual church identikit.

Consequently every detail in these descriptions is potentially applicable to any local church but I do not believe that any local church will exactly fit the bill as we find it here.

Re: , on: 2009/1/17 14:00

Hi AD

You wrote.....

"And so, I believe it is God's will that in a certain locale, all the true believers become joined together in a unity that is integral. In one candlestick. They are one body, one flock, with one eldership among them, and the Lord Himself in their midst."

Could you define what "a certain locale," means to you? We agree on much and I am still searching to see if this is not a matter of semantics.....Frank

Re: , on: 2009/1/17 14:09

Quote.....

"Did you listen to my session at Greenock?"

My comments were directed to brother AD in regard to his comment below.

"But I can't imagine God lumping those seven churches in The Revelation into one church called the church of Asia, and addressing them all together. Can you imagine the suffering church in Smyrna sitting there together with the others, and hearing, "I have somewhat against thee?" No, God had no censure for them. Nor the church at Philadelphia. Can you imagine the church of Laodicea sitting there in the congregation with the saints from Philadelphia, and hearing, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name?"

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/17 18:29

Quote:

appolus wrote:

Could you define what "a certain locale," means to you?

I've been thinking about this, and am not sure I am clear on it yet.

In The Revelation, each of the seven cities mentioned had one church.

The church in Ephesus... The church in Smyrna... And so on.

It seems to me an area where Christians can gather together for fellowship-- I mean, physically, not virtually-- would have one church.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/17 18:34

Quote:

"Did you listen to my session at Greenock?"

My comments were directed to brother AD....

...But I think Philologos has given a very satisfying answer to your query. I concur with what he shared.

AD

Re: , on: 2009/1/17 19:35

Quote....

"In The Revelation, each of the seven cities mentioned had one church. The church in Ephesus... The church in Smyrna.. . And so on. It seems to me an area where Christians can gather together for fellowship-- I mean, physically, not virtually -- would have one church.'

I agree, and if we are looking to Scripture for our guide, then it should be our guide. Here is the Biblical record...

The phrase "The church," is used 70 times in the NT. 19 OF them talk about "The Church of God." The word "churches," is used 35 times. In those 35 times it makes reference to seven names. Judea, Galatia, Asia, Galilee, Samaria, Cilicia and Macedonia. Every one of these is either a province or a region. There is not one example of "churches," used in reference to a city. If we are to just use the Biblical source, then it seems clear. Each city had one church, any other thought would be an argument from silence.....Frank

Re: , on: 2009/1/17 19:37

Quote....

"But I think Philologos has given a very satisfying answer to your query. I concur with what he shared."

I am glad that you are satisfied brother

:-) One man's satisfaction is another man's frustration :-)Frank

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/17 20:16

Quote:

"The Church of God." The word "churches," is used 35 times. In those 35 times it makes reference to seven names. Judea, Galatia, Asia, Galilee, Samaria, Cilicia and Macedonia. Every one of these is either a province or a region. There is not one example of "churches," used in reference to a city. If we are to just use the Biblical source, then it seems clear. Each city had one church, any other thought would be an argument from silence.....Frank

Are you advocating the Witness Lee position?

Re: - posted by Questor, on: 2009/1/17 20:29

Quote:

Acts 13

1Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them

3And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

Minister = To serve

They **ministered** fasting, praying, and speaking to a local assembly, and the Holy Spirit intervened, telling them to separate out Barnabas and Saul for other work.

Every time I see the word minister, I see 'taking care of'!

How do we take care of God?

And if we are not clear on this matter, how can we minister/serve to 'the CHURCH'?

Only the Holy Spirit can minister to 'THE CHURCH'.

And none of us should dare to mention 'THE CHURCH' in a critical way, nor any other Church or assembly anywhere.

If we cannot minister to them, they are outside our hands, and we should not dare to speak otherwise.

Q

Re: , on: 2009/1/17 20:39

Quote....

"Are you advocating the Witness Lee position?"

Never heard of him brother. I am really just interested in what Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches us , emphatically, that every city had its own church. Anything that deviates from that flows from man and not from God.....Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/17 23:25

Quote:

philologos wrote:

...I have heard of Witness Lee, and have a vague idea what he taught. What is the Witness Lee position?

AD

Re: Who decides?, on: 2009/1/17 23:33

Then I guess the question becomes "who defines the true church in each city or locale?", and "What is the disciplinary role of the overseers concerning that discernment?"

Since they aren't from God, wouldn't you want to shut them down somehow?

Quote:

appolus wrote:

Quote....

"Are you advocating the Witness Lee position?"

Never heard of him brother. I am really just interested in what Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches us, emphatically, that every city had its own church. Anything that deviates from that flows from man and not from God.....Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/17 23:37

Quote:

appolus wrote:

Quote....

"But I think Philologos has given a very satisfying answer to your query. I concur with what he shared."

I am glad that you are satisfied brother

:-) One man's satisfaction is another man's frustration :-)Frank

:-)

The encouraging thing, Frank, is that our Lord will yet have us all in one mind (1 Cor. 1.10). From our perspective I'm sure we all despair at times as to whether this could ever happen.

But Paul says there is provision-- the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ-- to bring this about.

While we anticipate this, then, we are all exhorted to be kind and patient with one another, and forbearing.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/18 13:45

Quote:

-----Questor on 2009/1/17 22:29:08
Every time I see the word minister, I see 'taking care of!'

Caring is an aspect of all ministry but the root of 'ministry' is the idea of being a waiter at a table.

This word for 'minster' is

(<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg3008&tKJV>) Strong's G3008 - leitourgeo; It is a word from which we get our word 'liturgy' but it is the word used of priests 'serving' God.

Come bless the LORD
all ye servants of the LORD
who stand by night in the house of the LORD.

This is not the outward ministry at the altar but the secret inner service of God in the Holy Place.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/18 13:49

Quote:

-----Never heard of him brother. I am really just interested in what Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches us, emphatically, that every city had its own church. Anything that deviates from that flows from man and not from God.

Scripture 'teaches' no such thing. It is a legitimate interpretation and consistent with the revelation of scripture. But we cannot reconstitute a 1st century context by organising 'joint meetings'. We have no idea of the size of churches in the New Testament era other than in Jerusalem.

a local church is not defined by its public meeting.

Re: , on: 2009/1/18 14:20

Quote.....

"The encouraging thing, Frank, is that our Lord will yet have us all in one mind (1 Cor. 1.10)"

I am encouraged by that thought brother. Yes, He will yet have us all in one mind, as amazing as that thought is. To me, it's all about the seasons. You can call it seasons or dispensations or whatever. It seems clear that Jesus called people hypocrites because they could not discern the signs of the times, especially as that time drew near. And quite simply, we do not have the luxury of time, in my opinion, any more. There is the "fierce urgency of now."

If I could use Greenock as an example, just because many of us now know of it. It's a town of about 60,000. Roughly 4% of the population of the town go to church on a regular basis. There are over 70 different gatherings of "Christians," on a Sunday morning. There were 5 people at the church my mum and dad attends, this morning. The town has a reputation for drugs and violence. Darkness reigns over the town. Now, the Christians, the bearers of light, do they come together and fight the darkness? Now I am not talking about "The Church," just the people who are called by His name in one small town.

Do you think the enemy is pleased? Can you just hear one of C.S. Lewis's demons from "Screwtape Letters," laughing at their division? There are 70 different denominations because at some point someone did not like the color of the carpet, someone was offended by an interpretation of Scripture, someone did not like the sign gifts and so on. If we look at the Biblical model, we see one town, one church. Now, today, we scoff at that notion because that notion is filtered through our own wisdom. We have deemed that thought a ridiculous one. Yet, it is inescapable that the divisions amongst genuine Christians were and are caused by man and not God. We know what God says about unity. We know what God says about being of "one accord," or "in one mind."

And so the responsibility lies with us. It is easier to divide and start our own church rather than sort out our problems. There is a famine and a drought going on all across Christendom in the West. When a famine hits a country, it affects everyone. The good, the bad, the ugly. A drought is the same. When the Prophet stands upon the mountain and declares to the people "choose ye this day whom ye will serve," this is a challenge from God to the people, His people. Shortly thereafter the drought ends.

So, being pragmatists, where does that leave us? I believe that we will begin to see pastors coming together. They will put aside notions of pre-eminence. The call will be made and whoever will come will come. Behind it all will be the Holy Spirit. One can stay in the desert and still be a child of God, or one can cross over into the fullness of God.

One of the pastors from our SI prayer group is being used to share and to reach out to other pastors in his area and has had joint prayer meetings in which there was standing room only. This is a seed, I believe that with all my heart. If we honor God and His Word and do what it teaches us to do, He will enable it, no matter how preposterous it seems. The sermon on the mount is preposterous, outside of God's enabling Spirit. And what will drive us to Him and His will? Hunger and thirst. May the hunger and thirst for God's presence drive us to a place of His choosing. In Mark 1:12 Jesus was "drove," into the desert.....

G1544

ἐκβάλλω

ekballō

ek-bal'-lo

From G1537 and G906; to eject (literally or figuratively): - bring forth, cast (forth, out), drive (out), expel, leave, pluck (pull, take, thrust) out, put forth (out), send away (forth, out).

In Genesis 3:24 man was "drove," out of the garden. God knows what it takes to fulfill His will and if we have to be "drove," by the Spirit in order to get to a certain place of His choosing, then that is what will, and I believe is, happening.....
Frank

Re: , on: 2009/1/18 14:29

Quote

"Scripture 'teaches' no such thing. It is a legitimate interpretation and consistent with the revelation of scripture. But we cannot reconstitute a 1st century context by organising 'joint meetings'. We have no idea of the size of churches in the the New Testament era other than in Jerusalem."

What Scripture teaches us brother is that in every single reference to a town or city, it makes only mention of "the church." There is not a single example of the plural used in reference to city or town, only region. Now, one can extrapolate different meanings from that I suppose, but the data cannot be changed and so it is our only indication. It's not about reconstituting a first century context. It is simply looking at the way they gathered, as opposed to the monstrosity that we have today, which is more of a Catholic model than anything.

I guess we would have to agree to disagree on that brother, unless you have a Biblical example of more than one church in a city?.....Frank

Re: , on: 2009/1/18 14:44

Hi brother, you write....

Then I guess the question becomes "who defines the true church in each city or locale?", and "What is the disciplinary role of the overseers concerning that discernment?"

"Since they aren't from God, wouldn't you want to shut them down somehow?"

I think that these are two excellent questions. I believe, and this is just my opinion, that the Holy Spirit, first and foremost would have the lead. Can I suggest that people will go where the life is? Someone once asked me if I would go back to the Catholic church after I got saved at the age of 26? My reply was, that I had just left the cemetery and I am now among the living, why would I go back to death? I know that demoniac, after being healed by Jesus, would no longer live in the cemetery, His first desire was to be where Jesus was.

When God moves amongst His people, a hungry and a thirsty people, they will come to Him. "Come to me," Jesus says, "all those who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." In Revelation He tells us that "He stands at the door and knocks." If one is to open the door one has to move towards the door. If a movement comes, where pastors join forces with each other, and it is led of God, the people will come. Christians are fiercely independent people, just as the Jewish people were, but in adversity, it is unity that causes one to survive. The disciplinary role of the overseers will be that of the Biblical model.....Frank

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/18 17:07

Quote:

-----Now, today, we scoff at that notion because that notion is filtered through our own wisdom.

I never met anyone who 'scoffed' at that notion and I doubt that you have either.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/18 17:08

Quote:

-----Its not about about reconstituting a first century context. It is simply looking at the way they gathered, as opposed to the monstrosity that we have today, which is more of a Catholic model than anything.

You don't know how they gathered and neither does anyone else.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2009/1/18 17:42

Dear Brethren,

A very interesting thread going on here and just thought I would drop a thought in here.

What we do know is this:

1 Corinthians 3:5-15 (KJV) 5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?
6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.
8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.
9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.
10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.
14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.
15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

That the foundation for the church has already been laid by the Apostles and all of us after them are building thereon. We are told to take heed how we build upon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Every building must be according to the original pattern or we will suffer loss.

We know that the building of God is spiritual for his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. We also know:

Ephesians 4:7-16 (KJV) 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?
10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:
16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

We also know:

1 Peter 2:5 (KJV) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The bible never gives us any specifics concerning material houses, buildings, or places to meet. He just tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Although the word does talk about order and a pattern of worship that is acceptable with God. I hope to read and comment more later.

Blessings to all!

Re: , on: 2009/1/18 20:38

Quote...."I never met anyone who 'scoffed' at that notion and I doubt that you have either"

Here is my full quote.....

"Now, today, we scoff at that notion because that notion is filtered through our own wisdom. We have deemed that thought a ridiculous one. Yet, it is inescapable that the divisions amongst genuine Christians were and are caused by man and not God. We know what God says about unity. We know what God says about being of "one accord," or "in one mind."

When I suggested this earlier in the thread, you replied...."I fear it would be a farce. I tremble that someone might actually try to organize it."2008/12/23 12:14

Dear brother, I would never presume to tell you what has been said to you over the span of your life. You asked me earlier to challenge you scripturally. I gave you the facts about what words the Holy Spirit used when he talked about "churches," plural and church singular. And the fact remains, in every place, without exception, the word church is used in regard to town or city. I believe that the Holy Spirit carefully chooses the words that He uses and we must take our cue from that, even if we do not fully understand the workings of a church in a town or a city, although the church at Corinth gave us quite a few clues.....your brother in Christ, Frank

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/18 20:41

Quote:

philologos wrote:

You don't know how they gathered and neither does anyone else.

That's true, and I think God has purposely veiled the details from us, lest we try to reproduce it by ourselves without Him, and think we were fulfilling the will of God. We seem so inclined by nature to try to do things independently of Him.

But if we don't know just exactly how they did gather, we do know for sure how they didn't.

The church at Antioch that we read of was not composed of various denominations. When the church of Antioch was gathered together, this was not the denominations in Antioch getting together from time to time for special events, and to pr

omote unity.

Rather, they were one in the Spirit, a community of the Holy Spirit living within the community of Antioch.

How they met was a secondary thing.

The Witness Lee thing was mentioned earlier. I didn't receive an answer (yet) as to my question about what the Witness Lee position is. I recall people speaking negatively about it some years ago, but I couldn't recall much about what they'd said. So I checked the internet earlier, and it seems he had this "one city, one church" teaching.

But the impression I got, upon what I read, is that Witness Lee had a pretty heavy-handed structure in place in his attempt to reproduce this truth. And he more or less wrote off others who gathered outside of his organization.

Even so, I believe this is truth, this "one city, one church." The Mormons make a big thing about the Melchizedek order of the priesthood. Their teaching is deception. But that doesn't make the Melchizedek order as presented by Scripture deception.

So with this "one city, one church." It is truth, regardless of how the Witness Lee organization has distorted it. There is something here about the autonomy of local churches, and the Lordship of the Spirit of Christ, that is beautiful truth.

God's will and design is that all the saints in a certain city, or town, be one church. One lampstand. I anticipate He will yet have this. Will yet bring this into being. It will no doubt take great shakings, and a powerful move of the Spirit of God. But He will bring this into being.

And all of His genuine saints will be "gathered" in one church, not scattered among the different denominations.

One church in each locale. Not a mega church, I don't mean that they will all gather under one roof, except, maybe, from time to time as He directs for specific purposes.

I don't know how they would gather. I incline to think they would be gathering in homes, in different homes, coming together in larger gatherings from time to time, as there was liberty to do so.

But it's not the meeting itself that is the church. The church is the community of believers, and they come together as the Spirit of life leads them together.

Paul in addressing the Romans, spoke of Priscilla and Aquila, and "the church that is in their house" (Rom. 16.5). It's my opinion that the whole church in Rome didn't meet in Priscilla's and Aquila's living room. No doubt there were other gatherings in other homes throughout the city (and I do not think a gathering in order to be valid must necessarily be held in a home).

Yet Paul calls the church that met at Aquila's a church in its own right. "...The church that is in their house."

Because, "where two or three are gathered together..." That's a church, is it not?

And it's no doubt the same picture at Ephesus, and Antioch, and Jerusalem, and Philadelphia, and so on.

One city, one church... Yet there are churches within that church, which themselves would be autonomous, yet perfectly one and in harmony with their brethren gathering elsewhere in the same city. Like a rock thrown in a pool, with ever widening circles.

It's a beautiful prospect.

But to think of the "pastors" of a certain area starting to realize what the scriptural order is and trying to get this up and running... I would just remind us all of what happened to Uzzah when he reached out his hand to steady the Ark. I for one am not going to try to figure this out, and set it up, and reproduce it with my own hands.

I just want to walk in my pathway, and let the Lord of the church build His church.

Like someone has said. The Lord will yet reveal what He can do with the man who will not touch the glory. (Which is why Uzzah was smitten. The ark was to be carried with staves on the shoulders of the priests. No man was to get his fingerprints on it.)

...The Lord has been pleased to give us a little understanding of these things. But we can't fabricate them just because we see a little now the way things ought to be. How deeply we need the Lord of the church in our midst! I mean in a way that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is ruling in the churches, causing things to take the shape that LIFE produces.

And maybe from that perspective, it's time to seek Him. Seek HIM, I mean. Not FOR these things we want to see, but for HIMSELF.

"For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye ME, and ye shall live.

But seek not Bethel..."

I know, it's good to have some understanding of the true scriptural order concerning Bethel (house of God). But if that's as far as it goes, we might still find ourselves trying to dissect it all, when others who are hungry for the living God are drawing His Presence into their midst.

"Seek the LORD, and ye shall live... Seek Him that made the seven stars, and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning... the LORD is His Name" (Amos 5.4-8).

AD

Re: , on: 2009/1/18 20:48

Quote....

"It's not about reconstituting a first century context. It is simply looking at the way they gathered, as opposed to the monstrosity that we have today, which is more of a Catholic model than anything." You replied....

"You don't know how they gathered and neither does anyone else."

Yet in an earlier post on this thread you wrote to me ...

"You are trying to understand the scriptures in the light of current circumstances. I am saying that we will never understand current circumstances until we understand the scriptures in their original context." 2008/12/22 22:06

I totally agree with that statement brother. You further wrote.....

"Take a look at the word 'churches' in the New Testament. You will find several instances where our current usage would be to say 'the church' and in each one you will find the reference is to 'the churches'. This ought to tell us our current conceptions have strayed from the original." 2008/12/22 22:10

When one takes a look at Scripture, as you suggested, one finds no reference, none, to churches, plural, in regard to town and city, only regions. And so yes, "this ought to tell us our current conceptions have strayed from the original."brother Frank

Re: One church in one city - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/19 5:10

Quote:
-----AD wrote: God's will and design is that all the saints in a certain city, or town, be one church. One lampstand. I anticipate He will yet have this. Will yet bring this into being. It will no doubt take great shakings, and a powerful move of the Spirit of God. But He will bring this into being.

I accept that it was very probable that in the first century the church in each location was considered 'one church'. We do n't know how big these were and it maybe that the numbers were such and more importantly THE PURITY OF DOCTRINE that this was the case. Without doubt this is the original plan Jesus has for His church 'that they may be one' (John 17). If you consider Paul's letters to Corinth and Ephesus, he urges them to be 'of one mind', 'to be in unity', 'operate in harmony as various members making up one body' etc. If we take it that these letters are to ALL the believers in that locality then there should not be 'seperate' churches. Different, but NOT seperate.

It seems also that the believers met in smaller groups in houses (from house to house) and it is probable (to my thinking) that these smaller groups would have some degree of autonomy with elders caring for these sheep, but also recognising they were part of the larger 'church' in that particular city or region'. This is just my theory and I know it is hard to prove absolutely. I am basing this on the earlier thoughts in the thread about the family being the starting point for grouping and leadership/responsibility. As a Father (and Grandfather) my first responsibility is to care for and shepherd my family, then as others become connected to us through witnessing, relationship etc they also come within this unit of care (not permanently or rigidly). It is a natural, organic process. Ideally if we were to try and base this on what we can understand from scripture, these smaller extended family groups would then also gather with other groups in the same locale and submit to one another, recognising those who were already Elders of the smaller groups.

However, that is not where we are today at this present time. I think to try and manufacture this would cause many problems. There are such movements here in the UK such as 'churches together' and all they do is try and bring together a lot of seperate 'denominations' and compromise the truth and have unity on the lowest common denominator. Today we have a lot of 'denominations' that call themselves Christian, but have gone so far from the truth and we have a few true believers that are scattered within a wide number of these churches among many 'professing' christians (wheat among Tares), So here in is the problem!

I think that maybe (as many think probable) that when persecution comes because of the gospel, to the church in the West, then this will sort out the true saints from professing 'Christians' and then maybe this gathering of all the true believers in one location will become the norm and happen naturally by the holy Spirit).

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/19 5:13

Quote:
-----The phrase "The church," is used 70 times in the NT. 19 OF them talk about "The Church of God." The word "churches," is used 35 times. In those 35 times it makes reference to seven names. Judea, Galatia, Asia, Galilee, Samaria, Cilicia and Macedonia. Every one of these is either a province or a region. There is not one example of "churches," used in reference to a city. If we are to just use the Biblical source, then it seems clear. Each city had one church, any other thought would be an argument from silence.....Frank

You have made this statement more than once so let's take a look at it...

Quote:
-----The phrase "The church," is used 70 times in the NT. 19 OF them talk about "The Church of God."

I am not sure where you find this figure of 19. I can only find 8 such references...

Acts 20:28; 1Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1Tim 3:5 and the last of these ought to be 'a church of God', definite article being omitted. Of these 8 only 2 are location specific:

To the church of God which is at Corinth, 1Cor 1:2b NKJV

To the church of God which is at Corinth, 2Cor 1:1b NKJV

Both of these are part of the 'address' to which Paul sent his letters. Only the Corinthian and Thessalonian letters are specifically addressed to a 'church'. The other letters that we refer to are usually addressed to the 'saints' in a particular location.

During the time of the New Testament, despite many pressures, the saints at Corinth remained as 'the church in Corinth'. Paul was promised 'many people' in Corinth (Acts 18:10) but so far as we know they always continued under one leadership as the church of God in Corinth.

In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to 'the whole church coming together'. 1Cor 14:23 Can we presume from this that there might have been occasions when the 'complete' church did not assemble as one gathering; house meetings, home groups...? I think we can otherwise I see no point in the adjective 'complete'.

We can see other kinds of meetings in the NT. for example we find a public meeting taking place in Ephesus. Acts 19:9. This meeting is plainly not a 'gathering of the church' in Ephesus but is much more orientated towards the outsider. (Watchman Nee has some interesting observations about this in the book 'Normal Christian Church Life') The daily 'reasoning' in the school of Tyrannus was not a 1 Cor 12-14 meeting, but was a function of Paul's ministry. Did the local saints support it? I am sure they did but it was not their 'body meeting'.

In distinction to a church like that in Corinth we have 'the saints in Rome' Romans 1:7. Gibbon estimated that the population of Rome at this time was approximately 1,200,000. How many of these were 'saints'? We don't know but someone (Robert perhaps) can calculate some possible percentages for us. I can manage a simple one; 1% would create 12,000 saints. Where are they going to meet as the 'whole church' gathered together? You may call it speculation but there must have been dozens, if not hundreds, of functioning 'body gatherings' in Rome. Perhaps it is not without significance that the scripture makes no reference to the 'church in Rome'?

Re: , on: 2009/1/19 11:42

Quote....

"I am not sure where you find this figure of 19. I can only find 8 such references..."

Actually there are many more when we narrow it down to "the church." Here are just some, I can give many more.....Act 2:47, 5:11, 8:1, 8:3, 11:22, 11:26(a considerable crowd) 12:1(Herod persecutes "the church") 12:5, 13:1, 14:27, 15:3,4,22, 18:22, 20:17,28(significant) 1Cor 1:2, 6:4, 10:32(significant)

There is a wealth of Scripture to establish the fact that in each city or town there was only one church. There is not a single example of "churches," plural in regard to city or town.

Quote.....

"Rome at this time was approximately 1,200,000. How many of these were 'saints'? We don't know but someone (Robert perhaps) can calculate some possible percentages for us. I can manage a simple one; 1% would create 12,000 saints. Where are they going to meet as the 'whole church' gathered together? You may call it speculation but there must have been dozens, if not hundreds, of functioning 'body gatherings' in Rome. Perhaps it is not without significance that the scripture makes no reference to the 'church in Rome'?"

A couple of observations here since we are in the realm of speculation. Ravenhill speculated that 2% of modern America was actually Christian. If that is anywhere close to being true, then the percentages in Ancient Rome would have been minuscule in comparison, especially when you consider that death was a real possibility just for being a Christian. Yet, let's say that I give you your speculation brother, it would change nothing, there would still be just one church in each city,

perhaps with many gatherings as AD suggested in his recent reply. As for there being no reference to the "church in Rome," and that being significant, we would probably agree that we do not base our interpretations of Scripture on what it does not say, when we have an overabundance of Scripture that has already established the fact that there was only one church in each city or town.

So, for argument sake Ron, lets say we agree that there is one church for each city and town with, depending on size of city and town and the amount of believers, multiple gatherings. Would each of these gatherings have elders ? I do not believe so. My main reason for not believing that is that we do not have any scripture to support that theory. We do know that churches had elders and deacons, we know that from Scripture. If each little gathering had elders and deacons and so on, there would be much room for schisms. How would that work in practical terms? Well, for instance, in your gathering you identify someone who is cheating on their spouse. You approach that person to no avail. You take another brother with you and that produces nothing. Now you have to call "the church." If that man remains unrepentant, then he would be expelled from "the church." Today, to avoid discipline, one could simply move to the church down the street or a denomination that approved of your particular sinful behaviour (homosexuality being one example)

It still comes back to the fact that denominationalism is not Scriptural and is an offence to God. He has equipped us for everything that we need to worship together. There was no more a diverse group than the group of twelve that Jesus called. Yet they were unified in Spirit because of Jesus. It is our model, and we should strive to be perfect and follow the Word of God, no matter how implausible it may seem.....Frank

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/19 14:18

Quote:
-----So, for argument sake Ron, lets say we agree that there is one church for each city and town with, depending on size of city and town and the amount of believers, multiple gatherings. Would each of these gatherings have elders ? I do not believe so. My main reason for not believing that is that we do not have any scripture to support that theory. We do know that churches had elders and deacons, we know that from Scripture.

No we don't know that each church had elders and deacons. There is no mention of elders or deacons at Antioch. Only the Philippians letter includes 'deacons' in its greetings. The references to deacons in 1 Tim and Titus do not mean that 'all churches had elders and deacons'. I believe strongly in eldership but a church can be a powerful testimony to Christ and a real light bearer without elders or deacons.

Are you advocating some kind of linked eldership with jurisdiction over all the saints in a city? How are you defining city? London is made up of two cities, the City of London and the City of Westminster, would that be two churches or one?

Quote:
-----"I am not sure where you find this figure of 19. I can only find 8 such references..."

Actually there are many more when we narrow it down to "the church."

I know there are more references to 'church' but you quoted a figure for the phrase 'the church of God' and I can't find out where you had it from.

church: Matt 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3-4, 22; 18:22; 20:17, 28; Rom 16:1, 5, 23, 27; 1Cor 1:2; 4:17; 6:4; 10:32; 11:18, 22; 12:28; 14:4-5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 35; 15:9; 16:19; 2Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; Eph 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32; Phil 3:6; 4:15; Col 1:18, 24; 4:15-16; 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1; 1Tim 3:5, 15; 5:16; 2Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philem 1:2; Heb 2:12; 12:23; James 5:14; 1Pet 5:13; 3John 1:6, 9-10; Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14

churches: Acts 9:31; 15:41; 16:5; 19:37; Rom 16:4, 16; 1Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:33-34; 16:1, 19; 2Cor 8:1, 18-19, 23-24; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Gal 1:2, 22; 1Th 2:14; 2Th 1:4; Rev 1:4, 11, 20; 2:7, 11, 17, 23, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 22:16

church of God: Acts 20:28; 1Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1Tim 3:5

churches of God: 1Cor 11:16; 1Th 2:14; 2Th 1:4

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/19 14:19

Quote:

-----We don't know but someone (Robert perhaps) can calculate some possible percentages for us.

:o Well, I'm gone for 3 days and this reputation I can't live up to is still carrying me before it. :-P

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/19 14:35

Quote:

-----It seems also that the believers met in smaller groups in houses (from house to house) and it is probable (to my thinking) that these smaller groups would have some degree of autonomy with elders caring for these sheep, but also recognising they were part of the larger 'church' in that particular city or region'. This is just my theory and I know it is hard to prove absolutely.

It's my theory too. When faced with the evidence that we have in the scripture we need to create a scenario and then check it against the facts. I think your scenario is consistent with the biblical evidence.

Quote:

-----I think that maybe (as many think probable) that when persecution comes because of the gospel, to the church in the West, then this will sort out the true saints from professing 'Christians' and then maybe this gathering of all the true believers in one location will become the norm and happen naturally by the holy Spirit).

I have visited many of the 'old iron curtain countries' for over 20 years now. The authorities often forced smaller groups into larger conglomerates. In some countries a church had to decide whether they were Orthodox, Brethren or Pentecostal. You can tie a cat and a dog together by their tails but it doesn't produce unity. :-D

Quote:

-----Without doubt this is the original plan Jesus has for His church 'that they may be one' (John 17).

one, as we are one... Is that a physical union? is it a visible union? I know that the world is supposed to 'see' something but just what can they see if only the regenerate can see the kingdom of heaven? John 3

There is a 'unity of the Spirit' which just happens; I think you and I experienced that 'happening' at Greenock? If we dig into the small print we will certainly find differences in emphasis but such things are no hindrance to genuine 'unity in the Spirit'. Gee... I don't even agree with myself ALL the time! ;-)

We are admonished to 'preserve' the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. We cannot create it but we must be diligent to maintain it.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/19 15:19

Quote:

Heydave wrote:

Without doubt this is the original plan Jesus has for His church 'that they may be one' (John 17). If you consider Paul's letters to Corinth and Ephesus, he urges them to be 'of one mind', 'to be in unity', 'operate in harmony as various members making up one body' etc. If we take it that these letters are to ALL the believers in that locality then there should not be 'seperate' churches. Different, but NOT seperate.

It seems also that the believers met in smaller groups in houses (from house to house) and it is probable (to my thinking) that these smaller groups would have some degree of autonomy with elders caring for these sheep, but also recognising they were part of the larger 'church' in that particular city or region'.

Hi Dave,

I agree pretty much with your whole post, but just highlighted a bit of it.

Different, but not separate. That says it.

In perfect harmony, yet unique expressions of the manifold (variegated) wisdom of God.

And I believe this is the very reason why the Lord places such emphasis on the importance of the local churches being a utonomous (am still searching for a better word than autonomous) ...and subject directly to Himself.

I have often noticed (when travelling) how terrain can vary so greatly. Mountainous terrain has a unique kind of beauty. But then after a few miles you are in the foothills, and then the prairies... Very different expressions of one law of life in the natural creation.

And so shouldn't the New Creation reveal unique expressions of the glory of the Lord too?

AD

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/19 15:35

Quote:

-----one, as we are one... Is that a physical union? is it a visible union? I know that the world is supposed to 'see' something but just what can they see if only the regenerate can see the kingdom of heaven? John 3

I knew when I wrote that I was going setting myself up :-) It's a subject easy to be mis-interpreted. I do agree with the fact that we are already one in Spirit. As I said in an earlier post, we are to keep the unity of the Spirit while we grow in the unity of the faith (doctrine). Ref. Ephesians 4. This latter part is the hard bit!

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/19 15:40

Quote:

-----I have often noticed (when travelling) how terrain can vary so greatly. Mountainous terrain has a unique kind of beauty. But then after a few miles you are in the foothills, and then the prairies... Very different expressions of one law of life in the natural creation.

Quote:

-----And so shouldn't the New Creation reveal unique expressions of the glory of the Lord too?

Hey I really like this :-D

Thanks for this, it warms my heart!

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/19 15:47

Quote:

philologos wrote:

I believe strongly in eldership but a church can be a powerful testimony to Christ and a real light bearer without elders or deacons.

Yes.

We are so used weak Christianity, it's all most of us have ever seen... with the people never growing to stature, perpetually in need of "caregivers" to take care of them.

But isn't it the "job" of elders to work themselves out of a job?

This scripture comes to mind:

"...That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be cornerstones..." (Ps. 144.12)

Grown up in their youth!

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/19 16:05

Quote:

Heydave wrote:

Hey I really like this :-D

Thanks for this, it warms my heart!

It warms my heart, too, Dave.

It makes me greatly desire to give the Lord His lordship in my life, so that He can bring forth that particular expression of Himself that He has in mind for me.

I do believe this to be the answer to the unity problem. I think, if you understand what I am saying, we should forget about trying to be one, and rather... if I just walk in the Spirit, and give Him His lordship in my life, I cannot help but be one with others who are doing the same. It's a spiritual reality.

My life might be (no doubt would be) a very different expression from theirs, but it will be in perfect harmony.

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/19 16:53

Quote:

-----And so shouldn't the New Creation reveal unique expressions of the glory of the Lord too?

I heard a speaker say once that if you give men trees they will plant orchards in perfectly straight grid pattern with sorted rows by category. But when God plants trees we get the majestic country sides like we see in New England during the fall. I thought it was a good point.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/21 7:39

Quote:

-----ADisciple on 2009/1/19 17:47:33

But isn't it the "job" of elders to work themselves out of a job?

Not really because the elders' (plural) job is the oversight of the whole local assembly. The elders may well, as individuals, be called upon to 'separate' from the local assembly as in Acts 13 for some other work that God has for them.

There is a provocative statement in the OT, the poor you have with you always. In every assembly there will always be those who need the personal care of the elders (and of other saints). Our objective with these saints is certainly to 'work ourselves out of a job'.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/21 11:18

Quote:

philologos wrote:

In every assembly there will always be those who need the personal care of the elders (and of other saints). Our objective with these saints is certainly to 'work ourselves out of a job'.

Yes, this is what I had in mind. I think of Paul's teaching, that the ascended Christ gives the gifts of apostles, prophets, etc. for the equipping of the saints TILL...

"Till we all come (unto) the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a (full-grown) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ..." (Eph. 4.11).

TILL. That is, they have worked themselves out of a job. The body, equipped and provisioned by the ministries, is now enabled to "edifies ITSELF..." by means of a working that the apostle calls "love."

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/21 11:51

I have been wondering about the ordaining of elders.

This is an area (among many) that I don't have much understanding about. I've wondered if maybe you (Ron) had in mind to discuss this eventually. (And maybe it's something you have already touched on earlier, and I somehow missed. There are a lot of pages back there now.)

I'm thinking of this verse in Titus.

"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1.5).

(Interesting to see that: "elders in every city...")

But what is this all about, ordaining elders? Surely this is something beyond a ceremony, a procedure, of some kind.

And if the elders were ordained by the apostles, what does this say of apostolic authority relative to eldership authority?

Because I don't think the apostles were set over the elders in a hierarchical kind of way. They numbered themselves among the elders (1 Pt. 5.1).

I am wondering if it isn't right here that things began to go awry in the early church. Not because this was not of God, but because it was taken in a wrong direction, and men began ordaining one man to be the bishop over certain areas.

In my Bagster's Englishman's Greek/English Interlinear (which is the complete source of my obvious in-depth knowledge of Greek :-)) the letter to Titus concludes with this: "To Titus, of the Cretans assembly first overseer chosen..." It's called the subscription, but a note at the bottom of the page says that it's not considered part of the original manuscript by certain scholars (who are listed).

But there it is. "Titus, chosen the first bishop of the church of Crete..."

2 Timothy has a similar subscription. "To Timotheus second, of the of the Ephesians assembly the first overseer chosen, written from Rome..."

And so this tries to tell us Timothy was THE first bishop of the church of Ephesus.

But again a note at the bottom of the page, stating that certain scholars reject this as being part of Paul's original manuscript.

I am inclined to agree that these subscriptions were added later. For the setting up of one man as bishop of a church is contrary to the scriptural pattern.

But it shows us how early this hierarchical structure came on the scene, to our sorrow.

EDIT: I have no idea how much later these subscriptions were added to the original manuscripts. I mean, I don't know just when it was that this thing of "one bishop" over churches entered in. Probably very early, but just when, I don't know.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/22 15:08

Quote:

-----ADisciple on 2009/1/21 13:51:45

In my Bagster's Englishman's Greek/English Interlinear (which is the complete source of my obvious in-depth knowledge of Greek) the letter to Titus concludes with this: "To Titus, of the Cretans assembly first overseer chosen..." It's called the subscription, but a note at the bottom of the page says that it's not considered part of the original manuscript by certain scholars (who are listed).

But there it is. "Titus, chosen the first bishop of the church of Crete..."

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But again a note at the bottom of the page, stating that certain scholars reject this as being part of Paul's original manuscript.

I am inclined to agree that these subscriptions were added later. For the setting up of one man as bishop of a church is contrary to the scriptural pattern.

These are just comments that the KJV first added and have no basis in the text. Others have just assumed that they are true even if uninspired but as you say they are contrary to what is revealed elsewhere throughout the NT.

Quote:
-----"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I have appointed thee" (Titus 1.5).

(Interesting to see that: "elders in every city...")

But what is this all about, ordaining elders? Surely this is something beyond a ceremony, a procedure, of some kind.

How shall we define 'a city'? I notice that the scripture does seem to distinguish between a 'town' and a city'; Matt 9:35; 10:11; Mark 6:56; Luke 8:1; 13:22 although the KJV and the NKJV don't seem to distinguish between a town and a village. Others have tried to identify what 'city' might mean in our contemporary world. I mentioned elsewhere that sometimes what is referred to as a city ie (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_Westminster) London is legally 2 cities; the city of London and the city of Westminster. If you walk down the north side of the river Thames in London you will see where the civic boundaries lie. Some have suggested we ought to use the old postal districts, others have suggested obvious features like rivers or main roads but it is really just a human concept and one that changes from person to person; this is why the strict concept of 'one city, one church' does not and never did hold water. The city of Rome is one of the few cities that correspond in size to modern cities and surely Rome would have had many local gatherings of the saints.

Some think an first century city would have had walls! We still have one or two of those in the UK but not many. So the area of a 'city' is really impossible to measure.

As regards the input of apostles or their delegates into the ordination of elders, that is a topic we can give some time to.

The word for 'ordain' in Tit 1:5 is

(<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg2525&tKJV>) Strong's G2525 - καθίστημι which means 'to appoint'. Vines has this comment

Appoint, Appointed:

a strengthened form of No. 1, usually signifies "to appoint a person to a position." In this sense the verb is often translated "to make" or "to set," in appointing a person to a place of authority, e.g., a servant over a household, Mat 24:45, 47; 25:21, 23; Luk 12:42, 44; a judge, Luk 12:14; Act 7:27, 35; a governor, Act 7:10; man by God over the work of His hands, Hbr 2:7. It is rendered "appoint," with reference to the so-called seven deacons in Act 6:3. The RV translates it by "appoint" in Tts 1:5, instead of "ordain," of the elders whom Titus was to "appoint" in every city in Crete. Not a formal ecclesiastical ordination is in view, but the "appointment," for the recognition of the churches, of those who had already been raised up and qualified by the Holy Spirit, and had given evidence of this in their life and service (see No. 11). It is used of the priests of old, Hbr 5:1; 7:28; 8:3 (RV, "appointed").

Vine, of course, was Brethren so that might shape his thinking a little.

The word 'ordain' used of the work of Barnabas and Paul is
(<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg5500&tKJV>) Strong's G5500 - χειροτονέω which is used in...

So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23 NKJV

and

and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind, 2Cor 8:19 NKJV

of this word Vines says

Appoint, Appointed:

primarily used of voting in the Athenian legislative assembly and meaning "to stretch forth the hands" (cheir, "the hand," t eino, "to stretch"), is not to be taken in its literal sense; it could not be so taken in its compound procheirotoneo, "to choose before," since it is said of God, Act 10:41. Cheirotoneo is said of "the appointment" of elders by apostolic missionaries in the various churches which they revisited, Act 14:23, RV, "had appointed," i.e., by the recognition of those who had been manifesting themselves as gifted of God to discharge the functions of elders (see No. 2). It is also said of those who were "appointed" (not by voting, but with general approbation) by the churches in Greece to accompany the Apostle in conveying their gifts to the poor saints in Judea, 2Cr 8:19.

The word did originally mean to 'appoint' by 'stretching out hands in a vote' but the meaning of a word depends upon its use and not its origin.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/23 9:50

Quote:
-----The word did originally mean to 'appoint' by 'stretching out hands in a vote' but the meaning of a word depends upon its use and not its origin.

So in the process of recognizing folk that God had His hand on, there was also a need to follow the guidelines in the Pastorals? Was this to help guide the appointments so as not to confuse a gifted teacher with an elder, etc?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/23 12:15

Quote:

philologos wrote:
As regards the input of apostles or their delegates into the ordination of elders, that is a topic we can give some time to.

Vines has this comment

Not a formal ecclesiastical ordination is in view, but the "appointment," for the recognition of the churches, of those who had already been raised up and qualified by the Holy Spirit, and had given evidence of this in their life and service (see No. 11). It is used of the priests of old, Hbr 5:1; 7:28; 8:3 (RV, "appointed").

Vine, of course, was Brethren so that might shape his thinking a little.

Even so, I think this gets it right. And it accords with your earlier reference to God advising Moses to "gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people..." (Num.11.16).

Elders whom thou knowest to be elders.

The following quote is from T. Austin-Sparks, "Explanation of the Nature and History of This Ministry."

"...Neither had we studied the New Testament with the object of trying to formulate a New Testament church or its order. We have since come to believe that the New Testament does not give a full and final pattern for reproduction and imitation.

"Thus, having set aside all the former system of organised Christianity, we committed ourselves to the principle of the organic. No 'order' was 'setup', no officers or ministries were appointed. We left it with the Lord to make manifest by 'gift' and anointing who were chosen of Him for oversight and ministry. The one-man ministry has never emerged. The 'oversers' have never been chosen by vote or selection, and certainly not by the expressed desire of any leader. No committee

s or official bodies have ever existed in any part of the work. Things in the main have issued from prayer."

I like that.

AD

Edit. The Austin-Sparks article is (www.austin-sparks.net/english/000535.html) here.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/23 14:05

Quote:

philologos wrote:
How shall we define 'a city'?

...Some have suggested we ought to use the old postal districts, others have suggested obvious features like rivers or main roads but it is really just a human concept and one that changes from person to person; this is why the strict concept of 'one city, one church' does not and never did hold water. The city of Rome is one the few cities that correspond in size to modern cities and surely Rome would have had many local gatherings of the saints.

I see your point. The "one church one city" concept seems to become too rigid a straight jacket to impose on the kind of demographics we have in our day. You mentioned the London/Westminster situation. And there are cities elsewhere in the world where the population numbers several millions.

Yet the importance of the autonomy of local churches cannot be overstated.

What then do you see to be the factors that govern the limiting boundaries of a local church?

I am thinking they can't be strictly external regulations.

(By the way, thanks for the time you took to answer my question in some detail... the one about ordaining elders, I mean .)

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/23 14:52

Quote:
-----RobertW on 2009/1/23 11:50:13
So in the process of recognizing folk that God had His hand on, there was also a need to follow the guidelines in the Pastorals? Was this to help guide the appointments so as not to confuse a gifted teacher with an elder, etc?

The Pastorals don't really add a lot to our understanding of the mechanism of appointing 'elders'. 1 Tim and Titus have a lot to say about the credentials of 'elders' but most of what is in those lists could be (should be?) the character of any maturing Christian. The word 'mature' there is instructive.

6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 1Tim 3:5-6 NKJV

I used to think this 'credential' was a bit superfluous but it may have a different significance. We always need to tread gently when we dip into unfamiliar words but (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg3504&tKJV>) novice is Strong's G3504 - neophytos and originally meant a newly planted one. Vine's says

Novice:

an adjective, lit., "newly-planted" (from neos, "new," and phuo, "to bring forth, produce"), denotes "a new convert, neophyte, novice," 1Ti 3:6, of one who by inexperience is unfitted to act as a bishop or overseer in a church. In the Sept., Job 14:9; Psa 128:3; 144:12; Isa 5:7.

but if you look up those Septuagine references you will find that sometimes does just mean a 'newly planted' thing. Here's my suggestion... this may not just be referring to 'new converts' but to 'newly planted' saints in the local assembly. I think many of us will have experienced the trials of 'newly planted' saints who arrive with their own agenda. It can be very disruptive and can easily create polarizations. If on the other hand a new arrival who is already a mature Christian or teacher, is required to acclimatise before taking on leading responsibilities some of those struggles would not take place.

The other special credential of course is 'teachishness', my own word; the instinct to instruct the saints.

You may notice that I avoid the word 'qualifications', this is simply because you might have a saint with all of these credentials but who was not intended, by God, to function as an overseer. These lists in the Pastorals are 'generalisations'... these are the kind of people who can be recognized as overseers.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/23 14:53

Quote:
-----ADisciple on 2009/1/23 14:15:42
Even so, I think this gets it right. And it accords with your earlier reference to God advising Moses to "gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people..." (Num.11.16).

I think so too but I thought is only fair to point out to others that Vine will have his own way of looking at things... as do we all.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/24 0:19

...Just finished listening to your session at Greenock, Ron, the one on "the word of His grace." (Am feeling a bit "backwards" about not listening to it till now...)

I found it so refreshing, so encouraging. Thank you.

And I have the answer to my own question as to what governs the perimeters of a local church.

We just so deeply need the Lord of the church Himself in our midst!

As Austin-Sparks said in the bit that I quoted earlier, the new testament doesn't reveal to us all the detail of how they "did church."

It's so we will cry unto the Lord of the church to come into our midst HIMSELF.

Lord, help us part ways with our chronic bad habit of trying to get it all figured out apart from YOU... and trying to put it all together, without YOU!

...Help us to repent of our twin evils: of forsaking the Fountain of living Waters, and hewing out for ourselves all these myriad of "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Help us: we recognize that Your call to repentance, to return to YOU, must itself be the enabling "word of Your grace."

Israel in the wilderness, they went after YOU. It was YOU they were in love with! But then they left that first love, and fell in love with Your "things."

"The priests said not, Where is the LORD? And they that handle the law knew Me not" (Jer. 2.8).

How much do we do that ourselves, Lord, becoming so familiar with all the things of your "law," even all the "new testament" things... and at the same time know so very little of hearing, seeing, handling... the Word of Life?

Lord, help us to return to our first love.

AD

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/24 10:08

Quote:

-----Lord, help us to return to our first love.

Amen to that!

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/26 12:07

Perhaps having had a bit of a pause here I could ask how elders are typically to handle folk that begin to do things that could be characterized as not being 'decent' and 'in order' within the meeting? Obviously we want God to use the body, but what about when a person oversteps the boundaries or is coming off in a harsh way?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/26 14:41

Hi, Robert. Are you asking how the priest is to trim the lamps?

This verse comes to mind.

"And Aaron shall burn thereon (on the altar of incense) sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth (or, setteth up) the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it..." (Ex . 30.7,8).

In other words, the tending and trimming of the lamps was to be done by the priest in an atmosphere of incense. There was to be an atmosphere clothing, covering, protecting this work on the lamps.

David said, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense..." (Ps. 141.2).

So this "dressing" of the lamps must be conducted in a spiritual "atmosphere." Prayer, the Presence of God in the cloud of the incense filling the tabernacle... this must be there.

And when it is, the High Priest Himself will be there, walking in the midst, and the Wisdom of God will be there, dealing with things often spontaneously. And not always necessarily through the ones who "seem to be pillars."

Of course, if that Atmosphere is not there, we end up resorting to rigid controls, designated speakers, prearranged agendas, etc. And are back to square one.

Here's a quote from Azusa Street by Frank Bartleman.

"We were obliged to deal firmly with extreme cases, but in the main the Spirit passed over and moved out of the way irregularities, without further advertising them. Many have declared we cannot throw our meetings open today. Then we must shut God out also. What we need is more of God, to control the meetings. He must be left free to come forth at all costs... Through prayer and self abasement God will undertake for the meetings. This was the secret in the beginning... A spiritual atmosphere must be created, through humility and prayer, that Satan cannot live in. And this we realized in the beginning. It was the very opposite of religious zeal, and carnal, religious ambition."

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/26 14:49

Quote:
-----Through prayer and self abasement God will undertake for the meetings. This was the secret in the beginning... A spiritual atmosphere must be created, through humility and prayer, that Satan cannot live in. And this we realized in the beginning. It was the very opposite of religious zeal, and carnal, religious ambition."

What happens when things seem to get out of hand with an individual and they try to take over a meeting? Almost like the person is in a totally different context than everyone else?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/26 16:31

Quote:

RobertW wrote:
What happens when things seem to get out of hand with an individual and they try to take over a meeting? Almost like the person is in a totally different context than everyone else?

Then I would say (not laying aside what I said earlier about that needed Atmosphere) the person needs to be spoken to.

But initially not in the gathering, I would say. I think there's wisdom in what the early Quakers used to do. They had a name for the open meeting, and when someone was disruptive they would seek grace to keep the meeting on course, if possible, and then later two or three would take that one aside privately and address the issue frankly.

And I think we need that "word of His grace" as much for this kind of thing as for anything else.

AD

Re: , on: 2009/1/26 20:18

AD writes...

"So this "dressing" of the lamps must be conducted in a spiritual "atmosphere." Prayer, the Presence of God in the cloud of the incense filling the tabernacle... this must be there."

Tozer writes.....

"The world is evil and the times are waxing late and the glory of God has departed from the church as the fiery cloud once lifted from the door of the Temple in the sight of Ezekiel the prophet. The God of Abraham has withdrawn His conscious presence from us and another God whom our fathers knew not is making himself at home among us. This God we have made and because we have made him we can understand him: because we have created him he can never surprise us, never overwhelm us nor astonish us, nor transcend us. The God of glory sometimes revealed Himself like a sun to warm and bless, indeed, but often to astonish, to overwhelm and blind before He healed and bestowed permanent sight. This God of our fathers wills to be the God of their succeeding race. We have only to prepare Him a habitation in love and faith and humility. We have but to want Him badly enough, and He will come and manifest Himself to us."

We can trim the lamps, but what is a lamp without oil? How goes the lamp without a spark to light it?.....Frank

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/26 21:47

Quote:
-----This God we have have made and because we have made him we can understand him: because we have created him he can never surprise us, never overwhelm us nor astonish us, nor transcend us. The God of glory sometimes revealed Himself like a sun to warm and bless, indeed, but often to astonish, to overwhelm and blind before He healed and bestowed permanent sight.

This statement from Tozer really challenges me. It is almost like he is saying that human nature by default wants to put God in a box. We know what He has revealed in His word, but even many of those things are rejected. So it seems as if there is a huge low micron filter that God has to somehow pass through before He is received.

It is amazing to me how the Pharisees had all kinds of laws and fences around the laws and such; but they had no FIRE. We need (http://mp3.biblebase.com/mp3/MrNorth/hi/fire1_GWN-Fire_on_the_altar.mp3) FIRE on the Altar. What greater question can we hear than, "Where is the Fire?"

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/27 3:52

Quote:
-----What happens when things seem to get out of hand with an individual and they try to take over a meeting? Almost like the person is in a totally different context than everyone else?

Robert, do you remember that picture of the ducks and geese in the hallway of my home?

I saw it on someone's wall and chuckled out loud. It is called 'the meeting' and is an artists picture of about 30 ducks and geese in various configurations. Some are clearly 'together' and conscious of it, some are 'out on their own' with their beaks aloft, some are looking bemused.... It reminded me so much of what can be the practical outworking of the theory of some of this discussion. Years later the friend sent me a copy and it has pride of place in my hall. I frequently pause, on my way to our meeting, and chuckle.

For this pattern to 'work' we need to encourage the saint to maintain an assiduous walk with the Lord. Otherwise 'the meeting' is just going to be a performance event. One of our leaders sometimes quotes the little comment of Paul 'let the meeting eat at home'. By this he means we ought not to be coming to 'the meeting' for our ordinary rations; we ought, each one, to eat at home. Sometimes one hears the phrase, 'I didn't get much out of it'... to which the real answer is 'how much did you put into it?' The issue with many patterns of meetings is that there is, in reality, very little opportunity for input. Many, especially larger meetings, degenerate into a Christian spectator sport. The architecture of the room will tell you instantly what kind of meeting the leaders have in mind. I know God can break through... I question whether or not he should need to!

Sometimes a contribution will apparently cut right across the apparent direction of the meeting; did you notice all those apparentlies? I do believe the God will give the oversight to the oversight in these things and that it is the responsibility of the elders to 'watch over' the flock at its gatherings. Sometimes the best thing to do is just 'nothing'. The flow of life in the blood of a healthy person will rectify many intrusions to its natural flow and even cope with alien invasions. I remember many years ago a surgeon saying to me 'many diseases are self curing if we can just keep the patient alive long enough'. The concept stuck in my mind.

If the life of God is flowing in the gathering it can 'cope' with many little anomalies. If it is a serious block to the direction of the meeting our elders will, very occasionally, just gently say eg 'let's sing that a little later and give some time to what the Lord is saying just now.' If someone persisted in marching to the sound of his own drum one of them would find the time and place to raise the issue and gently admonish them.

In all these things disposition is everything and legislation to be avoided.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/27 3:56

Quote:

-----appolus on 2009/1/26 22:18:20

We can trim the lamps , but what is a lamp without oil? How goes the lamp without a spark to light it?.

I think he probably had in mind a comment from the Greenock conference where I said that the trimming of the lamps and the actual filling with the oil was the designated responsibility of the High Priest alone and never delegated to other priests.

We beat out the oil daily but put it at the disposal of the High Priest.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/27 9:15

Quote:

-----Ron's: In all these things disposition is everything...

I recall once that Mr. North talked about the spirit in which a person says things; i.e., if their tone is harsh and critical or angry- this should not be. I'm just trying to reconstruct the jest of what he said. What happens when folk go into an angry tirade denouncing and being pushy scaring folks?

By way of analogy I recall how Peter Jackson in LOTR used a special effect to show the sharp sudden realization that the ring was evil when someone would reach out to touch it. What happens when we have that 'sense' that there is something fishy behind the words?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/27 10:40

Quote:

philologos wrote:

In all these things disposition is everything and legislation to be avoided.

Good word.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/27 10:42

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

We need (http://mp3.biblebase.com/mp3/MrNorth/hi/fire1_GWN-Fire_on_the_altar.mp3) FIRE on the Altar. What greater question can we hear than, "Where is the Fire?"

Haven't had a chance to listen to this yet, Robert. Who is speaking?

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/27 10:49

Quote:
-----Who is speaking

Mr. North. I think is is one of the most significant sermons I have ever heard. At least in my top 2 or 3. It deals with the correlation between our being exceedingly on the altar and God answering the offering of ourselves to Him by FIRE.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/27 11:06

Quote:

appolus wrote:
We can trim the lamps , but what is a lamp without oil? How goes the lamp without a spark to light it?.....Frank

I appreciate your burden here, Frank, and share it.

It's seems there is such a "dearth" these days, as you have mentioned in different posts the last while.

"The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth" (Joel 1.10).

Many of the situations we face are the symptoms that diagnose this very thing. The Oil is missing.

...But I am encouraged to trust that our great High Priest sees (with His seven eyes) and knows all about this, and has th e seven horns of power as well, all power in Heaven and in earth, accomplish His work.

I have a real anticipation in my heart these days, of seeing Him once again walking in the midst of the lampstands, and d ealing effectively with all things, with grace, and love, and wisdom, and tact, and authority.

...And not just seeing Him, but recognizing Him, in this one, and that one, as He moves in the midst of the assembly.

AD

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/27 11:51

Quote:
-----Sometimes the best thing to do is just 'nothing'. The flow of life in the blood of a healthy person will rectify many intrusions to its nat ural flow and even cope with alien invasions. I remember many years ago a surgeon saying to me 'many diseases are self curing if we can just keep th e patient alive long enough'. The concept stuck in my mind.

Although I agree with the general principle being stated here, however it does raise other concerns and issues. I accept that if every small deviation or off beat word is 'jumped on' then all that will do is hinder others from feeling free t o share. So your principle would be OK for these minor issues, but where there is a more serious deviation from truth I t hink there is a need for a much clearer and public correction. What I am thinking of is where there is a clear doctrinal po sition stated that would be considered to be error.

Let me given an example (thinking of something we would all agree on): Someone may hold to the teachings of certain well known T Bently or the hypa Health, wealth, prosperity doctrine and share a 'word' in a meeting which strongly emph asises these teachings. Although the mature will just reject this and move on, there will be those young and immature C hristians that could be led astray by this if not corrected publicly at this time. I'm sure we could all think of other situations .

The other issue I have considered is that if there is no real clarity on where a particular church stands on certain doctrinal issues, then it is possible that you will get a whole range of influences in the body that may be considered to be harmful and dangerous.

I know I might be sounding over cautious or 'paranoid' :-), but we know that 90% of what is on the UK God TV is anything but sound and many Christians are being conformed by this. Can we just rely on people being genuinely 'led of the Spirit' in these days? Don't we need a stronger voice in the churches today? It's fine in an 'ideal church' (I don't know one) where everyone is walking closely with the Lord and in the Spirit all the time, but we know this is not the case.

These are just some thoughts I had- not a clear position.

Having said all that I visited Ron's church (not his, but just for understanding) last Sunday morning where this type of body ministry operates and was blessed and enjoyed the clear, same word that came through many different people, in slightly different ways. There were none of the issues I raised above, but I'm just thinking of what COULD happen.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/27 22:43

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

Quote:

-----Who is speaking

Mr. North. I think this is one of the most significant sermons I have ever heard. At least in my top 2 or 3. It deals with the correlation between our being exceedingly on the altar and God answering the offering of ourselves to Him by FIRE.

Hi Robert. I listened to this message this evening. You are right. You are right.

North says at about the 1:00 hour mark, "...A life so pleasing to God (or, proceeding to God, I couldn't quite catch the word)...burning, burning, burning... That's it. Anything that hinders this is sin. That's the way you've got to regard it."

That makes me tremble.

A little further on he says that the reason the people were worshipping and saying, "Praise the LORD, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever..." (2 Chr. 7.3) it was far more than their being thankful for all the good He had done them. It was because the Fire had come.

Lord, be merciful to us!

...I feel humbled, filled with yearnings... that the Lord will "turn to ashes" my burnt sacrifice (Ps. 20.3, marg.).

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/29 22:20

As we continue to think about Elders I was reading Mr. North today on the subject of Elders. He notes how it is essential for elders to be a picture of Christ's unfailing love and devotion for the Church (for example). That their lives are to be an unblemished picture of love that endures and can survive severe troubles (my summary of his thoughts).

He also talked about the importance of the people and God being in agreement in the selection of elders.

How are pastors/teachers to function in a local body of believers? Are they to be sent out from a local assembly or do they operate independent of the church?

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/1/31 15:38

Quote:

RobertW wrote:

How are pastors/teachers to function in a local body of believers? Are they to be sent out from a local assembly or do they operate independent of the church?

Hi Robert. Your question has gone unanswered for a couple of days. I myself was waiting to see what others would say. I anticipated Ron B. would likely speak to this, and thought you were likely anticipating that, but perhaps he is on a journey or something.

So... I think this is a very important question. And I'm inclined to say that the answer to your question is, "Yes. Both."

But I don't think "independent of the church" is the right way to say this. (Although I know what you mean.) Not "independent," but "free."

Just as local churches are to be free to be subject to the Head in heaven, so each member of the local church is also free to be subject primarily to the Lord.

This is a beautiful spiritual order. There is to be a beautiful liberty of the Spirit enjoyed by each one of us, to walk with our Lord freely as He leads us individually. "He calleth His own sheep by name (individually, that is) and leadeth them out" (Jn. 10.3). The local body is not to stifle this liberty, but rather enhance it.

So, in reference to the pastor/teacher, he has complete liberty to walk in the Spirit as the Lord Jesus Christ leads him. And when he is able to have the further support of a local church confirming that leading, and blessing him as he pursues it, so much the better.

But when, as sometimes happens, this order gets mixed up, one of those unhappy yokes develops. And the local church ends up usurping that authority that is the Lord's alone.

In a couple of instances in Acts, the brethren were supported in the will of God by the local church.

In Acts 13, (and Ron B. covered this earlier on this thread, but I can't remember where, when he talked about "separate" and "sent," I think it was) we have this:

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" 13.3).

So they were sent forth with the support of the brethren. But the next verse says, "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed..."

It was the Holy Spirit who initiated this. This all began when "the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for t

he work whereunto I have called them."

If we put ourselves into that little picture for a moment, and imagine we are sitting there, quietly waiting on the Lord together with the rest of them, no doubt we would hear one of the brothers open his mouth and say, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul..."

But we are told it was the Holy Spirit who said this. No contradiction here, of course. That's how the Holy Spirit speaks. Through the members of Christ.

But just because the word came through one of the brothers, this was not a case of their being sent out from the local assembly in some way that usurped the authority of the Lord of the church Himself. It was the Holy Spirit who initiated this leading... and Paul and Barnabas bearing witness in their own spirits that this was right... (we must NEVER neglect that) ...and then the brethren later laying hands on them and praying and supporting them.

In 15.36, Paul says unto Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." It's obvious here that Paul is obeying the impulse of the Spirit of God, a leading in his own heart. It's the Lord who is leading him in this.

But then in 15.40, we read, "And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."

So they had the further witness and confirmation of the brethren as to the leading Paul received initially from the Lord.

There can arise great entanglements when this order is not carefully protected. And bondage, instead of liberty.

I realize it is likely that many of those at Antioch were probably itinerant ministers, but to my mind, this order, this liberty, applies not only to itinerant ministries but also to the "home-base" members of the local church. I mean, these are to enjoy just as much liberty to be led by the Spirit of God as the itinerant ministries.

...Colossians 2.19 sums it up for me. "...And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

Not holding the Head, from which ALL the body..." That is, each member of the Body is subject to the Head of the Body. My hand (which I use to minister to my body) may be joined to my forearm, and my forearm to my upper arm, and my upper arm to my shoulder... But my hand doesn't take orders from my forearm. My hand gets its directions straight from my head. I mean from me.

My hand is subject to my head.

Edit to add this: In light of this verse in Colossians it becomes immensely helpful to seeing the picture clearly when the pastor/teacher is able to see he is just one of those members of the body of Christ, and not a clergyman separate from them.

AD

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/2/7 22:29

Quote:
-----...Colossians 2.19 sums it up for me. "...And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Not holding the Head, from which ALL the body..."

That is, each member of the Body is subject to the Head of the Body. My hand (which I use to minister to my body) may be joined to my forearm, and my forearm to my upper arm, and my upper arm to my shoulder... But my hand doesn't take orders from my forearm. My hand gets its directions straight from my head. I mean from me.

It seems to me that this is essential to the growth of a local church. In Isaiah 66 it was the people wanting to build A Temple; but Jesus said that He would build His Church. So I see that we must be co-laborers with God, hearing what the Spirit says. Almost like the Holy spirit knows who the next person is to be added to the church and we have to be sensitive enough to God to be in place to co-labor with God in bringing it to pass.

Re: , on: 2009/2/9 18:21

Quote:
-----How are pastors/teachers to function in a local body of believers?

I love these verses that are emboldened. I read them word by word, over and over.

Eph 4:11-16 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
for the perfecting of the saints,
for the work of the ministry,
for the edifying of the body of Christ:
till we all come in the unity of the faith,
and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
unto a perfect man,
unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ:
from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted
by that which every joint supplieth,
according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,
maketh increase of the body
unto the edifying of itself in love.*

It appears that pointing the Body to its Head is the main focus, so that it can be a healthy, united and active Body by abiding in and being led to/by The Head.
Those verses are so beautifully written.
The focus is not on vs 11 - but 12-16.
The focus is to The Head Who is "Truth and Love" and is never 'inactive' in this world.
I find it all amazing.
HE is Amazing.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/2/10 11:43

Quote:

RobertW wrote:
So I see that we must be co-laborers with God, hearing what the Spirit says. Almost like the Holy spirit knows who the next person is to be added to the church and we have to be sensitive enough to God to be in place to co-labor with God in bringing it to pass.

Yes, and this "co-labour" applies to the increase not only of new converts, but also to the continuing spiritual growth of the members of the body. It is all our Lord's work, as He builds HIS church, our part being to abide in His yoke as workers together WITH Him.

Here's a beautiful verse: "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them..." Act 14.27).

How often I read that and totally missed what was being said. More or less reading it as "all the things God did BY them ..." You know, they were doing great things for God...

Then one day I saw it. "...All the things God had done WITH them." It was God, and they, working together. They did these things together with God, as co-labourers WITH God.

What a beautiful walk that is. How I greatly desire to enter more into that kind of a walk. ...Where, like the Son of God, we are not doing our own works, but are walking in a prepared pathway, doing only what we see the Son doing, as He did only what He saw the Father doing.

AD

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/2/10 11:50

Quote:

Jesus-is-GOD wrote:
I love these verses that are emboldened. I read them word by word, over and over.

Yes, and I hold them up to the Lord and ask Him to read them, too.

...Lord, do you see this? Do you see what's written here? ...Just reminding You, Lord... You haven't forgotten this, have you? This must be fulfilled yet...

AD