

IS THERE A PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Increasingly we hear in our midst that there is no pattern for the church and its activities in the New Testament. It is suggested that a major reason for our lack of growth and progress is that we are using the wrong model. By going back and trying to follow the examples of the early churches, we have become bogged down in a never ending process that has proved divisive. While the suggestions as to how we are to proceed in our efforts to please God and serve men seem vague, it appears that the end result puts a lot of things in the realm of human judgment and opinion, colored considerably by contemporary cultural factors. One could wonder what it is in the history of mankind that would make us believe that human wisdom and judgment would be more unifying than attempting to find and follow principles and teachings that come from the Word of God.

What follows is a brief Scripture study designed to help us see whether or not God has typically presented some kind of a brief, an outline, or a pattern for the things he has asked of mankind.

HAS IT TYPICALLY BEEN TRUE THAT GOD HAS PRESENTED A WAY WHICH IS CLEARLY ENOUGH STATED THAT WHEN WE LEAVE IT THERE IS AN IDENTIFIABLE SOMETHING TO WHICH TO RETURN?

Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus says the Lord, "Stand by the way and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is and walk in it: and you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, "We will not walk in it."
COMMENT It would seem that God had communicated a way in which people should walk, but they were rebelling and walking in their own ways. The remedy was to return to the "way of God" which had been given to them.

DID MOSES HAVE A PATTERN TO FOLLOW AS HE LED GOD'S PEOPLE?

"And Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it." (Exodus 25:8-9)." Now if He (Jesus) were on the earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "That you make all things according to

the pattern which was shown you on the mountain" (Heb. 8:4—6). COMMENT Beyond the teaching about the tabernacle and the priesthood, God gave a compendium of laws and procedures Israel was to follow. It is clear that God had a definite pattern that was to be followed. Variation could bring swift punishment (Lev 10:1 -3).

DID CHRIST HAVE SPECIFIC DIRECTION AS TO HIS TEACHING AND WORKS?

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work." (John 4:34). Jesus therefore answered, "Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner;." (John 5:19). "I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." (John 5:30). "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." (John 6:38). COMMENT It is clear that Christ understood that he was bound to follow the will of the Father in His life, words and teachings!

WAS CHRIST CAREFUL TO TRANSMIT TO THE APOSTLES THE TEACHINGS HE HAD BROUGHT FROM THE FATHER? DID JESUS OFFER ANY KIND OF HELP WHICH WOULD GUARANTEE THEIR AUTHENTICITY?

"I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do, and now glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. Now they have come to know that evergging Thou hast giv n Me is from thee·, for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them·, and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me." (John 17:4-8). "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper; that He may be with you forever, that is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:16-18). "But the Helper the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:16). "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father that is the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father; He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the

beginning." (John 15:26-27). "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me, for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you." (John 16:13-14). And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you-, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20). And He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things, and behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:44-49). And gathering them together; He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8). COMMENT: The uncontestable power of God which worked through the signs and wonders done by the Apostles served as the basis for convincing both the Apostles and those who heard them, that Christ had kept his promise to guide them by and through the Holy Spirit.

DID THESE APOSTLES, LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT SAY TO THE PEOPLE THAT THEY WERE PRESENTING TO THEM THE VERY WORD OF GOD, WHICH WAS TO SERVE AS A PATTERN TO GUIDE THEIR LIFE WITHIN THE CHURCH?

" We also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." (1 Thes. 1:13). "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." (2 Thes. 2:15). "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's, commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." (1 Cor. 14:37-38). "...In case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household

of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (1 Tim. 3:15) "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other" (1 Cor. 4:6). "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10). "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and abiding word of God...And this is the word which was preached to you." (1 Pet. 1:22-25). "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. "...Prescribe and teach these things Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching...Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." (1Tim. 4:6, 11, 13, 16). "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2:2). "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9). "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3). COMMENT The Apostles were convinced that even the words they chose were in fact chosen by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12-16).

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