

Where's The Gospel?

**Where's the
Apostleship?**

Most Christian churches do not study the history of the church.

Why?

Maybe because it might expose our mistakes!

There was an event in Christian history which was absolutely pivotal. this event and the results of this event reshaped the Christian church and whether we know it or not, serves to define Christian function to this day.

The event happened in the 4th century.

What was the world like back then?

In one word, crazy!

The Roman empire ruled the world, including Israel.

What was Roman rule like?

Was it harsh? Was it authoritative? Did they operate through an authoritarian hierarchy?

History tells us this is so, but did you know that Jesus Himself verifies this fact?

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;”
(Matthew 20:25-26, KJV).

“But Jesus called them to him, 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:
(Mark 10:42-43, KJV).

“And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;”
(Luke 22:25-29, KJV).

In this teaching Jesus speaks of the “kings of the Gentiles”. Certainly the Romans were the Gentile kings/princes who ruled Israel.

How did Jesus describe their government?

“.....their great ones exercise authority upon them.”

“One person exercising authority over another”

Again, this is historically accurate, but we don't need history to verify this fact--Jesus told us this was so. The Holy bible tells us this is so. And he had a reason for telling us this fact.

Jesus goes on to say....

“.....But it shall not be so among you:”

“.....But so shall it not be among you:”

“.....But ye shall not be so”

Jesus clearly and specifically stated, three times in scripture, that He did not want Christians to follow the specific human governmental concept of exercising authority one over another.

Are we aware of this Biblical warning?

Do we study this concept?

Do you study this concept in your church?

Do we also realize that, 1700 years ago, the Roman government, the “kings of the Gentiles” drastically reformed the Christian church? Changing the format and rules of function and the definition of ministry?

History Time

Perhaps you are aware of the emperor Constantine and his effect on the Christian church. Constantine was a Roman emperor in the 4th century. Up until this time, Christianity had been illegal in Roman. This was the era of cruel Christian persecution by the Roman government. The emperor Constantine made a 180 degree turnaround in this practice. He made Christianity legal in Roman. At the same time, he began to consult with and invite Christians to be part of the Roman governmental process.

Was this Gods' will?

Was Constantine truly a Christian?

The debate on these questions has raged on for centuries among scholars.

We don't need to enter these debates at all, we should just stick with the facts.

And, the fact is that these events happened 1700 years ago.

I believe that these events continue to effect and influence Christianity today.

Let's study more and see if you agree.

Constantine's decision has always overshadowed another event in Christian history which occurred shortly after Constantine's time.

the emperor Theodosius is responsible for, what I believe to be, the most influential event in christian history with regard to church function.

You see, Constantine made Christianity legal in Rome. The empire had had many religions and at that time Christianity became one of the "choices" Romans had in their religious practices. The emperor Theodosius was responsible for a giant change in Roman culture. He made the unprecedented decision to lawfully make Christianity the official Roman religion.

Suddenly, by the decree of the emperor (the "god above all gods"--according to Roman belief) it was illegal to be anything but a "Christian".

Here is a quote from a catholic history book.....

Masses of people joined the church.
Their registration and care required completely new forms of
organization and ministry.

the state, Christianity, only recently threatened in its very existence by the state during the last and most cruel persecution and still numerically only a small minority, was suddenly in the position to preach its belief publicly, to develop its religion, and to make known its maxims. Masses of people joined the church. Their registration and care required completely new forms of organization and ministry. The internal and external expansion of the catechumenate, the new attention paid to preaching and Christian instruction, the liturgical development, and the controversy with the still existing paganism gave valuable impulses to Christian theology. These people who now became Christians

Who can think ill of the bishops of this religiously agitated time for welcoming the aid of the state? They could only be glad if ecclesiastical canons, which now were worked out more explicitly, found official recognition as well and were supported, if necessary, by the "secular arm". Soon council decrees were published as imperial laws and thus incorporated into the political life. Constantine's sons continued on his course. Con-

Emperor Theodosius the Great

(379–394) in the eastern half (394–395 in the whole empire) finally raised Christianity to the exclusively legitimate religion of the Roman Empire. In the year 380 an imperial edict demanded that all subjects accept the religion "which the saintly apostle Peter transmitted to the Romans and which Pope Damasus (in Rome) and bishop Alexander (in Alexandria) practise". Conversion to paganism was made punishable in 381 and the Roman Senate, so far a refuge of the old state religion, solemnly had to disavow the belief in the gods. In 392 an imperial ordinance declared participation in pagan sacrifices in the temple as high treason. After that, paganism rapidly disappeared from public life. Christianity had become the official religion and the church

Again, this event is well-documented history. Have you ever heard about it before? Have you ever thought about the ramifications of this event?

Throngs of people were now, supposedly “Christian”, simply because the emperor said so.

Certainly, we can see the beginning of error. After all, being a Christian is a choice. Salvation is attained by faith in Jesus. This is a choice one must make--with the mouth and the heart..

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
(Romans 10:9-10, KJV).

Suddenly, being a Christian is redefined. Christianity was something enforced by law, and consisted of outward appearances rather than an inward choice and change of the heart. This new “christianity” became, as time went on, part of national and familial heritage. There was no more “decision for Christ”--the emperor had made that decision for everyone!

The “Christian nation” was born.

Whether we realize it or not, almost every Christian church has been birthed under the concept of a “Christian nation”. (More about this later.)

The same catholic history book made another statement about the events of the 4th century.....

“Simple apostleship was no longer necessary.”

What does this mean?

Well, first we ought to understand what “simple apostleship” was.

To do this we need to look at the new testament Bible.

Jesus operated through apostleship.

The church in the Bible also did so.

“ By whom we have received grace and **apostleship**.....”
(Romans 1:5)

“Apostles” were the first, the “primary” ministry of the new testament church..

“And God hath set some in the church, **first apostles**, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.....”
(1Corinthians 12:28)

What was apostleship?

Well, simply meeting together in small groups--groups of equals--(non-authoritarian!). Praying and asking God what to do, and then doing it--quickly, efficiently, spontaneously. Doing the best we humanly can to let God lead and be ready to carry out His commands to spread the Gospel.

The word apostle means “someone who is sent with a message”.

The Christian message that Jesus created, and the church in the Bible spread, was called the Gospel--the Good News of salvation--healing--deliverance--in the name of Jesus. This message brought to those in need--the poor--the hungry--the blind--the oppressed.....

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
(Luke 4:18-19, KJV).

If we study these verses carefully there is one final part to this Gospel--“release” which is apostleship itself. The phrase “to set at liberty” is in fact the Greek “apostolic” liberty. So, the Christian message, delivered through the function of apostleship--is this gospel--the Good News that Jesus saves--heals--delivers and releases.

This message is meant to be directed toward or sent to the poor--the needy and contained in the message of the Gospel itself is the release of all who believe to function in this same apostleship.

It is a self-propagating cycle (it is, in fact, the way God works).

It is not authoritarian in nature.

It does not need human government to work.

Jesus, in His ministry in the earth, stated that He “did nothing of Himself, but rather followed the commands of the Father in heaven..

“For I have not spoken **of myself**; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.”

(John 12:49)

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not **of myself**: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”

(John 14:10)

Jesus said He did not exercise authority over His apostles. He worked with them and not over them.

God the Father gave the specific commands to Jesus, and He worked with others to carry out these commands. and follow the authority of the Father.

Jesus was under the authority of the Father, but did not exercise authority over those He worked with. Does that make sense to you? Jesus said it was how He worked. It was how He defined His actions, (not a judgment call I am making-!).

This was the perfect example that the church in the Bible followed, but for one change. After Jesus died, was resurrected and ascended, all authority was given to Him. He then became the “Head” of the Church.....

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power** is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matthew 28:18)

“And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the **head** over all *things* to the church,” (Ephesians 1:22)

“And he is the **head** of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.” (Colosians 1:18)

The only Potentate..

“Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only **Potentate**, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;” (1timothy 6:15)

The only One who is meant to exercise authority over the Church.

That is who Jesus is supposed to be.

So. Apostleship was the functional plan of Jesus and the church in the new testament Bible.

It was a non-authoritarian system designed to work with instruction from a leader who was not physically present.

Apostleship was the Bible system of function, designed by God to spread the Gospel.

But, in the 4th century, someone, some unknown, unnamed person made the decision that “apostleship was no longer necessary”.

Was this the right decision?

I think that most Christians do not realize that this decision has been made for them, by someone, in a long ago time, under extraordinary circumstances.

It's reasonable to believe that the Christians of that day were forced to make this decision, and in a strange way, it almost makes sense....

think about it.

If everyone is a “christian” then there is simply no need to function in a plan designed to spread the gospel.

No more need to work together in small groups and spread the Good News.

Something else was “invented”.

“New forms of function and ministry were invented”

The Christian church was radically reformed in the 4th century in order to accommodate the dictate of a Roman emperor.

The “church” was reinvented.

What was the result?

The catholic church.

Go to a catholic church next Sunday and you will get a pretty good idea of the “new form of ministry” which was “invented” in the 4th century.

Catholic Church--Where's the Bible-?

What is the functional plan of the catholic church “mass”?

- 1. Meet repetitively and have a sabbath day.**
- 2. Build and maintain a large meeting place called the “house of God/sanctuary”**
- 3. First comes praise and worship.**
- 4. The priest/pastor has authority over the congregation.**
- 5. The congregation (non-ministers) are obligated to give offerings/tithe.**

Is there a Biblical basis for this format?

Yes, it is found in the old covenant.

In the old covenant God gave Israel laws that were commandments--laws that served to expose sin. (These laws are basically unchanged in the new covenant). But, in the old covenant, Israel was also given another set of laws, another set of instructions, which could be categorized as sacrificial law.

The commandments made Israel aware of sin, but God also gave Israel a way to be cleansed of sin...

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

(Leviticus 17:11, KJV).

Blood cleanses sin.

This is a Godly concept in both covenants--but--(hopefully!) we Christians ought to know whose blood cleanses ours in-!

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious **blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:” (1Peter 1: 18-19)

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the **blood** of Jesus **Christ** his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1John 1:7)

But Israel quite obviously did not have the blood of Jesus as their sin offering, instead, God gave them a very detailed method that needed to be followed in order to make atonement for sin. Yes, blood on an altar, but they had to build the altar, in the right place, and they had to have the correct authority to shed the blood, and they had an amount of blood that God required (and they had to offer other crops as well).

What did Israel have to do to make atonement for their sin?

- 1. Meet repetitively and have a sabbath day.**
- 2. Build and maintain a large meeting place called the “house of God/sanctuary”**
- 3. First comes praise and worship. (an entry gate of praise and an inner court of worship)**
- 4. The priest/pastor has authority over the congregation. (The Levitical priesthood)**
- 5. The congregation (non-ministers) are obligated to give offerings/tithe.**

Does that list look familiar?

Well it's the same basic set of operations that the Roman church decided to utilize as their functional plan (yes, they did not sacrifice animals--but they decided they still needed “all the cutlery” to do so!)

This is the stuff that replaced apostleship.

When the Roman church decided to take on this functional plan, and forsake apostleship they completely removed the operational plan the new testament gave for spreading the Gospel.

They replaced it with an authoritarian human government.

They removed the Gospel function from the Christian meeting.

Didn't need it any more--everyone was a Christian!

They threw out Jesus' functional plan as well as the example of the church in the Bible, in favor of an authoritarian government from the old covenant.

They chose a failed government of old testament Israel, a governmental plan which in fact was not even Gods' highest plan for the nation of Israel.

Gods' first, highest plan for His people Israel was that every member be a priest.

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests**, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:5-6)

A nation of priests--ministers--servants to God.

Israel refused the idea.

They demanded a king, they demanded human authority.

The compromise that God gave, was the Aaronic priesthood. Human authority. If you continue to study the history of Israel you will see that the priesthood became corrupt so Israel had judges place over them in authority. But, the judges became corrupt and were replaced by kings. Finally the kings became corrupt and God sent prophets to Israel telling them of the King of Kings who was to come.

Some times Christians have looked at the history of Israel and thought that they were wicked people. But the fact is that they were sinners just like all us Christians are. The lesson to be learnt is that all human authority is sinful authority..

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” (Romans 3:23)

Wouldn't it be much better to let God be in authority?

Wouldn't it be better to work simply and directly with one another, doing the best we can to (imperfectly!) seek Gods' will and not exercise authority one over another?

So, in the old covenant God wanted Israel to be a nation of priests.

Did you know He has offered Christians the same deal in the new covenant?

“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.”
(1Peter 2:5)

“But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal **priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”
(1Peter 2:9)

A deal that Christians have ignored for centuries!

Well, 1700 years ago the Roman church rejected the idea of a “priestly nation”.

They rejected apostleship and took on the form of Israel's failed old covenant government.

But It Works-!

Now, this government (like any human government) works.

It is effective in certain ways.

It works in many outward objectives.

It builds an impressive building and creates an outward form of “unity”--which in reality is a strict uniformity in function and operation.

It is very effective in creating the impression that the leader has authority over others.

It effectively indoctrinates future generations into itself by it's repetitive nature.

In other words, it's a cult--and it does have it's good points--

Still--

Where's the Gospel?

Where's apostleship--the new covenant operational plan for spreading God's message?

Not needed! IF everyone is a Christian.

Not needed! IF we live in a Christian nation.

And as we shall see, the concept of a "Christian nation" continued far beyond the 4th century.

Christianity Spreads--But Not by Apostleship.

Fast forward in time now from the 4th century. Over the next centuries, Christianity is used by many leaders--some good--some terribly bad--as an excuse to rule over and conquer other peoples. For example, many nomadic northern European tribes are conquered by Charlemagne and others. In the process, Christianity (the Roman version) is forced upon people.

The end result is that Europe becomes "Christian". Literally everyone "goes to church" on Sunday--"obeys the rule" --"pays the tithe"-- that the catholic institution required (maybe you didn't know that the catholic church invented the Christian tithe?). An institution which inevitably becomes corrupt with its own wealth and influence and authority (the parallels between old testament Israel and the history of the church are amazing).

Along Came The Reformation.

It wasn't until the 15th century that people could finally get their hands on a Bible. The printing press was invented and people (like Martin Luther) began to notice that it said some "different stuff" than the church was teaching.

So, new churches were formed. Unfortunately as the old saying goes, the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree. Yes, the new "protestant" churches had a more Biblical approach in their doctrine, however, functionally they fell very close to the catholic "tree".

Well, let's run down our list once again.....

What was the functional plan of the protestant church service?

- 1. Meet repetitively and have a sabbath day.**
- 2. Build and maintain a large meeting place called the "house of God/sanctuary"**
- 3. First comes praise and worship.**
- 4. The priest/pastor has authority over the congregation.**
- 5. The congregation (non-ministers) are obligated to give offerings/tithe.**

Looks pretty familiar!

The fact is that even though the protestant churches drew closer to new covenant doctrine, the functional plan of the local church was changed very little.

What about apostleship?

What about the new covenant plan to operate in the Gospel?

Well, the fact was that the new protestant churches were also being formed in Christian nations--so--they saw no need to reform that part of Christian function. No need to study the new covenant operations and functions of ministry, and authority which could be described as apostleship. No need to mess with the system.

Oh yes, "send" the missionaries to Africa and Asia--to places where obviously the gospel needed to be spread, but at home--stick with the old covenant/catholic version of function.

After all, it works.

Holds people under authority.

Builds a nice building.

Makes money for the king!

Maybe now is the time to get off the history train, and take a look in the mirror.

Should we ask *ourse/ves* the big question?

What is the functional plan of meeting for YOUR church?

Is it like this?

- 1. Meet repetitively and have a sabbath day.**
- 2. Build and maintain a large meeting place called the “house of God/sanctuary”**
- 3. First comes praise and worship.**
- 4. The priest/pastor has authority over the congregation.**
- 5. The congregation (non-ministers) are obligated to give offerings/tithe.**

Why?

Your To Do List....

Ask some questions in your church. Do it politely.

When was your church founded?

Where was your church founded?

Was your church founded in a Christian nation?

Maybe that is why it follows the rules that all those other churches follow.

But, even if you go to a brand-new church--look in the mirror.

How hard is your group of Christians working to build and fulfill the tradition established by other churches--which were founded in Christian nations?

Where's the apostleship?

Where is the meeting of small groups--which pray in the Spirit and seek God's will on where and when and how and whom should be sent with the Gospel...

"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. 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. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."
(Acts 13:1-4, KJV).

Here is a concise example of the apostleship of the Christian meeting--from the Bible.

Notice:

1. A small group.
2. Equals--(where's the pastor/priest/overseer?)
3. All ministers (ministry a gift for all--not authority over others)
4. The Holy Ghost gives the instructions--God is in charge--(does your church allow the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to function and really truly relay God's instructions?)
5. Result: apostles. People are "sent" with the Gospel....

".....So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost."

This happened all the time in the church in the Bible. It is a clear reflection of what Jesus did in His ministry.

A small group sending another small group--that's the functional plan of Jesus and the church in the new testament.

Does your church do things that way?

Addendum; 101 Reasons Why Apostles Are Not Needed

There is a sort of traditional “cottage industry” in the Christian church. Over the centuries, a multitude of scholars have made their living coming up with excuses to get rid of apostles, apostleship, and the new covenant operational plan of the church. (this certainly was something the established church wanted and needed in order to keep itself afloat!)

Think about it. For centuries in order to become a well-known published church scholar, someone absolutely had to be in agreement with the functional plan of the church. (We could say this applies today. One cannot get behind a pulpit unless one believes in and supports the pulpit.)

These church scholars have come up with some incredibly long-winded explanations for why the Christian church should not operate through the new testament plan of apostleship. (Although I have never found any of them deal with the converse question. Why then does the church operate through old covenant sacrificial laws??)

These explanations consist of lots’ of their own words attached to some little snippets from the Bible. By doing things this way anyone can make the Bible say anything they want it to say. This is how non-christian cults operate. (Let me make myself clear, what I am suggesting is that believers should continually seek the will of God and be free to adjust themselves to His ongoing will through prayer and also to an open and continual understanding of the Bible--and these ongoing understandings should be put to use immediately. This Bible study does not contain all that every Christian should do--just the simple outline and understanding that we all have the right from God to be lead by Him directly, and should work together in a form that allows all of us to maintain this right.)

For centuries, the only way to become well-known--to “get published” and to talk about the church was to be in absolute agreement with the functional plan of the church. The catholic church basically owned the Bible for over 1,000 years and only allowed a select few have open access to it.

When the Bible was finally published freely it’s translation was still under strict church control. This is why we have phrases in a “King James Bible” that say “obey”-- “submit”--“the rule”--“under”--“over” etc. Little buzzwords that to this day are emphasized by many, but should serve to prove the prejudice and experience of the translators--which was very strict indeed (and of course had to be approved by the king--who was supposedly the authority who “had the rule” “over” the church--and over all England). If they could have placed King James name as the Head of the church they would have, but they could not. To be honest, the King James translators did a very good job of translating the Bible, (take note that all the quotes in this study are from the KJV) but they did a very poor job with regard to church function and did the best they could to subvert apostleship. If they didn’t, they would have never got published!

I pray you see the point.

The one thing I have found is that the process of Christian growth certainly ought to include an openness to change, an openness to seek God's will and further understand His example found in the Bible.

The Christian church has had a closed door on study in his area for centuries, a closed door on correcting it's functional plan.

A closed door to ministry.

A closed door about authority.

A closed door to apostleship.

Look around and see if you don't agree with me.

There has not been a lot of freedom in Christianity to study and understand Biblically church function.

I want you always to understand that I openly confess that my attempts are meager, imperfect and uncertain at best.

I only pray and hope to inspire others to study these areas.

Joseph Rich

