

Chapter 2: The New Testament Pattern

Since we are living in the last days we must completely open to the moving of the Holy Ghost, who is endeavoring to restore the New Testament pattern to the Local Church. The ministry of the "Word" was restored when the Word of God was once again given its rightful place among the people of God after having come out of the Dark Ages or the Devils millennium. During this time the Word was withheld from the body of Christ and held only in the hands of an elite, select group of so-called theologians.

In these last days the Spirit is striving to restore the ministry of the "works" of Jesus by empowering the Believer to do the same works that He did.

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do he shall do also: and greater works than these shall he; because I go unto my father. (John 14:12)

God is challenging the representatives of His Church to break away from tradition and to get into the flow of the Spirit if we ever expect to progress toward God's ideal for the Local Church. Those who refuse to move with the Holy Ghost are the ones who bring division to the Body of Christ. Jesus taught us that, just as you can't put new wine into old wine skins, the fullness of the Holy Ghost cannot enter old contaminated lives (Matthew 9:16-17). Even the Church has crawled into the ditch of "this is the way we have always done it." It is time to break from these traditions under the leadership of the Holy Ghost.

It is often those who want to flow with the Spirit who are forced to out of their nests - out of their accustomed place of worship and body of worshipers. When this happens you may mistakenly feel it is man who has forced you out. In reality, it is God leading you to higher heights and deeper depths in Him. Even though it is God's hand leading you, a time of shock and disorientation will inevitably follow this upheaval.

It is important that we recognize our life and ministry after a spiritual shake-up. The old rubble must be removed if we are to ever to rebuild according to the pattern the Lord has shown us. We must also remember that, as in Nehemiah's day, God is able to take some of the old charred stones from the rubble, clean them up and use them in the rebuilding process. It would be a mistake to write off each and every one who seemed to be resisting the purpose of God's pattern since they may be the very ones that God will restore and use in His rebuilding process.

We must strive in every respect to see that the New Testament pattern is restored to the Local Church. This can only occur with a combination of the intensive study of all Scriptures and the anointing of the Holy Ghost. We should never settle for second best. Copies are never as good as the originals they attempt to mimic. Rehoboam discovered the inadequacy of copies when he built shields of "brass" to replace the shields of "Gold" which his father, Solomon, had made.

We must always reach for the "IDEAL" which God has revealed by his spirit and in His Word. Sadly, we are living in a day when people are ready to believe and accept anything that has any semblance whatsoever to God. Scripture exhorts us to go on unto perfection and we must strive for the ideal in our life and work for the Lord.

We must that which has been revealed thus far and work with the Spirit to build upon it. To do this we must be flexible without compromising. It is possible to blend and maintain an uncompromising Spirit at the same time. Many have become so pliable that they played into satan's hand and have shipwrecked their faith as well as that of those who follow. Others become so ridged in their old ways that they have become stagnant in their experience and work for the Lord. I am in no advocating leaving the old paths of holiness for the new so-called social gospel. In reality, the social gospel is no gospel at all. Remember, I stressed the importance of flexibility while remaining uncompromising.

Sadly, many have lost sight of God's plan and purpose for the Local Church. All too often a great move of God's Spirit is followed by the organization of a new denomination or, at least, a body of churches formed under one central headquarters. These organizations are formed in an effort to maintain doctrinal truth and purity within the church. However, as we shall see further in our study, the organization has done just the opposite of what it was intended to do.

As we study God's pattern for the Local Church, we must properly interpret Scriptures or, as Paul said, "rightly dividing the Word of Truth," (2Timothy 2:15b). At this time, I would like to mention a few major principles for interpreting the Scriptures:

Scriptures must be interpreted as follows:

- Literally
- Morally
- Prophetically

First, I will discuss the "literal" or "historical" method of interpreting the Scriptures. It is very helpful to have a working knowledge of the history, geography, culture, and language of the Bible. Often, the "literal" is the key to the "spiritual". In our day too many people have such inner conviction that the Holy Ghost will teach them that they ignore the necessity of an in-depth study on their own with teachers who are under the anointing of the Holy Ghost. As dry and unspiritual as a meticulous study of the "natural" aspects of the Bible may seem at times, we must always remember that as we dig into the "natural" we will find the Spiritual.

Secondly, as we strive to interpret Scripture, we must consider the "principle" or "moral" teaching found in every text under study. We can only do this by thinking about that which may be applied to any and every age or period of time. This type of study will consist more of application than interpretation. In order to discover the moral teaching of many Scriptures, it is necessary to know the meaning of names and places first. Then, as you see the Old Testament story unfold before you, you will begin to see the many principles which apply to our day.

The last principle of interpretation that I will consider is the "prophetic" or "ultimate" means of interpreting Scriptures. When we study the Bible in this manner, we must remember that the overall plan of God points to the Church.

The prophetic interpretation of Scripture always requires an ample amount of proof texts for each point or doctrine we wish to emphasize.

Jesus himself taught us that he veils truth from those whose ears are dull and whose hearts are closed (Matthew 13:10-17). To really understand the Word of God, it must be in our hearts and not just in our heads. It is necessary for us to have a proper Spiritual experience to properly interpret the Word of God. Because God wants his children to serve and obey him of their own free will, he has left enough loopholes in Scripture for those who desire to continue in their own willful ways, to do so. As ironic as it seems, he will permit them, by taking a Scripture out of context or by reading into it what they desire to see, to find Scripture to convince themselves of the eras they wish to embrace (2Thessalonians 2:10-11).

It is absolutely necessary that those who genuinely desire to walk in all of God's truth remain spiritually sensitive lest they also be deceived. It is especially confusing when we see ones who reject certain revealed truth moving in the ministries in gifts of the spirit, or seemingly doing so. It is important to note that as important as the gifts of the spirit are they are indicative of spiritual maturity. Spiritually maturity is evidenced by a life abounding in the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and a life persisting in obedience to all the revealed will of God.

Some key questions to ask ourselves as we study the Scriptures are:

- How does this relate to the Jew and the people of that day in their natural circumstances?
- What application do these Scriptures have for the Church in end time events?
- How may these apply to the individual Christian?

The Obvious sense of a passage of Scripture is not to be ignored. Do not try to read some deep spiritual truth into a Scripture portion by excluding the obvious. Don't forget, that which was natural came first and then that which is spiritual. Adam â€" Christ.

footnotes

As an example, closely study the allegory found in Galatians 4:21-31

For example, the holiness doctrine is often considered legalism by those who don't desire to live under its teachings. Those who believe this have gathered enough fragments of Scripture to convince themselves that holiness is not necessary to see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14) or that the holiness God is speaking of only pertains to the inward experience. They completely ignore such Scriptures as Romans 12:1, 2 and 2Corinthians 7:1.

"The key is always near the door, a difficult passage may be explained by another passage which is very clear. Even the Old Testament is understood by the New Testament. Every Doctrinal truth has its headquarters passage. At the same time, all Scripture pertaining to that doctrine must fit into the doctrine itself. Do not come to a dogmatic conclusion about any given doctrinal truth until all Scriptures pertaining to that doctrine can fit into your conclusions. "

Do not think that God has chosen to conceal his divine truth. He definitely desires to reveal His spiritual realities to us. He does this progressively, piece by piece, as we have already seen in Isaiah 28:9-13. He begins this revelation by the "natural" or "shadows" which are seen in the Old Testament, then leads us on to the "spiritual truths" or "realities", which are seen in the New Testament. Revelation leads progressively to the cross, to the "ONE NEW MAN". He is endeavoring to bring us into the fullness of the stature of Christ. pertains to the inward experience. They completely ignore such Scriptures as Romans 12:1, 2 and 2Corinthians 7:1.

The truths that the "shadow" or "natural" portray are permanent but the natural objects themselves are not. We must see the meaning behind many of the natural terms used in the Old Testament to rightly discern the spiritual truths portrayed (i.e. Jew, Israel, covenant, circumcision, Zion, etc.). These terms are used to point to the progressive work of God. Always keep in the foreground of your mind's eye that God does not retrogress. God restores without retrogressing. He is using Old Testament words with a new center of focus. That center is the cross of Christ. We need the eyes of our hearts enlightened (Ephesians 1:18).

As we look at the natural, we may consider the nation of Israel. She must blend in with the Church. Her restoration today could well be a type of God's work in restoring the New Testament pattern to the Church in these last days. God is pointing us to the spiritual while we observe the natural dealings of God with humanity. Those who emphasize the natural dealings or works of God, have very little capacity for the spiritual truths that those natural things are striving to convey.

In this Chapter we've gone from the "shadow" to the "substance", from the "natural", to the "spiritual", and this is no time to retrogress to the natural or the shadow. Let us go on unto perfection, to completion in Him. The Church is, and will continue to be, throughout this age, God's means of revealing His will and purpose for humanity.

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