



# The New Testament Church

## *The Organization of the Church*

### I. STARTING A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

#### A. The Proper Start—Taken from *Be Fruitful and Multiply* by David F. Reagan

1. The problem of decline
  - a. Church history, as any history, follows certain identifiable patterns. Bible-believing churches have always gone through times of revival followed by times of steady growth that ended with years of decline.
  - b. In our present context, a generation is the time it takes for leaders of a people to be replaced by their children. Church history, both past and present, will generally follow the pattern set forth below.
    - (1) The first generation is made up of pioneers.
      - a) They start new churches; see great revivals; get things started.
      - b) They are often rough with uncouth ways, but get the job done.
    - (2) The second generation is made up of the builders.
      - a) They take the foundation that has been established by the first generation and build good strong works.
      - b) This group is a little more polished, but they still make a strong stand for the things of the Lord.
      - c) They live through a time of growth and strength in the Lord's work.
    - (3) The third generation is made up of managers.
      - a) These men are more interested in holding on to what they have.
      - b) Their convictions waver.
      - c) The spiritual strength of the churches begins to decline and so do their numbers.
    - (4) The fourth generation is made up of traitors to the cause.
      - a) They sell themselves out to a false gospel, a false spirit, and a false Christ.
      - b) The death of the movement is complete with this fourth generation, unless a group in the fourth generation pulls out of the dying movement and starts over again.
2. Examples of reproduction
  - a. The example of creation
    - (1) According to Job, if you look to the beasts of the earth and the wonders of creation, "they shall teach thee" (Job 12:7-8).
    - (2) On the third day of creation, "the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind" (Genesis 1:12).
    - (3) Here we see the very basics of life.
      - a) Since all things on earth grow old and die, one of the most essential qualities of life is its ability to reproduce itself.



- b) This ability is referred to in the phrase, “whose seed is in itself” (Genesis 1:11).
  - c) It had in itself the ability to produce more of itself.
  - d) The ability to reproduce is necessary for all of God’s creatures.
- b. The example of the early commissions
- (1) A commission is a sending out to perform certain tasks for the one who sent you with the authority and responsibility to perform those tasks.
  - (2) After creating man, God told him, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28).
  - (3) God gave Noah and his sons a similar commission, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1). This commission was given in a literal sense to Adam and Noah as a command for them to have children, to multiply their families and to cover the entire earth with their descendants.
  - (4) God told them both to be fruitful and to multiply.
    - a) Children are the fruit of the womb (Genesis 30:2).
    - b) Therefore, to have fruit is to have children.
    - c) Yet, it is possible to have many children and not to multiply.
    - d) One of the genealogies in Chronicles gives this report: “And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah” (1 Chronicles 4:27).
- c. The example of the first church of Jerusalem
- (1) Jesus clearly told His disciples before His ascension, “ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
  - (2) They were commanded to have a simultaneous outreach to their hometown of Jerusalem, to the region of Judaea which surrounded Jerusalem, to the neighbouring region of Samaria and to “the uttermost part of the earth.”
    - a) By being witnesses in Jerusalem, they were to win souls there and establish a local church.
    - b) In order to be witnesses to Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, they needed to send out missionaries.
    - c) However, to be witnesses in Judaea, they needed to plant churches in those locations.
  - (3) Consider the trouble in this church
    - a) The church of Jerusalem started with “about an hundred and twenty” (Acts 1:15) in the church. These waited for “the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4) as they had been commanded to do.
    - b) That promise came in the form of the baptism with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; Acts 2:33).



That “same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

- c) The church of Jerusalem continued to be blessed and grow.
  - d) The “Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).
  - e) The revival continued to bring in the harvest. “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand” (Acts 4:4).
  - f) With 5,000 men, the church must have been running from 20,000 to 25,000 by now. Surely this church had the resources to plant other churches and send out church planters. But did they do it? No, they were happy to keep building a bigger and bigger church in Jerusalem.
  - g) After the death of Ananias and Sapphira for lying (Acts 5), the church stopped growing—“And of the rest durst no man join himself to them” (Acts 5:13).
  - h) The church had to deal with internal murmuring (Acts 6).
  - i) After the preaching and stoning of Stephen, “there was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1).
  - j) God forced them to do what they failed to do willingly.
- d. The ministry of the apostle Paul
- (1) How did Paul do the work of spreading the gospel of Christ?
  - (2) In the book of Acts, we see him going from city to city preaching the word, winning the lost and establishing churches.
  - (3) When he left infant churches, he would ordain elders in them and commend them to the Lord (Acts 14:23).
  - (4) He would follow this up by returning at a later date and “confirming the churches” (Acts 15:41).
  - (5) He also wrote letters, or epistles, to deal with problems in the churches and to encourage them in the work of the Lord.
- e. The command to Timothy
- (1) Before Paul testified he was ready to be offered and the time of his departure was at hand, he gave this charge to Timothy: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5).
  - (2) One of Paul’s most important commands to Timothy was to “do the work of an evangelist.”
  - (3) The word *evangelist* identifies the job as the taking of God’s good news to the lost.
  - (4) Certainly, the work of an evangelist is to lead souls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
  - (5) Yet, if this is all an evangelist is, we are all called to be evangelists.
  - (6) In order to know the complete work of an evangelist, we should study the scriptures out on the subject.



- a) Since only one man in the Bible is specifically called an evangelist, his work would define the work of an evangelist as to its Biblical definition.
  - b) In Acts 21:8, Paul's company "entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven: and abode with him."
  - c) Philip was active in the ministry of evangelism after the stoning of Stephen. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5).
  - d) Philip went to an unreached area, preached the gospel of Christ, and gathered believers there. Though he is not said to have started a church, he laid the groundwork for one.
  - e) Later, he was sent by the Lord to witness to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-27).
  - f) After baptizing the eunuch, "Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:40).
  - g) This pretty much covers what we know about the work and ministry of Philip the evangelist. His work can be summed up in three activities.
    - i) First, he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost (Acts 8:5, 40). This is where we get the idea of an evangelist who travels from church to church preaching special meetings in the services.
    - ii) Second, as an evangelist, he actively led lost souls to a saving knowledge of Christ. We see this not only in Samaria, but also in Philip's dealings with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). He is a personal winner of souls. This aspect of evangelism is often emphasized in messages on the pastor doing "the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5).
    - iii) Third, Philip opened up new areas to the message of the gospel. He pioneered the gospel into areas that did not have an established church. He went to Samaria before others went (Acts 8:5) and later "was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:40).
- (7) Therefore, if a pastor is to do the work of an evangelist, he must do more than just win souls.
- (8) Pastors are not to be satisfied with ministering to their flock alone. They are to take the gospel to new areas; either to places where Christ is not named or places where He is not claimed.
3. Some practical thoughts
- a. Research the need
    - (1) How many people are in the area?
    - (2) How many Bible believing churches are in the area?
      - a) Determine this by certain criteria



- i) Their stand on the Bible
    - ii) Their doctrine
    - iii) Their music
    - iv) Their outreach
  - b) Be strict, but do not be personal
- (3) Are there people looking for a church?
- b. Begin a Bible study or preaching stations
  - (1) In a nearby location
  - (2) At a non-service time
    - a) It is best to start with a day and/or time that is different from your standard services.
    - b) This allows those who work the Bible study or preaching station to stay involved in the regular services.
  - (3) Support the meeting with people.
    - a) An empty meeting place is not as welcoming as is a full meeting place.
    - b) Have different people designated to support the outreach.
  - (4) Canvas the area.
    - a) Print flyers for distribution.
    - b) Go door-to-door.
    - c) Do street preaching.
    - d) Offer in-home Bible studies.
- c. Send out an arm—taken from *A Church Arm* by David F. Reagan
  - (1) Another idea of starting one church out of another is by sending out an “arm.”
  - (2) This arm is usually a small group from the old church that want to start a church in another place.
  - (3) We see this in the sending of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries (Acts 13:1-5). They went as sent out from Antioch and established churches in many places.

## B. The Proper Organization

- 1. Request independence
  - a. Church plants begin with a small number of people sent out by another body for the purpose of establishing a work in a new area. As this new work prospers and continues to build up in number, it may desire to seek independence from its sending church.
  - b. At such a time, the new work should write the sending church and request independence. Here is an example from history: A letter to Old Center Baptist Church in Logan County Kentucky—“The return of the Arm which received into full fellowship James Moore, . . . the Arm requests help from the body to inquire into their strength and if found capable of keeping of house to constitute them into a church.” Taken from *Pioneer Baptist Church Records of South-Central Kentucky and the Upper Cumberland of Tennessee 1799-1899* pg. 29
- 2. Establish articles of faith



- a. The order of these things could easily be contested, but it seems wise to first establish the articles of faith so that all other decisions are based upon these principles.
- b. These should be done as thorough as possible in the beginning.
- c. These should be mostly if not exactly like that of the sending church.
3. Establish by-laws and constitution
  - a. These are governing documents that guide a body of believers in church business, and protect the church from corruption.
  - b. These articles should be approved and signed by all founding members.
4. Call a pastor
  - a. Arguably this could be done before the establishment of articles of faith or the by-laws and constitution.
  - b. The reason why it is given here is that it might be done according to the articles of faith and by-laws.
  - c. In order to ensure the purity of establishing this new work, it would be wise to have the pastor of the sending church act as a moderator over these events.

## II. STRUCTURING A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

### A. Its Independence

1. Problems
  - a. The council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35)
    - (1) The problem (Acts 15:1)
    - (2) The determination of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:2-3)
    - (3) The presentation of the problem (Acts 15:4-5)
    - (4) The meeting of the apostles and elders (Acts 15:6-21)
      - a) The consideration of the apostles and elders (Acts 15:6)
      - b) The dispute of these matters (Acts 15:7)
      - c) The words of Peter (Acts 15:7-11)
      - d) The evidence set forth by Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:12)
      - e) The words of James (Acts 15:13-18)
      - f) The decision (Acts 15:19-21)
    - (5) The outcome of the meeting (Acts 15:22-29)
      - a) The sending of ambassadors (Acts 15:22)
      - b) The writing of letters (Acts 15:23-29)
    - (6) The reception of the news (Acts 15:30-35)
  - b. The authority demonstrated by Paul
    - (1) At Corinth
      - a) His leadership (1 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1)
      - b) His threat to come in wrath (1 Corinthians 4:21)
      - c) They wrote to Paul for answers (1 Corinthians 7:1).
      - d) His collection for Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)
      - e) His statement concerning his letters (2 Corinthians 10:8-10)
    - (2) With Timothy
      - a) He asked Timothy to abide at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3-4).



- b) He gave Timothy charges (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 1 Timothy 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:13-14; 2 Timothy 4:1-2).
      - c) He told Timothy what to teach (1 Timothy 4:11).
    - (3) With Titus
      - a) He left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5).
      - b) He appointed Titus to ordain elders (Titus 1:5).
      - c) He instructed Titus on what to teach (Titus 2:1, 15).
  - 2. Evidence for independence
    - a. They received members.
    - b. They practiced church discipline (Galatians 6:1).
    - c. They sent out missionaries (Acts 13:1-4).
    - d. They partook of the Lord's supper.
- B. Its Leadership**
- 1. In heaven (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:18)
  - 2. On earth
    - a. Bishops or elders
      - (1) They are made overseers by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28).
      - (2) They are over the church in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).
      - (3) They are to take care of the church of God (1 Timothy 3:4-5).
      - (4) They are to be remembered, obeyed, and saluted (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24).
      - (5) They are to take the oversight (1 Peter 5:1-4).
    - b. Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13)
- C. Its Authority**
- 1. Given by the Lord
    - a. The administration of the ordinances (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
    - b. The sending of missionaries (Acts 13:1-4)
    - c. The discipline of its members (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)
  - 2. Not to be replaced
    - a. By Bible colleges
    - b. By mission boards
    - c. By individuals or corporations
  - 3. Not to be usurped
    - a. By conventions
    - b. By fellowships
- D. Its Teachings**
- 1. Built on the word of God
  - 2. Both doctrinal and practical
  - 3. Propagated by all (2 Timothy 2:2)
- E. Its Responsibility (Acts 1:8)**