

Jesus Came to Establish the Church

A popular idea is that Jesus did not come to begin the Christian Church. When people read the words of Jesus in the Bible they do not see Him clearly say He came to establish the Church. Except they are wrong. Jesus clearly said and did what needed to be done to establish the Church.

Jesus spent three years training men to lead something. The New Testament is the "official" set of directions, building on the Old Testament. Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18. While in the opinion of many the New Testament does not "look" like a constitution and by-laws, God knows the way He is doing it is better.

Church / Synagog in Greek and Hebrew are different words but almost the same meaning. Synagog is more about the assembly. Church (ecclesia) is more about calling to the assembly. Jesus and His followers used the two words to differentiate the old way of Torah from the new way in Jesus. Assemblies, synagogos, organized churches - congregations are human groups, meetings. Different people set them up in different ways, with structure, rules and regulations. In Jesus' day the top authority was the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. They were guided by the words of Torah, the Old Testament. They had the authority to bind and to loose their regulations. They had the key of knowledge but no authority to change the Commandments of God.

Jesus told His disciples they had the authority to bind and loose. An example of that is the Apostolic Council in Acts 15. He gave them the Keys to the Kingdom. In the Bible, the term "keys" is used as a symbol of teaching authority Luke 11:52 "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering." Jesus established His followers with authority apart from, independent of the Sanhedrin. That is revolutionary.

The Church Jesus is establishing is Spiritual. Jesus is the promised Messiah. He came fulfilling the prophecies about the Messianic Kingdom. He "called" all people to believe in Him, to be saved - enter His kingdom. As such, it is pure, holy, eternal. People are "called" out, ecclesia, of the lost world to be the spiritual body of Christ. Christ is the spiritual head of the Church made up of people functioning as parts of His body, mouth, feet, hands, as He directs them through His Spirit and Word. This is not understood by the mind. It is by faith. The Church is visible in the multitude of assemblies, called Churches and denominations.

From the beginning false teachers and schismatics mislead and divided the assemblies. While in one sense they are destructive. The dynamic shifting of competitive teachers and assemblies trying to be the best most faithful makes impossible to lead the whole Church astray. The Holy Spirit raises up another teacher and assembly to promote the truth The false teachers attack the established teachings, claiming to have a better interpretation of the Scriptures and correct guidance of the Holy Spirit. That leads the faithful to examine, study, develop deeper explications of the truths. The

schismatics proclaim themselves to be leading rebellion against the corrupted established Church. Faithful teacher may be cast out for teaching truth. Luther was excommunicated. The schismatic sets himself outside so he can be free from interaction with the whole

The Old Covenant codified the promise to Abraham. God extended the promise to bless Abraham's descendants to be a blessing on all people. The Prophets proclaimed all people from the farthest corners of the world would come to Jerusalem, the Messianic Kingdom. God would establish a new covenant written in the heart. The Torah - Law was the instruction and explanation to guide the people in actualizing the Old Covenant with practical actions. The Priesthood were appointed leaders to do the will of God.

The New Covenant is Spiritual. It can not be confined in any human organization. It is not based on human decisions or on the letters of Torah but on the person, Jesus, the Messiah (Christ is Greek for the Hebrew Messiah). The spiritual is expressed in earthly forms. The spiritual redeemed Christian is at the same time a flawed sinful human being. In the same way, the perfect spiritual Church is manifested in flawed human assemblies, organizations. The Church does not have the authority to violate the words of Scripture. Human Church assemblies concern the teaching and application of those words.

Jesus clearly demonstrated that the Council had no authority over Him. Jesus moved the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. He changed the Ten Commandments God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. Only God has the authority to change God's Commandments. While the Bible does not clearly say "in words" Jesus changed the day of worship to Sunday. The Bible clearly shows "in actions" that He did. He rose on Sunday, met with His followers that evening. The next Sunday He met with them again. He continued to meet with them, teaching what they needed to know. Finally Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, was on Sunday. His followers worshipped every Sunday after that. The twelve Disciples would not, could not, on their own decide to change the Ten Commandments.

Jesus changed the central focus of worship from animal sacrifice to Himself. For the Old Covenant God gave long detailed instructions, regulations about the conduct of worship. The high points were the yearly sacrifice of the Passover Lamb for the salvation of the people of Abraham and the sacrifice of the Lamb on the Day of Atonement for the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus identified Himself as the "Lamb of God".

Deeply religious people will not disobey the clear commands of God unless they are directed to do so by God Himself. Only Jesus, whom His followers acknowledged as God in the flesh, had the authority to announce the old worship was fulfilled. It was not to be continued. Jesus established a New Covenant in His blood for all people. Every Sunday, they celebrate His atoning sacrifice as the Lamb of God for the forgiveness of sins, the salvation of all people from all evil, sin, death and Satan. He commanded the memorial meal of His Body and Blood. All who believe the Spiritual reality receive the true Body and Blood of Jesus, Spiritual power. This too is not accessible to the mind. It is by faith. Faith itself comes from God's call and is given by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

All pious Jews pray the Shema even today two to three times a day. The early Church, in the Didache, prayed the Lord's Prayer three times a day. I urge you to read the Shema and imagine yourself praying that twice a day. Compare it with the Lord's Prayer and appreciate the profound difference. Look at the Amidah. It is very worshipful. The Church did not continue those prayers but obviously they are worshipping the same God.

There is no record of when, where and how Jesus made the change in daily worship. God chooses not to reveal certain information to us. He knows best. Why does the Bible not record what Jesus said to command the changes? Clear words can be, are, twisted to result in the opposite from what was intended. Obscure words lead people to search the Spirit for guidance. If we had the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic, we would all be praying it in Aramaic. By recording it in Greek, God gave permission for the Lord's Prayer to be said in English, Chinese, every language.

From Abraham to Moses there were no Scriptures. After Moses there was the Torah, instructions. That made the foundation. People always go astray. The Prophets kept recalling and correcting the nation. Finally there were other writings that were accepted as inspired by God and useful for guidance. They had the letter of the written word. But even that can and will be misused. The people gathered to pray, read the scriptures and discuss them. Those nascent synagogues developed into a stable structure, apart from the sacrificial system. Jesus transformed those human assemblies into His "called out" spiritual body. Galatians 3:24f "So the law - Torah was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian."

"In the fulness of time, God sent His Son" Galatians 4:4 to fulfill what was promised. It was not possible in the thousands of years before, for God to keep straight all people everywhere in the world. It has been very difficult in the centuries since. God built on the foundation of the synagogues and Scriptures. Jesus transformed the whole concept of religion from priest, shaman, leading sacrificial offerings to receiving from God His spirit through His Word and receiving His indwelling presence in the Sacraments. He teaches much through stories and actions. They translate across languages and cultures. Doctrinal essays do not translate accurately.

In the New Covenant the letter of Scripture is bound to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Scriptures can not be understood by intellect alone. All that has to be clearly established has been in Scripture. The questions about application in various situations have to be worked out. The instruction is to pray for guidance, direction, remembering how the Holy Spirit guided the Church in prior times. While Scriptures may appear to conflict, God never disagrees with Himself. All necessary issues are in agreement across all the denominations in the whole Christian and Apostolic, Catholic Church. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection for the salvation of all who believe, and many other teachings - doctrines are universal. There are

disagreements. Anyone who refuses to spend eternity with those with whom he disagrees will not be there. All, who in obedience to Jesus, forgive, love, accept the other will be together and laugh over their old disagreements.

God calls us to be united with all His people. His Spirit builds us up in truth and love. We praise, serve, teach, learn, forgive and display in our life together the power of His presence. The proof of the Spirit of Christ is sharing His Love. "By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" John 13:35. While worship styles and language vary, the power, wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit has always been effective. The core of the Faith has been protected, in all the attacks throughout the centuries. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Galatians 3:6

Rev. Stephen H. Funck
SignDoveSF@mac.com

July 23, 2020

<http://TheSignOfConcord.com>

S. D. G.

God Wrote the Bible Confusing on Purpose http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/Bible_confusing_on_Purpose.pdf

Some Unique Features of Christianity http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/Unique_Features_of_Christianity.pdf

Accuracy of the record, memories http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/Accuracy_of_the_record_memories.pdf

Arguments from Silence http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/Arguments_from_Silence.pdf

Saved Lost http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/Saved_-_Lost_Why_Believe_.pdf

Faith alone - Good works http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/Faith_Alone_Good_Works.pdf

How could this all come about http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/How_could_this_come_about_.pdf