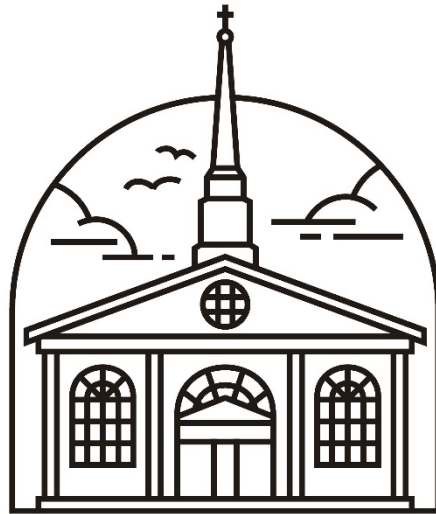


Origin of



the Church

Origin of the Church

Lesson Three

Church Structure

Overview

A structure was set, giving order to its leadership and guiding its followers. In addition to the natural leadership bestowed upon the disciples by the Son of God (God actively present on Earth), the Bible also accounts for the inherent authority placed upon James, the brother of Jesus, who is considered a living descendant of the Messiah.

(Matthew 13:55) He is referenced in the Acts of the Apostle as the voice to settle a significant controversy regarding circumcision in the days of the Church. After the case from both opponents was presented to the Apostle leaders in Jerusalem, James was the single voice to bring closure on the matter. After citing a quotation from the prophetic writings in the Torah, Acts 15:19 reflects his "sentence" or judgment in favor of allowing Gentiles to be affirmed in their faith in the Messiah without the requirement of circumcision.

Later, history documents the headship of the Church expanding beyond the temple city of Israel, largely because of the temple's demise and the persecution of Christian Jews in the Roman province. The oversight of the Church was shared among five regions, which became known as the Pentarchy. The Greek word, which means government of five, comprised the five following regions: Constantinople (Turkey), Rome (Church of the Empire), Alexandria (Africa), Antioch (Asia), and Jerusalem (Israel).

When Rome became obsessed with making the Church a utility of its empire, Church leaders in Roman territories gained greater recognition and became more affluent. Church leaders seated in the heart of the Roman empire became less connected to the other four members of the Pentarchy and more inspired and controlled by Roman interests. The Church leader seated in the heart of Rome believed all Churches within the Roman territories were under his direct rule and not subject to the authority of other Church leaders. Eventually, the Church leader in Rome demanded that all Church leaders become subject to him.

When Constantinople, the Roman custodian of power, embraced Christianity as the religion of the empire, the infrastructure was in place to make the Christian church the universal church of the world, which gave birth to the origin of the Roman Catholic (Universal) Church.

Church Structure

Acts 15:4 And when they were come to **Jerusalem**, they were received of the church, and of the **apostles and elders**, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

Acts 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

Acts 16:4-5 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Lesson Notes

(Acts 15:4) – The Apostles and Elders of Jerusalem are referenced in Acts as the ruling authority and counsel of the early Church. When a dispute arose between Paul and the Judean opposition leaders regarding the conversion of Gentiles, they argued over whether these new believers should be compelled to undergo circumcision to affirm their faith in the Messiah. The conflict led them to seek counsel from the Church leadership in Jerusalem, where James, the brother of Jesus, settled the matter after Peter affirmed Paul's ministry. (Acts 15:1-3,7-8,14-15)

(Acts 15:22) – To formalize their decision the council of Jerusalem issued a written thesis to eliminate the requirement of circumcision for Gentile believers. They sanctioned Silas and Judas Barsabas to accompany Paul and Barnabas on a tour to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to publish the decision rendered by the Jerusalem Church leadership. The thesis included instructions against eating food set apart for idolatrous rituals, the flesh of strangled animals, and from fornication. (Acts 15:23-30)

(Acts 16:4-5) – Paul traveled with Timothy throughout the cities of Derbe and Lystra as the Church was expanding among the Gentiles, publishing the instructions given to him by the Jerusalem Church council regarding circumcision and the additional standards to govern new converts following the Way of Christ.

Church Discipline/Order

Way of Christ: taught in every church

ICorinthians 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

Lesson Notes

(ICorinthians 4:17) – As an Apostle, Paul attests that he teaches the “way of Christ” in every place the Church was established. Timothy, the student-disciple of Paul, was sent to Corinth to remind and reprimand the congregation of believers, faulted for falling away from the “way of Christ”.

The testimony of Paul confirms that the “way of Christ” represented a universal discipline, with strict adherence expectations enforced.

The order of Prophetic Utterance

ICorinthians 14:1-3 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but rather that ye may prophesy and preferred before speaking with tongues

For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

Paul provides a ranking concerning spiritual gifts and attributes. He challenges men to follow or be inspired by love (charity) in pursuing spiritual gifts. He ranks prophesy as preferred over speaking in tongues because prophesy (declaring God’s word) provides structure (edification), counsel (exhortation), and comfort to men.

An unknown tongue is a cultural dialect known only by the person speaking. Jewish oration of Torah celebration included language attributes associated to distinct geo cultures. The early Church became a melting pot of many diverse Jewish people groups and gentiles. When Jewish dialects were used to speak or celebrate the Torah, other participants unfamiliar with their language could not participate or benefit.

A person speaking in an unknown tongue edifies only themselves and not those in the congregation around them unless an interpretation is offered. Words spoken to a public gathering of believers should have a distinct purpose. Without an understanding of the language, the words are sounds without meanings. As illustrated by Paul, instruments have distinct sounds, so their sounds can be identified and understood when they are heard. Without distinction, the sound of the trumpet could not prepare people for battle if its sound was uncertain. (ICorinthians 14:7-9)

There are numerous geo-cultural voices in the world and within Judaism, but each one has a distinct sound and purpose. If others do not know the distinct meaning of words spoken in the Church, the sound will be foreign (barbarian) to them, meaningless noise. (ICorinthians 14:10-11)

Public utterances must be governed and regulated to maintain order when the congregation comes together. If more than one person is spiritually inspired to speak using the tongues of the cultural language, it should be done in courses (portions; parts), allowing each culture to share and participate but not more than three and with each one interpreting their words for all others to understand. If there is no one to interpret, that man should keep silent and speak only to himself. (ICorinthians 14:26-28)

The spirit of the prophet is subject to the discipline of the prophet. The spirit will not require a prophet to speak out of order or out of turn. In one setting, the utterance of the prophet should be limited to two and no more than three. One prophet can judge the revelation of another all other prophets should hold their peace. God is not the author of confusion but of peace in all the Churches of the saints. (ICorinthians 14:29-33)

The order of Prayer Utterance

1Cor 14:12-14 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church

Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret.

For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

Apostle Paul teaches the Church of Corinth to distinguish between personal prayer and public prayer. Prayer in an “unknown” tongue is the spirit of a man praying beyond the limits of his natural understanding. In Romans 8:26, Paul addressed this prayer model as the “Spirit (of God) making intercession on our behalf with groanings that cannot be uttered”. These are personal prayers authored by the spirit of God residing in us, speaking the words that reach beyond the infirmities (weakness) of our flesh.

Praying in the spirit publicly is unfruitful to the individual and to the congregation when because it is not accompanied by an interpretation.

When we pray or sing in the spirit in the presence of others who cannot understand us, they are not able to affirm us with Amen because their understanding is unfruitful. (1Corinthians 14:15-17)

Paul applies preference for speaking fewer words (five) that everyone present can understand in comparison many words (10k) that are unknown. (1Corinthians 14:19)

The order of speaking women in public : (correct interpretation)

1Corinthians 14:33-35 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

The final notation in the litany addressing order and succession of ministry within the Church provides an annotation concerning the disruption of created by personal conversations between husbands and wives.

The passage cannot correctly be understood without the background of the limits set upon the previous voices and personalities. To imply that suddenly the Bible is placing a limit on women "only" misreads the textual emphasis highlighted in this chapter. Specifically, there is a limit placed upon men who are also told to be silent "when no interpreter is present" while speaking in their cultural language.

The next clarification is understanding the physical location where women are asked to be silent. The passage says: "let women keep silence in the Churches". The Church is not the temple or the synagogue. The early New Testament church was in a family home. They were house churches, and small meeting centers, crowded and filled with people beyond normal standards.

When a woman had a question about the events or procedures, which would have been new to all the people, but especially "Jewish" women because they had less active roles in temple or synagogue gatherings.

The native environment of the New Testament house church would have created occasions for many questions that would lead to confusion or hindrance in the execution of ministry. Paul addressed an issue that was specifically dominant in Corinth. The instructions were given to prevent disruption and distraction. Conversations to learn more and understand more were expected at home where the role of the husband was to teach all those under his covering (obedience). A woman is asking questions at Church is also a sign of a husband failing to teach his family when they are together at home.