

The New Testament Church and Its Work

Christ said he would build His church (Matt. 16:18). That he built it is evidenced by the fact that Luke says He added people to it day by day as they were being saved, (Acts 2:47). This church is the body of Christ and He is the head of it, (Eph. 1:22-23). The church which Jesus built is essentially the "New Testament Church."

This New Testament church was the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). It had fellowship in the gospel (Phil. 1: 5) and sent to have the word proclaimed (Phil. 4: 15). Thus the church fulfilled one of its main obligations by sounding out the word so sinners could be saved by the gospel, the power of God (Rom. 1:16).

This New Testament church also engaged in the work of edifying the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). The members of the church were "fed" and led by the elders as the borders of the kingdom were spread (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5: 13). Thus the church fulfilled another of its main features or obligations by teaching and admonishing the members (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

This New Testament church engaged in benevolent work among its needy members as circumstances arose which made it necessary for them to have some assistance (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 6:1-7; 11: 27-30). And so the church fulfilled its obligations in this field.

Aside from the work of evangelism and the work of edification and the work of benevolence, the New Testament church did nothing (Eph. 4:12). To be a New Testament church, a congregation today must engage in these three works to the extent of its ability and must not go on and do other things that might seem to be "good works."

All of the work of the New Testament church was done under the oversight and supervision of the elders of the local congregations. Acts 20:28 and I Pet. 5:1-3. At no time did a group of elders in a local church attempt to do a work for all of the churches. And at no time did any group of local elders take possession or charge of any of the work, resources, or oversight of any work except the work they did as a local congregation. There was no pooling of resources to pay for any work in evangelism, edification or benevolence. No church planned work it could not pay for. No church solicited money in order to carry on a work it had planned or undertaken.

At no time and under no circumstances in evangelism and edification did any congregation send any aid to a sister congregation. Only in the field of benevolence (and that when a local church had more indigent saints than it could, care for) did one congregation send help to another congregation. This help always ceased as soon as the need was met. The idea of permanent works by congregations requiring continuing assistance from sister congregation is not found in God's word.

- by A. C. Grider

Two Looks at Judgment

There have probably been parties or other social events which we all have had a desire to attend for enjoyment, renewal of old acquaintances, or various other reasons. On the other hand, there may have been times when we did not care so much about attending such occasions. When this occurred we would either go and probably not have a very good time, or stay at home.

One event is coming to which everyone's attendance will be required. No one will be able to stay at home at the coming of the Lord. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5: 10). Just as one person happily anticipates a social gathering while another dreads it, so are there two views of the judgment.

Those who love God and are striving to keep His commandments should have a bold and eager desire for 'their Master's appearance (I John 4:17; 2 Peter 3:12). Paul had a great love to see the coming of the Lord for he had a "crown of righteousness" prepared for him (2 Timothy 4:8). Thus, he had a problem of whether to die and be with Christ, or to live in the flesh in order to encourage and strengthen the brethren (Phil. 1:23, 24). For those abiding in Christ, there will be no need to be ashamed at His coming (I John 2:28).

Yet, those who are living in sin have a fear or dread of seeing the righteous Judge (Heb. 10: 27). They are not looking for a "crown of righteousness, but for a "lake of fire," a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Rev. 20:15; Matt. 8:12).

How are you looking forward to Christ's coming? Are you as Paul or are you looking toward the judgment in terror and horror? If you have a frightful looking at the second coming of Christ, then you need to search out the things causing that fear and correct them so that you may expect a "crown of righteousness."

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

- by Ronny Milliner

Thinking Too Highly Of Self

The inspired Scriptures warn us about holding too high an opinion of one's self. Note: "*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think . . .*" (Romans 12:3)

With this warning in mind, a few observations seem appropriate:

- 1) There has been much emphasis in recent years on the need to elevate self-esteem. It is claimed that a variety of personal issues ranging from abusive relationships to weight problems are all linked to low self-esteem. Fix this, and many of the problems will go away, or so we're told. Yet God's Word indicates just the opposite – that man's problems are most often associated with thinking too highly of himself. While admitting that there are some cases of unnatural and destructively low self-esteem, it seems clear that the real danger for most of us is in an already too high opinion of self. In fact, all the warnings of God's Word are about the danger of high self-esteem, not low self-esteem. Address this problem and many of our other issues will melt away.
- 2) Too high self-esteem is manifested in a compulsive attention to 'ME'. When we think too highly of self we are constantly worried that MY needs are not being met, MY interests, MY concerns, MY opinions aren't being attended to like I think they should be, etc. Selfishness is the root of many troubles, and the modern self-esteem movement has amplified this significantly.
- 3) High self-esteem prevents us from developing the humble heart of a servant that God so much desires in us. Our Lord said: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26-27).

- by Greg Gwin