

# **Enemies of the Cross**

## **A Brief Study of How Change Agents and Innovation Destroy the New Testament Pattern and the Church of Christ**

**Jim Wilsford**



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## **Dedication**

To my wife Helen who always stands strong in the faith.  
To the church in Orangeburg, South Carolina  
for securing the faith in that town.  
To all those faithful churches ready to fight the good fight.

## Preface

Enemies of the Cross of Christ began as a series of articles in “The Elders’ Corner” in the Bulletin of the Orangeburg church of Christ, Orangeburg, South Carolina. We had heard the rumblings of controversies like distant thunder, but it seemed remote and far away. For the congregation, the first flash of real lightning was when a friend, an elder of a church in Georgia, was asked to step down as an elder to make way for the innovative changes desired by the preacher and some members. The elder, converted from a denomination, saw the practices as a return to what he had left—practices unscriptural in both content and method. He could not go along and remain true to the Lord.

The lightning flashed once again when a faithful member moved to an out-of-state congregation. In that church the change agents were rapidly moving ahead to praise worship, in components and strategies that destroyed the New Testament pattern of worship. The sister had to move to a different congregation made up of former members who had left the changing congregation for conscience sake.

In our travels my wife and I were nearly always being confronted with these issues. The innovators were litigating against the elders of a Nevada church for possession of the building. The preacher in a Scottish church advocated instruments of music. A community church broke off in Hendersonville, Tennessee. The Nashville newspaper reported a division in the Madison, Tennessee, church. One other church had lead singers wired; another stood and applauded the guest Bible teacher. The list goes on and on.

These circumstances led to a series of articles in “The Elders’ Corner” called “Controversies Confronting the Church” aimed at informing the congregation. To share the articles in this new format is an effort to inform and prepare faithful brethren to protect themselves and their home congregations against the storms of change. Our desire is to circulate the material in a variety of printed and digital forms to reach as many brothers and sisters in Christ as possible.

There are several disclaimers. The work is the work of a local church and makes no claim to academic or linguistic scholarship. Certainly many of our brethren are producing more worthy works. Especially helpful to me are Dave Miller’s *Piloting the Straight* and Duluth (GA) Church of Christ’s *What Is Happening to the Church*, researched and written by Rod Rutherford and edited and delivered by Jim Dearman. This work also is available in VHS and audio tape formats.

Nor have we addressed fully the underlying ideas supporting change agents and innovations in the guise of a new hermeneutic with its core gospel concepts. It is our opinion that the assault on local churches is coming from trained local change agents who subversively insert their practices into the work and worship of the congregation. The broader, philosophical war will be waged for the minds of elders, preachers, and teachers on a broader national and international level. Helpful in this broader war is the work done by many faithful brethren in *The Spiritual Sword*. I have found their scholarly and scriptural rebuttals to the ever-advancing ideas of change agents and innovators most helpful.

Neither does this work intend to be complete or exhaustive in content. Please think of it as an essay in the traditional meaning of the word—a beginning. We have chosen to focus on the New Testament pattern and how it is being set aside in favor of the doctrines of men. For definitions and practices, the work focuses on those major ideas that revamp the worship and fellowship. The new and emerging apostate group is radically different from the church of the New Testament; and therefore, even outsiders will immediately recognize them as something other than the church of Christ. Soon they will be a denomination in every sense of the word.

For our countless limitations in scriptures, in thoughts and in words, we apologize and ask forgiveness. We have not hesitated to help ourselves to the thoughts and words of more qualified brethren. Our prayer is that this study will help Christians and the church to defend the faith once for all delivered.

To God be the glory in Christ and in the church.

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## Introduction

Which comes first: Is it the innovators and their efforts to change the church the Lord built, or is it the members, who look to please their neighbors just as the Israelites in the flesh who cried out: "Give us a king to judge us." 1 Sam 8:6. The answer is probably both/and, not either/or. Our thematic text tells us of enemies of the cross of Christ and exhorts us to live according to the pattern that the apostles gave us:

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Phil 3:17-18

Paul describes such situations as listeners who gather around them teachers to say what they want to hear. Paul speaks to Timothy about how these listeners will not put up with sound doctrine:

3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. 2 Tim 4:3-5.

The command to Timothy was to keep your head, endure hardships, do the work, and discharge all duties. Our directions for a response to the tidal wave of change could not be clearer or better stated. And the inspired writers reiterate the instructions over and over: Paul tells the Ephesians in Eph 4:14-15 in words just as pointed:

4 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, . . . [emphasis added]

The exhortation is the same to elders, giving them special charge to stop these enemies of the cross of Christ:

9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. 10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. Titus 1:9-11.

The struggle is on. The faithful must enjoin the enemy. We dare not see the enemy, fold our camp, and run. We must not shirk as the spies of old, but stand resolute as new Calebs and new Joshuas ready to possess the promise of our Lord. We are clothed with the armor of God as described in Eph 6:13-17. We have nothing to fear:

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of god.

In the struggle to come, the true believers may become as sinful as the false teachers by showing a bad attitude. For if we have and defend the truth, but lose the mind of Christ, we are doomed by our own conceit. Many of the sins of Gal 5:19-21, listed as deeds of flesh, are divisive sins:

## 2 *The New Testament Pattern*

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: . . . enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, . . . and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, all of these – if permitted to dominate our spirit in the battle – will allow Satan to win.

Therefore, in all our dealings with innovators and change agents, we must allow the fruit of the Spirit to dominate us: “. . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23.

In the end we will have victory in Jesus:

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom 8:37-39.

The Lamb of God will be victorious and those with Him will be called, chosen, and faithful.

"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."  
Rev 17:14.

Let us stand with the Lord Jesus in this present hour! Amen.

## **Part 1: The New Testament Pattern in Worship and in Fellowship**

### **1. History and Background**

From the very beginning in Acts 20:28-31, false teaching has confronted the church with controversy. The apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus that false teachers would arise:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

20th Century Controversies. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw its share of divisive teaching, church splitting efforts, and innovative practices which were introduced into local congregations. Scarcely a decade of the entire 100 years was free from assault by the ministers of the devil: "No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds." 2 Cor 11:14-15.

The instrument of music brought into the church in 1858 at Midway, Kentucky, was a part of the defining doctrine that set the church of Christ—the body of Christ—apart from the Christian Church which ran to excess in adopting this innovation in worship, along with innovations of organization like the American Christian Missionary Society.

In the first half of the century, premillennial teaching destroyed many churches as these false teachers substituted their opinions for the clear teaching of the scriptures. Centered in Louisville, Kentucky, this false teaching followed that of the denominations: a rapture, a physical war, a 1,000 year reign, and a physical kingdom established by the Lord on this earth.

The first half of the century also saw a threat from the denominationally influenced social gospel. Large efforts were made to separate the congregations of the Lord's church from the true work and mission of the church—preaching and teaching—to more socially relevant works and missions. Hospitals, nursing homes, soup kitchens, recreation and social activities became the primary work of many churches.

In the late 1950's, controversies grew among the churches as to what extent the church could engage in social fellowship and support of institutions other than the church, such as colleges and homes for older people and orphans. During this period the church divided into approximately three groups. The one group was against support of any institutions by the church and was against any form of social fellowship in church buildings and/or sponsored by the church. Another group—called the sponsoring church group—practiced the support of institutions (homes and missionary efforts) by the church only if local churches sponsored the work. The final group of congregations felt that local churches had autonomy (independence) in the matter of whom to support and how to manage evangelism and benevolent work.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, controversy began to arise around the issue of ecumenicalism (true believers are in all churches and unity is the most important issue). At the close of the century this movement produced those who redefined the gospel by advancing their core gospel concept. They also redefined the method by which scriptural authority is established through advancing their

ideas of a new hermeneutic. Many began to believe that the church and its members could participate in interdenominational services and works and that those members of other churches were saved too. Many brethren began to adopt the denominational practices of having choruses and dramatic groups performing in worship, using women speakers, wiring lead singers with microphones, etc. Some thought that the Lord's supper need not be taken every first day of the week or even on the first day of the week. The argument that baptism unto the remission of sins was no longer an absolute condition of salvation opened the door to open fellowship with members of denominations.

Also there arose a movement, which at first was called Crossroads after the Crossroads church, but later was more closely identified with the Boston church. These groups subverted many congregations by a rigorous method of discipling, using sectarian mind control and pressure to make and keep disciples. In many congregations, elders were replaced with "leaders" who lacked Biblical qualification as elders. The evangelist dominated these churches, insisting on absolute loyalty from the leaders and the congregations. Public chastisement, prayer partners, rejection of family, and continuous time commitments were the weapons used to keep disciples in line. Multiplied ministries is a term used to describe these techniques.

21st Century Controversies. Although this has not been a complete accounting of our recent history, it should give us the direction in which the winds of change are blowing.

## **2. 21st Century Issues**

Many churches have begun practices that are new and different from the teaching of the New Testament. These practices are also new and different from those practices of the New Testament church. These practices are disturbing and disrupting to those of us who are applying New Testament teaching as the authority for our work and worship. The elders at Ephesus were told to guard the church in Acts 20:28: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

The innovations are usually additions to the New Testament pattern of worship or additions to the New Testament pattern for the fellowship of true believers. The innovations in worship usually involve those additions that make the worship more entertaining and enticing. It is sometimes called praise worship: hand clapping, choral singing, dramatic presentations, dancing, and even the use of instrumental music. The innovations to the principles of the fellowship of true believers are usually fellowship with denominations, participation in interdenominational services, and the belief that there are saved people in all groups that profess belief in Christ.

Innovations are perverse by their very nature. "The introduction of something new; a new idea, method, or device," states Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. Chasing after their denominational friends, innovators in the church say, "Where is the scripture that forbids it?" Or as I heard one preacher say in support of the instruments of music in the worship, "There are only two passages that command singing." Innovators follow such statements with appeals to the Old Testament or to the trumpets in heaven of The Revelation. The New Testament is clear in 1 Peter 4:11: "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God." The seriousness of perverting these utterances of God is also made very clear in Gal 1: 6-8:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

The utterances of God are not only certain but they are for all time. Jude writes in Jude 3: “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” We all should hold to the fundamental teaching of these passages. “If anything is new, it is not true; if anything is true it is not new,” argued the restorers of New Testament Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

All Christians of the 21st century should become familiar with the underlying issues that we have to face. The answers to the issue questions define that difference between the innovators and their innovative practices and New Testament Christians and their New Testament practices in work, worship, and fellowship. We will find scriptural answers to these questions:

- Is there a New Testament pattern?
- How do we establish this New Testament pattern?
- Are we bound to follow this New Testament pattern? And what if we do not?
- Does this New Testament pattern include worship?
- Does this New Testament pattern include the fellowship of true believers?

Our congregations need to be prepared to defend the church of Christ against these innovations.

### **3. The New Testament Pattern**

Is there a New Testament pattern? This fundamental issue divides the new innovative practices from the teaching of the New Testament. These innovative practices include new and different items of worship and new ideas of what constitutes the fellowship of true believers. Some innovators regard the teaching of the New Testament writers as love letters of advice, not to be binding on the church today. They look only to the teaching of Jesus and examples from the Old Testament to establish their position. Therefore it is important to begin by looking to “the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation” (Eph 1:13)—to the words of Jesus and his apostles. In John 17:17, Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

Jesus preached a gospel of certainty of works and worship. Not just any work or worship would please the father. In Matt 7:21-23 He said:

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” (Emphasis added.)

These of whom Jesus speaks were worshipers. They said, “Lord, Lord;” they prophesied in his name; and they did many wonderful works in his name. What went wrong? Where did they fail? On two counts the Lord indicted them. First, they failed to do the will of the father, and second, they practiced lawlessness. Two principles emerge: In practices of work and worship, we must do the will of the father, and we must not practice without law. If it is the will of God, it is not lawlessness. If it is lawlessness, it is not the will of God. When innovators advance a new practice of work and worship, the congregation should ask: Is it the will of the Father? Is it in the New Testament?

Repeatedly the Lord reiterated these principles. In Matt 15:8-9, he applied the principles to worship: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.” If the new practice is not in the word of

God, from where does it come? It comes from men and the precepts of men. Their worship is in vain. No amount of lip worship ("Lord, Lord.") will change that. When the congregation sees people doing practices that are not in the New Testament, they should realize that it is vain. No matter how fervent the practitioners perform, how conscientious they seem, or how loud they contend for their practice, it is in vain that they worship. In John 4:23 Jesus said: "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." Vain worshipers worship according to the teachings of men. True worshipers worship in spirit and truth.

The Lord charged his disciples to teach certainty in the practices that the church was to observe. He commanded in Matt 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth. Jesus taught in John 16:13: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth." Our true worship is in truth; we are sanctified in this truth; the Spirit guided the apostles into all truth; and we were commanded to observe it all. It will be in this truth that we will find the New Testament pattern for worship and the pattern for the fellowship of true believers.

Jesus preached a gospel of certainty of works and worship. He gave his apostles the right to teach whatsoever He had commanded, and He gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth.

We have seen that (1) Jesus preached a gospel of certainty of works and worship, (2) Repeatedly, the Lord reiterated these principles, (3) the Lord charged his disciples to teach certainty in the practices that the church was to observe, and (4) the spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth. To what degree did the apostles carry out the command to teach the disciples "to observe all that I commanded you"?

From the beginning, the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Luke states expressly: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Paul commended these disciples for sticking to the teaching and told the Thessalonica church to follow their example:

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. 1 Thess 2:13-14.

The New Testament writers understood that they were teaching the verbally inspired word of God. Paul said in I Cor 2:7-13:

7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery . . .10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit . . . for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

Paul showed exactly how these words of the Spirit came to us. In Eph 3:3-5, he said:

3 how that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.

The certain language is unmistakable, for all time. The mystery of Christ is revealed in His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. When we read we can understand as Paul understood. The

writings are not mere suggestions or love letters, given in part or to be taken in part or ignored, as a new generation of innovators might hope. To the contrary, they are inspired, equipping us for every good work, making us complete: "16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." 2 Tim 3:16-17. As it instructs us in every good work, the word is also for all time. Jude wrote of our common salvation: "I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." Jude 3.

The apostles and prophets taught that a certain pattern defines true believers and their fellowship. The faith that was once for all handed down includes the pattern by which men become servants of righteousness. Paul wrote in Rom. 6:17-18: "17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." The word *form* is pattern. "The metaphor is that of a cast or frame into which molten material is poured so as to take its shape." [Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, (c) 1985]

The apostles and prophets taught that a certain pattern defines acceptable worship for Christians. Not only did the Lord teach that worship according to the precepts of men was vain in Matt 15: 8-9, but also the apostles and prophets emphatically affirmed it. Paul said in Col 2:20-23:

20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees . . . accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion (ASV will-worship) and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Paul warned against worldly innovations in Col 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Paul instructed Timothy: "Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me." 2 Tim 1:13.

The apostles and prophets certainly and emphatically taught a pattern for true conversion and a pattern for true worship.

#### **4. Following the New Testament Pattern for Obedience and Worship**

Many of the innovations of our day are additions to the New Testament pattern for worship and additions to the divine plan for the fellowship of true believers. Many are teaching that anything goes in worship and that the non-baptized believers can have fellowship: we with them and they with us. Those who advance such innovations have deserted the New Testament as the inspired word of God for our age.

These false teachings happen in spite of the repeated teachings that tell us to hold the pattern of sound words. In 2 Tim 1:13, Paul wrote, "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern [Gr. Tupos, pattern] of sound teaching." NIV. Paul also commends the Roman church for obeying the pattern of teaching: "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form [Gr. Tupos, pattern] of teaching to which you were committed." Rom 6:17-18. Further, Paul admonished the Philippians: "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern [Gr. Tupos, pattern] you have in us." Phil 3:16-17. The New Testament pattern for worship equips us for every good work: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." 2 Tim 3:16-17.

The New Testament pattern for obedience to the gospel is

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- Hearing the word of God (Rom 10:14-16, John 6:44-45),
- Believing the word of God (Mk 16:16, Heb 11:6, Acts 8:37),
- Repenting of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30, 2 Pet 3:9),
- Confessing the name of Jesus (Mt 10:32, Rom 10:9, Phil 2:11),
- And being baptized unto the remission of sins (Mk 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, 1 Pet 3:21).

The New Testament pattern for worship is

- Singing (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16),
- Praying (Acts 2:42),
- Fellowship or giving (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor 16:1-2),
- Partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 11:23-34),
- And preaching and teaching (Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7).

Those who obey the gospel are added to the church in Acts 2:47: "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." Paul affirmed that baptism is the act by which we enter the body of baptized believers in 1 Cor 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

The saved are in the church, and the church is the called out body of the saved.

### **5. *Following with Certainty the New Testament Pattern***

Is there a New Testament pattern and are we bound to follow it? As we discussed previously, this is the fundamental issue that divides the new innovative practices from the teaching of the New Testament. These innovative practices include new and different items of worship and new ideas of what constitutes the fellowship of true believers. We have previously established:

1. Jesus preached a gospel of certainty of works and worship.
2. Repeatedly, the Lord reiterated these principles.
3. The Lord charged his disciples to teach certainty in the practices that the church was to observe.
4. The spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth.
5. From the beginning, the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.
6. The New Testament writers understood that they were teaching the verbally inspired word of God.
7. Paul showed exactly how these words of the Spirit came to us.
8. The certain language is unmistakable, for all time.
9. The apostles and prophets taught that a certain pattern defines true believers and their fellowship.
10. The apostles and prophets taught that a certain pattern defines acceptable worship for Christians.

We now address the degree to which we are bound to follow the pattern so emphatically taught by the Lord and His apostles and prophets.

The Lord taught that those who practice lawlessness would be told, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness." Matt 7:23. The word for lawlessness describes a condition of people who call on the name of the Lord and even do wonderful works in His name, but are not doing the will of the Father. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Matt 7:21. Today's innovators have their own works, which are not found in the teaching of the Lord or his apostles and prophets. They look to their fervor and enthusiasm for justification, when they should seek the "pattern of sound words." 2 Tim. 1:13. In John 17:17, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in truth, your word is truth." We are bound to accept the teaching of the New Testament and apply its pattern or accept the consequences of not entering into the kingdom of heaven. We should fear lest we hear those fateful words: "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."

The apostle Paul taught that if an apostle, an angel from heaven, or any man should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! Gal 1:6-10. Paul also said in verse 7, "Which is really not another [gospel]; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ." In the strongest way, Paul declares the disfavor to come on any who even distorts the gospel. The false teachers in Galatians had another thing in common with modern innovators. They both appeal to the Old Testament to support their perversion. False teachers will say today that their practices (e.g., instrumental music) were done in the Old Testament or that God did not hold the people of the Old Testament to the pattern that he laid down. Paul's response was emphatic and clear in Gal 5:4: "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." When modern teachers appeal to the Old Testament to justify their practices, it is clear that their practices are not found in the New Testament. We should respond to them with the words of Paul in Gal 3:1-3:

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

If we are accursed for distorting the gospel, how careful we should be to follow the word of truth. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Rom 10:17. The apostle Peter agreed: "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God." NIV 1 Peter 4:11. If anyone preaches a distorted gospel, he will be accursed.

People who distort the truth are savage wolves, so be on your guard. Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:29-31: "Savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard!" When these savage wolves come among us teaching things not found in the New Testament, both elders and members must respond to protect the Lord's church. Elders are not only to be on guard, but they are told:

To hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. . . . who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. Titus 1:9-11.

Here Paul contrasts the faithful word, the teaching, and sound doctrine with teaching things that they should not. The truth is clear, the error is clear, and the remedy is clear: Refute those who contradict and silence them.

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished . . . Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this

teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 2 John 8-11.

## **6. Establishing the New Testament Pattern**

Previously we have established two positions by the scriptures. First, the Lord, his apostles, and the prophets taught that there is a New Testament pattern. Second, they taught that to fail to apply the New Testament pattern to the church results in devastating consequences. The Lord will say, "Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness (Mt 7:23)." The apostle Paul said that if anyone preaches a different gospel let him be accursed (Gal 1:6-10). The issue is how do we establish the New Testament pattern? The scriptures bring the pattern to us in four ways: direct commands, express statements, approved apostolic examples, and necessary inferences.

The first way to establish the New Testament pattern is by direct commandments of the Lord, the apostles, and the prophets. Direct commands teach us who true believers are and how they become such. In giving the great commission, Jesus said in Matt 28:20: "Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." New Testament Christians became such by obeying direct commands. In Mark 16:16 the Lord commanded: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." On the day of Pentecost, when they cried out what must we do, Peter commanded in Acts 2:38: "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." These two direct commands succinctly answer the issue today of what constitutes those of the fellowship of true believers.

Direct commands also help teach us the New Testament pattern for worship. What constitutes scriptural worship by music is a question answered by the direct commands of the apostle. We are commanded in Eph 5:19, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord." Col 3:16-17 also commands, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." These direct commands answer the issue today of what constitutes true worship by music.

Express statements by the Lord, apostles, and prophets establish the New Testament pattern. The inspired writers made clear and express statements that tell us what the truth is. One example of this is 1 Peter 3:21. In speaking of Noah and the flood, Peter said, "Eight persons were brought safely through the water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you." We cannot mistake this express statement: baptism now saves you, and its corollary is the saved are baptized. The New Testament pattern for what constitutes the saved is very clear.

Approved apostolic examples establish the New Testament pattern. Paul could not be clearer than in Phil 3:16-18: "However, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Not only are we to follow the apostolic examples, but also that example is the pattern. Paul portrays those who do not walk according to the pattern in the worst terms: "18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ." Innovators and destroyers of the New Testament pattern should beware. Church members should watch out.

It is by command that we partake of the Lord's Supper in our communion. The Lord instituted and commanded it in the Gospels (see Matt 26:26-30). The apostle Paul reiterated it in I Cor 11:23-34. However, the frequency of partaking of the Lord's Supper comes via approved apostolic example. The example of the Jerusalem church in Acts 2:42 showed that the pattern of partaking was continual: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." The example of the church at Troas in Acts 20:7 defines the

continual nature of the pattern more certainly: “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread . . .” The pattern is certain: we come together to break bread on the first day of the week. Every week has a first day.

Finally, where inferences are necessary, they establish the New Testament pattern. Truth can only be inferred where the sacred writers imply truth. Inference is not supposition such as in the saying: “Well, it could be this or could be that.” We are not at liberty to make up in the name of necessary inference. In John 3:23, we see, “John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.” Much water forces one necessarily to infer that baptism requires much water. Of the three modes of baptism practiced in the religious world, only one requires much water—immersion. In Acts 8:38-39, we find Philip baptizing the eunuch: “And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away.” One must necessarily infer that baptism requires both the baptizer and the subject to both go down into the water prior to baptizing and come up out of the water after baptizing. Only the baptism of the New Testament—immersion—fulfills this pattern. The express statement of Col 2:12 reinforces this pattern: “Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

Direct commands, express statements, approved apostolic examples, and necessary inferences are the tools for establishing the New Testament pattern. When men come with new ideas for worship and for what constitutes a true believer, the elders and congregation must ask: Where is the New Testament pattern?

## **Part 2: Change Agents and Innovators Deny the New Testament Pattern**

### ***7. Denying the New Testament Pattern in Matters of Faith and Practice***

We have studied how we use direct commands, express statements, approved apostolic examples, and necessary inference to establish the New Testament pattern. When men come with new ideas for worship and for what constitutes a true believer, the elders and congregation must ask, Where is the New Testament pattern? Our plea is to speak as the very word of God (1 Pet 4:11), to follow the example of the early church (1 Th 2:14), and to obey the Lord and his holy prophets and apostles (Mt 28:19-20). This plea is nowhere on the agenda of change agents and innovators. These false teachers are dividing the church and attacking the faith once delivered for all time (Jude 3). Their postmodern agenda transcends Bible teaching in an effort that mimics the most modernistic of the denominations, subverting the faith. Faithful Christians must look closely at what these change agents and innovators say and do, searching the scriptures daily to see if their teaching is true (Acts 17:11). Do not expect change agents and innovators to tell you outright what they believe. Rather they will assert themselves, inserting their false practices, ridiculing those who do not go along.

Innovators and change agents deny New Testament authority in matters of faith and practice. Their efforts usually focus on what makes a true believer and what is true worship.

*What will they say?* They will say the New Testament is not a pattern but a love letter, an expression of God’s desires, not God’s instructions. You will hear that we need a broader more all-inclusive view of the Bible. They will advance a new concept in the non-Biblical term *core gospel*. Focusing on the death, burial, and resurrection, they will exclude the New Testament teaching on fellowship and worship as not being a part of their core gospel. Their ideas of unity will emerge, giving advent to the fellowshipping of denominations and worshiping as the denominations worship. They will say that the New Testament is absent of prescriptive scriptures on worship that say that this is how you

## 12 *The New Testament Pattern*

do it. You find principles, but not really rules, they will say. And the New Testament is not an instruction manual about worship.

*What does the Bible say?* Peter gave an answer that is true from Moses until now:

Moses said, 'the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed' to everything He says to you. 23 And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days." Acts 3:22-24.

This is a certain message with a certain outcome and no room for deviation. Paul said: "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. NIV 2 Tim 1:13-14.

And for those who do not keep the pattern of sound teaching and guard it, Gal 1:7-9 is clear:

There are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

They replace New Testament authority with the assertions of their leaders. These assertions are clever in their deceit. Of course, if we have no examples, commands, or express statements that are binding, human opinion triumphs, and human assertions are permissible.

*What will they say?* One teacher started with talking about all the passages that teach us to care for the needy and how little we do. He moved deftly to singing and that we have only two passages that commanded us to sing, and yet we do that faithfully. Then suddenly he was saying that only two passages that tell us to sing do not preclude using instruments. The deed was done! Back to the need to care for poor people!

Another preacher was in the midst of advocating innovations to the worship. He was using the crippled man in Acts 3 who celebrated his healing by jumping and praising God to justify hand clapping and arm waving in the worship today. Now that was bad enough, and we will discuss it later. In reading about Peter and John going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, he inserted: "Basically you have two preachers going to church." "It was about three in the afternoon. That's a little different from when we have services." Without another word, he went back to reading. Notice what he has taught—going to the Jewish temple is going to church. And the Jewish service of worship is the same as ours except the hour. The implied conclusion is that when we worship with denominations we are doing just what Peter and John were doing—a complete perversion of the scriptures.

Another preacher was asking for a balance between ritualism and novelty in worship. He said that just because we always do things does not make them worship. However, he added we should not do something new just to be doing it. Now, note his illustration: like bringing in a marching band. More people want the new; and for the sake of the other people, we should do it. He has effectively taught the instruments in worship are all right, for the sake of other people.

*What does the Bible say?* Acts 17:11 says that the Bereans were "examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." What is the answer? We read in 1 Peter 4:11 "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God." NIV. How true is the prophecy:

Just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many

will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words . . . [emp. added] 2 Peter 2:1-3.

### **8. Denying the New Testament Pattern by Using the Old Testament for Binding Authority**

We have studied how innovators and change agents deny New Testament authority in matters of faith and practice, relegating the New Testament to the status of advice to the early church—a love letter, as it were. They also replace the New Testament authority with the assertions of their leaders, following the path set by earlier apostasy where the priest’s, preacher’s or pastor’s word supercedes the New Testament. Once the New Testament is minimized as God’s pattern for the church, innovators justify their opinions by turning to the Old Testament for selective proof of their erroneous positions. Here is how it works.

Innovators and change agents appeal to the Old Testament for justification of their innovative practices. In their deceit, they minimize New Testament teaching and use Old Testament examples to support their innovations, especially in worship. In this regard, they are exactly like the innovators of the nineteenth century. These people divided the church over instruments of music, destroying many congregations. In that day, after a futile appeal to the Greek as regards the meaning of PSALLO, which is to sing or make melody, the innovators fled quickly to the instruments of David for their support of the instruments of music in the worship. History is repeating itself as the innovators of today advocate the unauthorized acts of worship that make up what some call praise worship. Hand clapping, choral singing, arm waving, play acting, and shouting—all of these and more are without New Testament authority from either the Lord or his holy apostles and prophets.

*What will they say?* They will begin by admitting that most of their references come from the Old Testament. “Aren’t we a New Testament Church,” they might begin. “What did the New Testament church use for scripture? They used the Old Testament.” They will say that 1 Tim 3:16, which teaches that all scripture is inspired of God, means the Old Testament. Another reason to use the Old Testament, they will say, is that when you’re talking about worship, the New Testament is almost empty of specific rules. The New Testament only has 136 verses that remotely refer to worship. This is not unlike the sophistry of the preacher who said there were only two verses commanding us to sing.

They will say it is not the act; i.e., singing without accompaniment, observing the Lord’s Supper, giving, preaching and teaching, and praying (See Acts 2:42). One preacher in support of hand clapping and arm waving began to denigrate the New Testament’s authority on the subject of worship. He then asserted: “It is not the act that makes it worship.” “It is the condition of our heart.” “Doing the right things does not constitute worship.” He overlooked the fate of Cain and laughed off Nadab and Abihu as being “zapped by God.” Then he asserted God is more concerned with your heart than whether you do things the right way. To prove all this, he cited 2 Chronicles 29:30-31. Here King Hezekiah, in attempting to restore the temple worship, observed several exceptions to the instruction of the Law of Moses. They even “ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed (2 Chron 30:18).”

They will omit parts that do not suit their point. What is not pointed out by this innovative preacher is that the tolerance of God followed a prayer of repentance for the act which Hezekiah clearly understood as wrong:

For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, ‘May the good LORD pardon 19 everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification

rules of the sanctuary.' 20 So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people (2 Chron 30:18-20).

What is also overlooked is that in the Old Testament era God suffered certain exceptions such as the Israelites' plea, "Give us a King to judge us." 1 Sam 8:6. Even the Lord Jesus spoke of God's tolerance when the Jews hardened their hearts in Matt 19:8: "He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.'" In the same Old Testament setting, Hezekiah also re-instituted the musical instruments of David (2 Chron 29:29) Do you see where this sophistry leads? Hand clapping and arm waving are just the beginning to the real agenda. The real agenda is to move denominational practices into the church. The floodgates holding back apostasy will come completely down.

They will transfer the act in the Old Testament to an application for the church. Another preacher, in an effort to support the feel good, celebrative focus of praise worship, used Nehemiah 8 to make the point that the church's worship should be more celebrative. He concluded that Nehemiah turned the worship into a party. When reading, "Ezra blessed the Lord the great God," the preacher emphasized the New International Version's use of praised in the place of blessed. This is a clear abuse of the original language: barak (baw-rak'); a primitive root; to kneel; by implication to bless God (as an act of adoration) [Strong]. Ezra read the law from early morning to midday. The people listened attentively and were moved to weeping because they heard the law read. At the conclusion after the people bowed low and worshiped God, their faces to the ground, Nehemiah encouraged them to stop weeping and to start feasting. "All the people went away . . . to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them (Neh 8:12)." The preacher used this Old Testament example to insist on a more festive, celebrative tone to worship in the church.

Not only does the preacher use the Old Testament to prove acts without New Testament precedent, but in his sophistry combines the worship (reading of the Law) and the festival which were clearly separate in purpose, tone, and act. Later in the sermon, he uses this example to play out his innovation under the misnomers of joy and praise. He commanded: stand up, clap your hands, and wave your arms as you sing, pressuring the congregation to do it along with him.

*What does the Bible say?* To bind part of the law requires one to bind it all. When a former group of innovators and change agents tried to bind circumcision, Paul responded emphatically:

2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. Gal 5:2-4.

Can one not say today: "You who are seeking to justify the innovations of praise worship by the law are fallen from grace." Present day innovators and change agents who are justifying the antics of praise worship are following quickly with instruments of music, dedication of infants, and other acts of denominationalism. Previous teachers of circumcision, infant baptism, and instrumental music have paved the path that they are walking.

We must follow Paul's advice in 2 Tim 2:15: "15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." This requires one to understand that the mission of the Old Testament is completed in Christ: "17 Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." Matt 5:17. When the apostles suggested treating Christ as an equal to the Old Testament prophets, God answered, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" Matt 17:5. The New Testament writers affirm this certain voice of Jesus, "God, after He spoke long ago to the

fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son . . ." Heb 1:1-2.

What of the Old Testament that the fathers wrote? Rom 10:4 tells us: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." For the Christian era, Col 2:14-15 teaches clearly: "having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." The innovators and change agents must find New Testament authority for their new acts of worship and new occasions of worship. Their contention that the early church had no scripture except from the Old Testament is wrong. The Lord himself described the extent of their inspiration: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." John 14:26. The apostles were to know all things and remember all. This all-inclusive nature of the revelation came to them in the exact words of the Spirit.

Paul described the effect of this verbal inspiration on the apostles and prophets: "Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." 1 Cor 2:13. When Paul wrote, we were to understand his insight into the mystery of Christ:

By revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. Eph 3:3-5.

Peter endorsed Paul's writings as wisdom given unto him and as scripture:

15 . . . just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Yes, the church then had the exact word of God in the inspired apostles and prophets. Yes, the church now has the exact word of God in the New Testament written by those inspired apostles and prophets. The church then and the church now have the same mission—to make known this manifold wisdom of God. "10 . . . so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places." Eph 3:10.

Change agents and innovators cannot deny the word of Christ in inspiration was available to the early church. It is in desperation and even in panic that they support their false teachings by scurrying back to the Old Testament. It is ironic that the Old Testament writers themselves searched and sought diligently for what the change agents and innovators reject so callously:

10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries . . . 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven -- things into which angels long to look. 1 Peter 1:10-12

Please, do not tell Peter that he did not preach the gospel by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. And do not tell him that Paul did not write scripture.

## **Part 3: Destroying the New Testament Pattern with Words—the Language of Ashdod**

### **9. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Corporate Worship**

Innovators and change agents replace Bible worship and teaching with their innovations and introduce new non-Biblical words, which reflect this false doctrine. These new, non-Biblical words become a lexicon of change. This strategy of deceit is as old as the Devil's attempt to destroy Adam and Eve. The serpent entered just one word into God's command in Gen 3:4: "You will not surely die." These new terms hide the innovators' ideas with a semantic cloak of deceit. Their language is the language of Ashdod (Neh 13:24). In the next several sections, we will study the most common of these words:

- Corporate worship
- Praise and praise worship
- Emotion (s)
- Celebrate
- Contemporary service
- Community church

You will see that the terms and/or the phrases are not New Testament in origin. The first of these terms is *corporate worship*.

#### ***Corporate worship.***

*What will they say?* They will use the term *corporate worship* to distinguish between worship in the assembly of the church and all other places. One preacher explained it this way: "The way we worship here is different from the way we worship at camp." One report states that the '98 Jubilee's Children's Choir [a non-Biblical term itself] sang their songs to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The entire effort is that worship outside the assembly can be different, opening the floodgate to worship as and with denominations. Of course, it will not be long before these innovations in worship work their way into the assembly (corporate worship). In some congregations, hand clapping, arm waving, and shouting have already migrated from summer camp with the children to Sunday morning worship with the adults.

This argument extends to say that we are always the church whether we are in corporate worship or not. Therefore, the sophistry leads to the church doing anything that the individual can do, opening the gates to unscriptural activity in the assembly of the church.

*What does the Bible say?* There is no Biblical reference to justify the word. The worship of God is not tied to a place or time, according to the Lord himself. In John 4:23-24, He said: "23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." Wherever one worships God, it must be in spirit and truth.

One cannot pervert the teaching to make non-truthful practices acceptable. Our children are being indoctrinated at summer camps and youth rallies, in choirs and choruses, to worship as the denominations worship. Nor is the practice of going into denominational meetings and worshipping as they worship truthful. One congregation had a joint meeting with a Baptist group, singing half of the songs with the instrumental accompaniment and half without. Taking an act of worship out of the Lord's Day assembly does not qualify it to be perverted by innovations of man. The Lord said: "9but in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." Matt 15:9. From the

beginning of his teaching he laid down the sure path for us to follow: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Matt 7:21.

Semantic camouflage cannot hide what is happening:

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 2 Cor 6:14-15.

## **10. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Praise and Praise Worship**

*Praise* and *praise worship* are words used by change agents to describe their desired changes in worship.

***Praise and praise worship.***

*What will they say?* They will use the terms *praise* and *praise worship* to characterize the unique style and emotion of their innovative worship and distinguish it from what the true church of Christ does. One preacher characterized it this way in his attacks on true worship. "Does it always show? No." "We celebrate his holiness. Do we act like it? Well, no." "How often do we appear to be enjoying worship?" "Does it appear you are enjoying worship if there is no applause, if we sit quietly, stifling our feelings." In support, this preacher quoted the joy and praise passages from the Psalms of David. He further defined his meaning by strongly asserting that the church worshipers should shout, put hands up in the air, hug and kiss brothers and sisters in Christ and clap hands. He led them in a song, standing and clapping. By his own admission, some in the congregation were hesitant.

*What does the Bible say?* First of all, it never uses the term *praise worship*. Praise Worship is an entertaining display aimed to excite and please the creature rather than the creator (See Rom 1:25). Those instituting it are moving as idolaters of old moved. They have re-defined praise as it is used in Biblical expressions such as praise God. When Ezra praised God, the preacher, cited above, interpreted it as celebrative. The meaning in the original language was blessed as in blessed God. Paul used the expression in Eph 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

In the Greek language of the New Testament, praise is to speak in praise of and then only of God. In English, the celebrative meaning of the innovators is also missing. The noun form is an expression of approval. The verb is to express a favorable judgment. Therefore, in worship, we approve God and the Savior as only they can be approved. We express favorably this judgment of approval in prayers, hymns, spiritual songs, communion with the body and blood of Christ, fellowship in giving to God and to those in need, and preaching and teaching the Gospel. The approval should be conveyed in the spirit and truth of God's commands and not by how we feel or by what we think. Therefore, in our worship "let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, [emphasis added] 29 for our 'God is a consuming fire.'" Heb 12:28-29. Reverence is profound, adoring respect, and awe is an emotion combining dread, veneration, and wonder (Webster's 10<sup>th</sup> Edition).

Col 3:15-17 gives other attitudes of praise and worship:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts . . . And be thankful.16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, 16 as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do,

whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Other passages, too numerous to cite, detail the attitudes with which we are to approach the altar of God. The scriptures specifically call for restraining sensual indulgence in self-imposed worship.

23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. Col 2:22-23 NIV.

In all of this remember, it is God who is to be praised, not we who are to be made to feel good. According to Eph 3:21: “. . .to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.” We ourselves, the church, do not receive the glory. The glory is to God!

### **11. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Emotion(s).**

Innovations hide behind a demand for the congregation to show more emotion. In fact, this appeal is the rallying cry of those moving beyond the New Testament pattern in worship in the manner in which they worship.

#### ***Emotion(s)***

*What will they say?* They will call for a display of emotions. This appeal to emotions is very similar to the appeal of those in denominations who advocated a heart-felt religion in times past. One preacher put it this way: “If you’re standing, bowing, folding your hands, will your emotions show?” Another went further in speaking of Amos 5:21: “They were doing all the things they were supposed to; they were doing but their heart was not where it needed to be. It is not about what we do so much as where our heart is.” In this logic, commands of the Lord take second place to the feelings and emotions of the worshipers. He added: “People who like to stand and hold up their hands have freedom in Christ.”

The key phrase here is people who like to. The false teaching is that the worshipers’ feelings (emotions) transcend the commands of Christ and the apostles and prophets. This same preacher completely undermined the scriptural acts of worship in favor of emotions: The preacher said: “David said to Solomon that a heart that seeks after God—God is going to let you find him. It is not the content of the worship that matters. It is the intent. It is what everybody else needs.” The religion of these innovators and change agents becomes emotionally driven for its authority in worship. It is what everybody else needs.

*What does the Bible say?* First, the word emotion(s) is not in the Bible. That should be the end of it, but the false teachers in their sophistry use Biblical words *heart* and *spirit* interchangeably with the word *emotion(s)*. The Bible warns that our heart can mislead us in Heb 3:10-12.

Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, “they always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways . . . they shall not enter my rest.” Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

We must think to engage our hearts: “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.” Prov 23:7. To take our feelings as our guide is dangerous indeed. Prov 14:12 instructs us: “12 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.” Just as the New Testament tells us what to do, it tells us how. Jesus said to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). The innovators would have us think this use of the word *spirit* means emotions. We are told exactly what works of the spirit are in Gal.5:22-24:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The innovations of the day replace these characteristics of the spirit with worship designed to rouse the passions and desires of the flesh and to show it by hand clapping, arm waving, shouting, and leaping. Phil 4:4-9 describes the New Testament pattern for the spiritual attitude and acts of true worship:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Not only does Paul describe the proper spirit for worship but he also tells us what to do: “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things.” There we have it—the New Testament pattern for worship.

## **12. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Celebrate**

Change agents appeal to their congregation to display more emotion in worship, calling for them to celebrate. *Celebrate* is used in the same fashion as one would use it at a political campaign or an athletic event.

### ***Celebrate***

*What they will say.* *Celebrate* is one of their favorite and defining words. The word is usually used in connection with joy, praise, or praise worship. In one preacher’s sermon he describes the Old Testament passages on joy and praise as the worship literature of the early church as they “celebrate.” He contended that the only scriptures available to them were Old Testament scriptures. Another preacher called for shouting and leaping. Applause has become commonplace in many churches.

*What does the Bible say?* In this context, the worship is like the celebration of an athletic or election campaign victory. It has the air and aura of a theater performance—the cast has done well, the focus is on them, and a celebration is in order. The word celebrate (d) is used 53 times in the Bible—only one of which refers to the church:

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Cor 5:6-8.

The church is to celebrate the sacrifice of Christ who is symbolically our Passover. The very spiritual nature of this celebration is described by the words sincerity and truth. When this passage is considered with other passages on the nature of the worship, it is very clear that we are not celebrating in any contemporary sense of the word. Rom 12:1-2 commands us:

. . . to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the

renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [Emphasis added].

How is the worship? –A spiritual service, a renewing of your mind. What is the worship? –The will of God, good, acceptable, and perfect. When we approach God in the worship, the spiritual requirements are spelled out. We “worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.” Heb 12:28-29 NIV.

The scripturally offensive part of celebration as worship is hand clapping, arm waving, and shouting. These all add unauthorized acts of worship to our service. In these meetings one is clapping and one is not. One is standing waving and one is not. One is shouting and one is not. The acts are not only unauthorized by the scriptures but they pave the way for other unspecified acts of worship—playing instruments of music, performances of drama, presentations by choirs and choruses to mention only a few innovations. These acts violate the teaching of I Cor. 14 where Paul confronted similar innovations when some were speaking in tongues, others were not, some were singing, others were not. “But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.” Paul told us in 1 Cor 14:40. When change agents force members to perform celebrative acts of worship, they violate the consciences of some of those present. Rom 14:23 tells us “Whatever is not from faith is sin.”

### **13. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Contemporary Service**

*Contemporary service* describes the effort to include innovations in worship under the guise of being more modern and “with it.” These appeal to worshipers uninformed about the scriptural pattern.

#### ***Contemporary service.***

*What will they say?* Contemporary service describes a service constructed to fulfill the requirements of the innovators’ idea of what worship is. The term is usually heard where the change agents have divided the church and have some following them into the great apostasy and others who will not give up the New Testament pattern for worship. The compromise is to let one group meet in a contemporary worship and the other group meet in a traditional service.

Justification often comes in the form of saying that those of the denominations will be more comfortable when the church is less strict in following the scriptural pattern of worship.

When the error runs full course overtaking the entire church, the only worship will be the so-called contemporary service. In some churches, the elders resist the contemporary service and the change agents undermine them until they are asked to step down as elders. The contemporary service will have all the trappings of denominationalism and sectarianism. There will be the unauthorized, people-centered acts of worship—hand clapping, arm waving, applause, shouting, etc. These will combine with unauthorized methods of presenting material and performances—drama, choruses, choirs, solos, and other forms of entertainment—all of which may be entertaining to spectators and participants, but are without New Testament precedent. One church wires its lead singers to make the singing more exciting and professional. Another church offers drama, plays, and skits to celebrate the various religious holidays.

*What does the Bible say?* God’s approved worship does not change with time. Heb 1:2 tells us: “2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” These last days continue until now. Jude wrote, “. . . that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” Jude 3. Not only is the New Testament faith once for all delivered, it also is scripture: “16 All Scripture is inspired by God . . . 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” 2

Tim 3:16-17. It was the Lord who said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35. The restoration preachers had a saying: "If it is true, it is not new; if it is new, it is not true."

Even the meaning of the word *contemporary* illustrates its seductive nature. The first definition in Webster's Collegiate 10<sup>th</sup> Edition says, "1: happening, existing, living, or coming into being during the same period of time." By definition, contemporary worship is not from the New Testament. The dictionary adds, "Marked by characteristics of the present period." Out of the present period, have come new acts of worship with characteristics marked by the present time. The admonition of Paul is as fitting today as it was when he wrote it in 1 Tim 4:1: "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." Paul warns again of the dangers of deception tied to the times: "8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." [Emphasis added] Col 2:8.

John wrote:

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. 1 John 2:15-17

To build worship around what is pleasing to the flesh, eye, and spirit of the world is to love the contemporaneous world. Where did hand clapping, arm waving, chorus singing, play acting, shaking, and dancing up and down come from? Not from God's word but from the present, sinful world. For our friends who so love the contemporary, the warning of Paul still stands: "7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'the people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.'" 1 Cor 10:7. Innovators contemporary with Moses grew impatient with God's plan and built an idol—a golden calf. Now when Paul said, "Do not be idolaters," one might expect that the phrase they built an idol would follow. Not so! They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play follows. How contemporary were the Israelites. How timely is the warning to the Corinthian church and to all of us.

Another group of contemporary worshipers departed from God's will in Rom 1:18-26: They were described as men, ". . .who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Since God had revealed himself, ". . .they are without excuse." Paul wrote, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." They thought they were wise and built idols in their own form. Today men build worship in their own image and ideas. Of these idolaters of old, Paul tells us, "25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions." How contemporary were these idolaters of old.

Today's cry for contemporary worship with its call for a show of emotions—a show of feelings with shouting, and jumping with joy—has everything to do with worshiping and serving the creature, suppressing the truth as the "pattern of sound words." Such acts and attitudes of contemporary worship cannot be far from the "degrading passions" to which God gave over the men of old.

Faithful Christians resisting the innovations are treated as if they are the ones who are wrong. A preacher told one elder, "Why don't you just step down and get out of the way." In another congregation, faithful Christians received labeling names: argumentative, narrow, and unloving. Yet faithful Christians must resist the false teachers who attempt to storm the walls of the church, the house of God, and make captive of us all. See Col 2:8. This accommodation of error castigates

against those faithful to the New Testament pattern for worship. Often, elders not wanting to divide the congregation accommodate the innovators and let them have two services—one, a contemporary service. Our response to those advocating the concept of the contemporary worship must be the response of John:

9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 2 John 9-11.

#### **14. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Community Church**

This is the last part of our study. Previous terms studied are corporate worship, praise and praise worship, emotion(s), celebrate, and contemporary service. You will remember that these new terms hide the innovators' ideas with a semantic cloak of deceit. Their language is the language of Ashdod (Neh 13:24). Community church shows how far reaching the apostasy goes. The term *community church* exchanges New Testament Christianity for movement to modern denominationalism and sectarianism not unlike that of the Christian Church of 100 years ago. In fact, today, the movement to the community church captivates the entire denominational world.

##### ***Community Church***

*What will they say?* *Community Church* is a term used by some churches who break off after a division from those that stand for the truth on the innovative practices. They also call themselves Community Church of Christ. One sign read Church of Christ - Unity. Their worship is characterized by the term *praise worship* and their fellowship is extended to those of other denominations. Once the true church rejects contemporary worship practices, the next step for change agents is to move completely to the community church. The appeal is to widen the church to include the largest number of people. In places where the apostasy is full-grown, the church has all the trappings of a community church, if not the name. Fellowship is open to the largest possible number of people.

*What does the Bible say?* The idea of the community church speaks for those who see believers in denominations as fellow Christians. The error of this idea—beyond errors of worship—are abundant. However, at its core is the error of what constitutes the fellowship of true believers. John lays down the foundation principles of fellowship in 1 John 1:3-7:

. . . 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete . . . 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Christian fellowship is based on what the apostles proclaimed (verse 3); what the apostles and prophets wrote (verse 4): what the message was that they heard from Him and announce to us (verse 5); practicing the truth (verse 6); and, finally, walking in the light as He is in the light (verse 7). The results are stated: "we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." The Bible is not vague or uncertain about what they heard from Him: "16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16. Matthew quotes the Lord on how we become disciples:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matt 28:19-20.

Peter, Luke, and all those thousands of obedient souls on the day of Pentecost understood it the way Jesus said it. In Acts 2:37-38, "They were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" Peter's answer then and the answer now were stated clearly: "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." There is no way to avoid this teaching. It is what it is. Repent and be baptized.

Luke describes the outcome of their actions on the issue to fellowship in Acts 2:42: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42-47. They kept feeling a sense of awe (verse 43); all those who had believed were together (verse 44); they were sharing (verse 45); they were continuing with one mind (verse 46); they had gladness and sincerity of heart (verse 46); and they were praising God. The way into fellowship is certain and the characteristics of that fellowship are certain.

The Lord who commanded the terms and character of fellowship understood exactly what was happening: "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." Acts 2:47. How? By their obedience in believing, repenting, and being baptized.

Just as the New Testament is clear on the subject of fellowship, it is also clear on the dangers of fellowship with error. In 2 Cor 6:14-16 Paul wrote:

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnerships have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God . . .

To these same Corinthians, Paul wrote in 1 Cor 12:12-13:

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

The teaching on the fellowship of true believers is clear. The teaching of the change agents and innovators is clear. Paul's rhetorical question concludes the matter: what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

## Conclusion

The issues of the change agents and innovators mimic what is happening across the denominational world. In many churches, the changes will appear minor. In others, they will run quickly to the excesses of praise worship, contemporary worship, and the community church. In the extreme the emotionalism will run to speaking in tongues and miracles. In the end some churches will have full fellowship with unbaptized believers. This logic will also eventually lead to the fellowship of those in non-Christian groups, such as Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus.

As every wave of doctrine floods and every wind of doctrine blows, we must stand on the firm foundation of God:

. . . the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.' 2 Tim 2:19.

The struggle will be different from those of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The change agents and innovators discount the authority of the New Testament, relegating it to advice and characterize it as a love letter. In previous divisions, for the most part, parties on both sides claimed the truth of God's word in support of their positions. Today, the innovations are preceded by the claim of a new hermeneutic—a device designed to circumvent the authority of the apostles and holy prophets in defining the New Testament pattern. Therefore, they may reject the pattern and proceed in worship and fellowship to suit themselves, rejecting the truth of the Gospel. It will not be a debate on what the Bible says, but a debate on the very authority of the New Testament itself.

It is important that faithful churches take their stand now. For faithful brethren will easily see the sophistry of the change agents and falsehood of their innovations. The longer we wait, the larger the breach in the walls of the church. Some will cry that we who stand for the truth of the gospel are the dividers and troublemakers. They will want us to be quiet and unassertive in the path of their destruction. We will be labeled and branded, castigated and derided. In whatever comes, be assured it is as Christ said, even though the division cuts to the quick of family and friends. In Luke 12:49-53 the Lord prophesied of times like these:

49 I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; 52 for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

In the coming years we may experience a baptism of fire and suffering of our own, for the agents of change are already at work. We must look to the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, for our security; and we must use the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, to defeat the false teaching. Some churches will divide; some churches will depart into apostasy; but the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ will survive until He delivers the kingdom to the Father. In the meantime, we must each be like the apostle Paul:

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Tim 4:7-8.

The outcome of our struggle is set in heaven. According to Heb 12:22-24, our progress and promise is firm:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

In Heb 12:28-29 those who attack the kingdom cannot shake it:

28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

Finally, let us pray for the Savior's return as in Revelation 22:17-21:

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.