

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

April 29, 2018

Is the New Testament A Pattern?

by Frank Himmel

Faithful brethren have long regarded the New Testament as the pattern or blueprint for churches. We have called for "book, chapter, and verse" for everything taught and practiced. When differences arose, the discussion centered on what the pattern said. Now the popular approach is to deny that God intended the examples of first century churches to be any kind of pattern for us. It is argued that we are bound only by direct statements of Scripture; apart from them we are free to do as wisdom dictates. Is that what God intended?

At Mt. Sinai God gave Moses the law which formed the covenant between Him and Israel. A part of that revelation was plans for the tabernacle and its furnishings. God told Moses, "See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain" (Exodus 25:40).

Centuries later the wilderness tabernacle was later replaced by the Jerusalem temple. David proposed it,

but God disallowed him as the builder. Nevertheless, God revealed the plans to David, who then entrusted them to Solomon. "All this," said David, "the Lord made me understand by His hand upon me all the details of this pattern" (1 Chronicles 28:19). Solomon then built it "according to all its plans" (1 Kings 6:38).

Here is the point: if God was concerned that the tabernacle and temple, mere shadows of the good things to come, were built according to His exact specifications, would He be any less concerned about the church which these things foreshadowed? Or look at it another way: if Moses, David, and Solomon were not permitted to arrange things to suit themselves, why should we expect to be given that privilege?



The apostles were concerned about uniformity of teaching and practice. Instruction was the same, "just as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17). Organization was the same: elders

in every church (Acts 14:23). Worship was the same: "As I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also" (1 Corinthians 16:1).

When the Corinthians adopted novel attitudes about covering and uncovering, Paul responded, "We have no such practice, nor have the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16). These brethren also had ▶

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The devil advised Jesus, “*Serve Yourself.*” When Jesus was hungry, the tempter suggested, “If you are the Son of God, command, that these stones become bread” (Matthew 4:3).

Peter advised Jesus, “*Look out for Yourself.*” When Jesus warned the apostles that He must suffer many things and be killed, Peter responded, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you” (Matthew 16:22).

Jesus’ own brothers advised Him, “*Show Yourself.*” When it was time for the Feast of Booths, they urged, “Leave here and go into Judea, so that your disciples may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If you do these things, show Yourself to the world” (John 7:3-4).

Pilate advised Jesus, “*Defend Yourself.*” Responding to Jesus’ silence, the Roman judge challenged, “Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You” (John 19:10).

The crowd at Calvary advised Jesus, “*Save Yourself.*” As Jesus hung on the cross, “Those passing by were

hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, ‘Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!’” (Mark 15:29-30). The Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus said something similar (Luke 23:36-37).

Jesus did none of these things. Instead, He *gave Himself*. By so doing and dying, Jesus not only atoned for our sins, He also showed us how to live! “...Christ lives in me...who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20). ■

Is The NT a Pattern? - *continued from p. 1*

some unique applications of miraculous gifts in their assemblies. Paul laid down God’s rules, then reprimanded them: “Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?” (14:36). In other words, “Should we be following your example rather than you following ours?” “Do you have some revelation that we do not?” It was an appeal to uniformity of practice, to adhering to the pattern.

The authority in Biblical examples is not that a church did a thing, but that in doing a thing they illustrate what was commanded. We often speak of commands, examples, and necessary inferences. We could as well speak of commands stated, illustrated, and implied.

Paul commanded: “Brethren join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us” (Philippians 3:17). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Mark Clifton	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Mike Zachry	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Bruce Hollander	
CUP	Kerry Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Adam Wilson	
SERMON/INVITATION	Sam Walters	Albert Lee Harrison
CLOSING PRAYER	Bruce Williams	Adam Wilson