

The Church of Jesus

Continuing the Ministry of Christ

Introduction

Throughout my life, I have been exposed to a great number of resources that have thoroughly and accurately taught on *The Church of Jesus*. These lessons, sermons, and books have covered a multitude of issues concerning the Lord's church including its: origin, nature, history, government, ordinances, offices, membership requirements, practices, discipline, doctrines, etc. Each of these topics is important to understand and are grossly misunderstood by the majority of Christendom today. The unnecessary proliferation of Christian denominations in America and around the world is evidence enough of this misunderstanding.

Yet these same topics I consider the strengths of many Missionary Baptist churches today. Some of the most cited books studied by Missionary Baptist churches include J.M. Pendleton's *Baptist Church Manual*, J.M. Carroll's *Trail of Blood*, and the recently published *Handbook for Missionary Baptist Churches* by Brother Billy Moran. It is a common practice for Sunday school classes and Wednesday Night Bible studies to routinely teach on the various aspects of the Lord's church including the Articles of Faith and the Church Covenant.

But, a comprehensive understanding of the Lord's church, does not mean a proper *functioning* of it will occur. The Lord did *not* establish His church so we can carry out the proper governmental structure or establish membership requirements. Neither did He create offices for the sake of establishing a hierarchy or describe the ordinances so we can partake in a semi-sacrament. *ALL* of these things were established for a purpose! Our lesson will seek to explore this purpose and how it can be better carried out in the 21st century.

The Unity of God

Since it is Jesus' church, let's begin with the person of God. In eternity past, each member of the Trinity was assigned distinct responsibilities in order to carry out the purposes of God. One such purpose is the restoration of God's broken relationship with mankind. Because of sin, God and man's relationship was broken and can only be restored through the redemptive work of Christ. Each member of the Trinity has unique roles and responsibilities which must be accomplished for the full work of redemption to be completed. This means They must be unified and dependent upon One another in order for this work to be completed.

Jesus, as a member of the Trinity, was assigned many roles in order to accomplish our redemption. He is our Atonement, Mediator, Messiah, High Priest, Judge, and so much more.

But the specific role we will focus on tonight was His ministry spreading the gospel during his earthly life.

Jesus was sent from Heaven, in part, to proclaim the “good news” that the path to God which had been broken in Adam, was restored in Himself. He was the Messenger and the Message. He says as much in the following scriptures:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because **he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised** (Luke 4:18).”*

*“**As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world** (John 17:18).”*

*“**For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost** (Luke 19:10).”*

*“**And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth** (Mark 1:38).”*

But this office as Messenger was only held for a limited amount of time. Jesus was commissioned to proclaim the gospel at the age of 30 and concluded His public ministry approximately 3 years later, the night before His crucifixion when He prayed,

*“**I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me** (John 17:4-8).”*

So who is responsible for continuing this ministry? His church! In this same prayer, He transfers the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel from Himself to His church when he says,

*“**As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world** (John 17:18).”*

Notice that He did not transfer this ministry to preachers or the apostles but to, “...*them also which shall believe on me through their word* (John 17:20).” **The entire church is responsible for spreading the gospel throughout the world!**

The Purpose of the Lord’s Church

Just as Jesus was sent to proclaim the gospel, the Lord’s churches are now “co-labourers together” with Him. Each local body is individually responsible for the communities where they minister and the burdens God has placed upon them. The following scriptures show this responsibility.

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:19-20).”

“Go, ye, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:18-20).”

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem [locally], and in all Judea [regionally], and in Samaria [neighboring regions], and unto the uttermost part of the earth [internationally] (Acts 1:8).”

But the question that escapes the Lord’s churches today is: How do we reach our American communities in the 21st century? Fortunately, God answers this question is His Word.

Gifts in the Church

For most of my Christian life, I assumed the “gifts” given to the Lord’s churches involved song leading, Sunday School teaching, preaching, and holding a formal office in the church. Even though these offices in the church are edifying to the body, they are incomplete!

In order to carry out the “Great Commission” and spread the gospel locally and internationally, God dispensed gifts to the church. **These gifts are discernable in the diversity of personalities and interests held by members of a church and are dispensed in such a way that the full ministry of Christ cannot be carried out unless the church is unified and dependent upon one another to carry out its mission.** Jesus reveals this in His prayer in John 17 when He says

*“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, **that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me** (John 17:21).”*

There are two primary passages in the New Testament that instruct us about the gifts given to the church. Those two passages are Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12. In both of these passages, Paul compares the Lord’s church to a body and from this analogy describes the way the church ought to function. For brevity’s sake, we will only look at the passage in Romans 12.

*“For as we have many members in one body, and **all members have not the same office**: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then **gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us**, whether **prophecy**, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or **ministry**, let us wait on our ministering: or he that **teacheth**, on teaching; Or he that **exhorteth**, on exhortation: he that **giveth**, let him do it with simplicity; he that **ruleth**, with diligence, he that **sheweth mercy**, with cheerfulness (Romans 12:4-8).”*

The gifts which Paul highlights in this passage are explained below. Each of these definitions uses various translations and the original Greek to help identify the specific meaning.

1. Prophecy- Proclaiming truth, not necessarily future events as it was in the Old Testament
2. Ministry- Serving; Using skills, knowledge, and money to aid people; often people who are less vocal and like to stay “behind the scenes” in order to aid the church
3. Teaching- to instruct; teaching others concerning scriptural and non-scriptural things
4. Exhortation- Encouraging; to animate or urge by arguments to a good deed or to any laudable conduct or course of action.
5. Giving- to give of one’s own belongings; generally money
6. Ruling- manage; the ability to place individuals within a group in the place they are best able to help the group accomplish its greater task; this gift is necessary for various enterprises of the church to be executed with unity, passion, and efficiency
7. Mercy- It means to be patient and compassionate toward those who are suffering or afflicted. The concern for the physical as well as the spiritual needs of those who are hurting is covered by the gift of mercy. Those with this gift have great empathy for others in their trials and sufferings. They are able to come alongside people over extended periods of time and see them through their healing process.

A church which has been given these gifts will realize that God providentially and purposefully placed them in the local body as, “...*members in particular* (I Corinthians 2:27),” to collectively spread the gospel. When a church functions properly, and reaches its fullest potential spreading the gospel, each member will realize that the gifts of their fellow members are indispensable to

fulfilling *their own* God given burden. Just as the Trinity is *unified* and *dependent* upon One Another to accomplish Their purposes, so also is the church. Paul says much to the Corinthian church when he says,

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (I Corinthians 15:15-27).

21st Century Manifestation of Those Gifts

The final, and most often neglected part of this topic, is the application. How do Missionary Baptist Churches in the 21st century reach the world?

The reality is that it is different for each church. Some gifts God has given in greater proportion to one church than another. This is why it is essential that a church diligently pray for a specific burden regarding the needs and demographics in their communities, plead with God to lead them how best to carry out their burden, and ultimately ask God to open the hearts of those they are attempting to reach.

The list below contains biblically sound enterprises which incorporate the various gifts contained in the church, and how these gifts can come together to, “*Let your [our] lights so shine before men, that they may see your [our] good works and glorify your [our] Father in heaven,*” and spread the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world.

21st Century Enterprises to Reach the World

1. Food pantry (similar to Pleasant Valley Missionary Baptist Church)
2. An orphanage
3. Foster care families
4. Helpers for families with disabled children
5. School Supplies for poor students in our community
6. Christian Daycare Centers which centers around Christian teaching
7. A women's post-abortion counseling center
8. Pregnancy crisis center
9. Programs comparable to Alcoholics Anonymous (and all of the supporting groups)
10. Drug Programs
11. Half-way Houses
12. Translation work for sermons and other material
13. Website design ministry for churches and missions
14. Mission societies
15. Ministers classes
16. After-school program helping kids do homework
17. Divorce counseling for adults and kids
18. Missions Communication (Macedonian Call- but online and more easily accessible)
19. Battered women's shelter
20. Prison ministry
21. Kids of prisoners ministry
22. Homeless shelters
23. Christian schools
24. Christian teachers for schools
25. Financial counseling (similar to Dave Ramsey)
26. Emergency Response teams (to travel to areas after tornados or hurricanes)
27. Medical teams domestically
28. Medical teams internationally
29. A church which is heavily involved in encouraging mission works (writing letters to ministers, sending members to attend revivals and other special events, etc.)
30. Singing schools
31. Barbers and hairdressers providing haircuts for the poor one day a month
32. Music lessons for instruments
33. Traveling Carpenters (Men who can build helping churches and missions build churches)
34. Sunday School literature
35. Operationworld.org type database for Missionary Baptist churches
36. TV programs
37. Social Media outreaches

38. Driving a church vehicle (van/bus)
39. Visiting shut-ins and widows to perform free services for them
40. Adoption Agencies
41. Ministers and Deacons Conferences in foreign mission fields
42. Apologetics (men who are devoted to traveling and teaching on culturally relevant issues and how the church should respond to them...a church could help provide the resources to travel and enable men to do those things...answer hard cultural questions to help teach the churches how to respond to them in our wider culture i.e. the reason why God condemns homosexual marriage, the problem of suffering, the perceived “contradictions” of the Bible, etc.)
43. A person to help other churches accumulate workable sound systems, websites, video equipment, and how to use them in ministering to their community
44. Church outreach to Spanish speakers
45. Other languages
46. Church Accountant (help churches and ministers be legal with church finances)
47. Soup kitchens
48. Helping hospital-bound families
49. Marriage counseling
50. Youth Retreats (to teach our young people in the ways of truth and kindle lasting relationships among them)
51. Homeschool curriculum author
52. Publishers
53. Editors for anything written
54. Podcasts
55. Radio
56. Homosexual/Transgender Counseling
57. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Counseling
58. Songwriters
59. Instrument lessons for churches
60. Christian Scientists
 - a. Biologists
 - b. Chemists
 - c. Archeologists
 - d. Geologists
61. Single-mom helpers
62. Constitutional Lawyers
63. Movie-makers
64. Evangelists
65. Church Teachers/Sunday School Teachers

66. Missionaries
67. Song leaders
68. Christian Authors for all Ages
69. Tent Revivalists
70. Street Preachers
71. Christian Blogs
72. Nursing Home Ministry
73. Braillist (for the blind)
74. Sign language translator
75. Big Brother Organizations (mentors for young men who don't have a father)
76. Big Sister Organizations (mentors for young ladies who don't have a mother)
77. Depression and Anxiety Counseling
78. Songwriters
79. Vacation Bible Schools
80. Youth Weekends
81. Veteran support groups (and families of veterans)
82. Facebook Live/Youtube Preaching
83. Many, many more!

Conclusion

The millennial generation is slowly but steadily drifting away from the majority of Missionary Baptist Churches. This drifting has already caused many of the Lord's churches to disband and many others wondering where all of the young people have gone. I do not agree with their leaving, but I understand it. I believe the contents of this lesson explain the sentiments of many in this generation who desire to serve God. **At one time, many of these young men and women felt a powerful and compelling urge from the Lord to serve Him with their divinely given gifts, but failed to find a place within the Lord's churches to employ them.** As a result, many of them have chosen to forsake Missionary Baptist churches, employ their gifts for other denominations or use them primarily as a part of secular institutions. Simultaneously, countless souls are experiencing unimaginable torment because of the unwillingness of many Missionary Baptist churches to support and encourage Spirit led enterprises to, "...seek [out]...those that are lost."

My prayer is that God's people will minister as Jesus did during His earthly ministry. He sought the downtrodden, depressed, anxiety-ridden, broken people in the depth of their despair, ministered to their needs, and then preached the hope of the gospel. Let us strive in unity to continue the spirit of His ministry in the body of His church and reach the people of the world where they are at now. May God burden, lead, and enable His churches to do as He did...reach the world with the gospel!