



The New Testament Church

The Functions of the Church

I. THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD (Acts 6:4)

A. The Ministry Defined (Acts 6:1-4)

1. The number of the disciples multiplied (Acts 6:1).
2. There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because the widows were being neglected (Acts 6:1).
3. The twelve called the disciples unto them and said that they could not leave the word of God to serve tables (Acts 6:2).
4. The twelve gave instructions to the disciples to choose men to appoint over the serving of tables (Acts 6:3).
5. The apostles determined to give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4).

B. The Foundational Nature

1. This ministry is foundational for all other ministries.
2. If this ministry is not fulfilled, all other categories risk being unscriptural in their fulfillment.

C. The Ministry Executed

1. Preaching

- a. The pastor
 - (1) The foremost ministry of a pastor is the ministry of the word.
 - (2) He must give himself to the study of God's word in order to feed the flock (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
 - (3) He does not give himself to the study of the Bible only to prepare to preach, but to be approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - (4) Paul declared this great truth in his charge to a young pastor named Timothy (2 Timothy 4:2).

- b. The preachers

- (1) Though this is certainly the foremost responsibility of the pastor, it is also the responsibility of any man that is called of God to preach.
 - (2) Every preacher must continually give himself to the word of God that he may be ready to preach a Bible message.

2. Teaching

- a. There are many ministries within a church that are available for the purpose of teaching/learning the word of God.
 - b. Those who lead these ministries must be given to the word of God in order to help others in their understanding (2 Timothy 2:2).



II. THE MINISTRY TO THE LORD (Acts 13:2)

A. The Ministry Defined (Acts 13:1-3)

1. The context of the passage
 - a. Prophets and teachers were gathered at Antioch (Acts 13:1).
 - b. They ministered to the Lord and fasted (Acts 13:2).
 - c. The Holy Ghost called for the separation of Barnabas and Saul for a special work (Acts 13:2).
 - d. The men fasted, prayed, and laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:3).
2. The concept of this ministry
 - a. Some may wonder how we can minister to the Lord, but the saints in Antioch were obviously doing so.
 - b. We minister to the Lord when we do those things that are specifically meant to honour and worship Him.

B. The Ministry Executed

1. Giving
 - a. When we give to the Lord, we are signifying that He is worthy.
 - b. If we withhold from Him, we are signifying that He is not worthy.
2. Praise
 - a. In song: The songs we sing ought to be done in such a way as to minister to the Lord.
 - b. In word: The testimonies, the preaching, and teaching ought to bring praise to the Lord.
3. Prayer: In prayer we declare our own inadequacies. We also declare the greatness of God and our need for Him.
4. Serving: When we give of ourselves, our talents, and our time, we are declaring that God is worthy of our efforts.
5. In one sense, all ministries, if biblical, are ministries to the Lord.

III. THE MINISTRY OF THE SAINTS (1 Corinthians 16:15)

A. The Ministry Defined

1. The context of the passage (1 Corinthians 16:13-18)
 - a. Paul admonished Corinthian believers to serve (1 Corinthians 16:13).
 - b. He encouraged them to perform their service from a heart of charity (1 Corinthians 16:14).
 - c. He mentioned the house of Stephanas stating that they dedicated themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15).
 - d. He encouraged the Corinthian believers to submit themselves unto all that helped and laboured with Paul (1 Corinthians 16:16).
 - e. He mentioned the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus stating that they refreshed Paul's spirit (1 Corinthians 16:17-18).



2. The concept of the ministry
 - a. The chapter began with news of an offering being received for struggling believers (1 Corinthians 16:1-4).
 - b. The letter spoke of receiving the brethren (1 Corinthians 16:5-12).
 - c. The ministry of the saints is any ministry that strengthens the saints of God.
 - d. It is true we should reject the modern philosophy that makes the church part country-club; part entertainment-center; and part psychology department. However, that is not to say that we ignore the biblical call to minister to one another.
 - e. Saints are to be known by their love to one another (John 13:34-35).

B. The Ministry Executed

1. In fellowship
 - a. The word *fellowship* carries the connotation of serving together.
 - b. We minister to each other when we serve together.
 - (1) We strengthen each other.
 - (2) We sharpen each other
2. In benevolence
 - a. This would match the context of 1 Corinthians 16.
 - b. At times we minister to the saints financially. This is much more a command for the New Testament church than financially supporting the lost (Galatians 6:10).
3. In hospitality
 - a. The saints of God ought to be given to hospitality.
 - b. We should minister to the saints by opening our homes, and hearts.
4. Etc.

IV. THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION (2 Corinthians 5:18)

A. The Ministry Defined (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

1. God reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
2. God gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).
3. God committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).
4. We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).
5. As ambassadors, we have a message (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

B. The Great Controversy

1. The great omission (a.k.a. The great commission)
 - a. We will call this *the great omission* because of all that is left out when this is taught as a commission given directly to the New Testament church.



- b. Let us consider all five accounts of this event in order to get a scriptural perspective (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:45-53; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-9).
- c. General omissions
 - (1) The Bible never calls this commission the “great commission.”
 - (2) The recipients of the commission (Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:14; Acts 1:2, 8)
 - (3) The focus on power in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18; Acts 1:8)
 - (4) The reason for the commission is that Christ had all power in heaven and in earth—*“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore”* (Matthew 28:18-19)
 - (5) The focus on nations (Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8)
 - (6) The focus on baptism (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16)
 - (7) The message to be taught (Matthew 28:20)
 - a) They were to teach people to observe **all** things whatsoever the Lord Jesus commanded the apostles.
 - b) The Lord Jesus commanded His apostles to obey the words of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-3).
 - c) The Lord Jesus taught His disciples many other things that we are not commanded to teach today (Matthew 5:17-19, 40-42; Matthew 10:7-10).
 - (8) Signs confirmed their message (Mark 16:17-20)
 - a) Casting out devils (Mark 16:17)
 - b) Speaking with new tongues (Mark 16:17)
 - c) Taking up serpents (Mark 16:18)
 - d) Drinking deadly poisons (Mark 16:18)
 - e) Healing (Mark 16:18)
 - (9) The remission of sins (Luke 24:47; John 20:23)
 - (10) The connection to the kingdom (Acts 1:6-8)
- d. Assumptions
 - (1) We assume “the gospel” is the same gospel Paul preached (Mark 16:15; Romans 16:25-27).
 - (2) We assume the disciples understood salvation by grace through faith for the gentiles (Acts 10:9-48; Acts 15:1-11).
 - (3) We assume the baptism of Matthew and Mark are the same baptism which we implement on new believers today (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).
 - (4) We assume the signs are more strongly connected to the early church than they are to the Jewish kingdom (Mark 16:17-18).
 - (5) We assume remission of sins (Luke 24:47) is always exactly the same as forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7).
 - a) Twelve scriptural references to remission, remit, remitted (Matthew 26:28; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77; Luke 3:3; Luke 24:47; John 20:23; Acts 2:38; Acts 10:43; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 10:18)
 - b) Meaning of remission



- i) Literally means to send back
 - ii) To refrain from exacting payment
 - iii) To refrain from inflicting punishment
 - iv) To put off; to postpone
- c) Some biblical uses of remission
 - i) Benefit of Old Testament sacrifices (Hebrews 9:22)
 - ii) Covering of Old Testament sins (Romans 3:25 with Hebrews 9:15)
 - iii) To be blotted out in the future (Acts 3:19; Romans 11:26-27; Jeremiah 50:20)
- (6) We assume the church started before the “great” commission was given.
- 2. Our commission
 - a. Given to us (2 Corinthians 5:18)
 - (1) Includes Paul
 - (2) Includes the church of God in Corinth
 - (3) Given after the beginning of the New Testament church
 - b. Committed unto us in “word” (2 Corinthians 5:19)
 - (1) We have been given the “word of reconciliation.”
 - (2) This is contrary to the “power” and the “signs” associated with the gospel of the kingdom and the great commission.
 - (3) We “beseech” and “pray” that folks would be reconciled to God rather than using the “signs” to draw them (2 Corinthians 5:20).
 - c. Calls us as “ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:20)
 - (1) Those carrying out the “great commission” were mainly the twelve *apostles*.
 - (2) We are sent out as *ambassadors*.
 - a) Ambassadors are official representatives of the place from which they are sent.
 - i) This cannot be true of the apostles preaching the kingdom, because they had never experienced the kingdom.
 - ii) As ambassadors, we have Christ in us and are fully able to represent Him.
 - iii) In addition to this, we are already seated in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-6; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1-4).
 - b) The apostles preached a physical kingdom, and the reception of a physical king. As ambassadors, we preach a spiritual kingdom and offer spiritual peace.
 - d. A message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20)
 - (1) Reconciliation means to bring together.
 - (2) The message of the apostles was that of bringing God to earth to be with man (Acts 1:6; Acts 2:30; Acts 3:19-21).
 - (3) Our message is that of bringing man to God to be with Him.
 - e. Yields the righteousness of God in the new believer (2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17)