

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## A Biblical Church: Left in Ignorance or Fully Informed?

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

Over the years I have occasionally (Gratefully on rare occasions) encountered someone who claimed that Scripture is divinely inspired and preserved, but that the New Testament says almost nothing about how a New Testament church should do her spiritual business. By "Business" I refer to the primary function of a New Testament church to maintain faithful care of the Lord's truth, to teach that truth to His people, and to exemplify that truth in the godly—exemplary—lives of its members. (1 Timothy 3:15) Invariably these folks use this claimed vacuum to rationalize any and all ideas or behaviors they invent in their private creative minds (Actually not at all creative unless you classify following the serpent in Genesis 3 as "Creative"). We have just concluded an extensive study of 1 Corinthians 12-14 on spiritual gifts, gifts that Paul specifically wrote the Lord "set" in the church. After studying these three chapters, there can be no credible case whatever for the "Ignorant Church" bogus theory; and this after studying only three chapters from the New Testament. How much more informed might we be if we studied all two hundred sixty chapters in the New Testament?

The whole idea that the New Testament is utterly silent on the character and work of the central institution the Lord appointed in the New Testament as the custodian and protector of His truth is incredible. Both logically and factually, the idea lacks credibility. In fact, the idea patently contradicts the basic truth of our study passage. If Scripture so fully informs the "Man of God" that he may be "*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,*" on what basis can defenders of this ignorance theory claim that the man of God is yet so fully informed? Do they honestly believe that everything related to a faithful New Testament church is not in any way a "good work"? If so, do they believe that church is sinful and wholly unbiblical? Why then does the New Testament include so much information about "Church," including Jesus' own words? And why then were so many New Testament letters written to churches? Every book in the New Testament written to a church refutes the "Ignorant church" theory, for they inform each church in clear details regarding how they should carry on their spiritual work. This point indicates the utter groundless standing of the theory.

A study of the Old Testament, along with the New Testament's commentary on Old Testament worship, consistently teaches that the Old Testament served as a temporary preparation for the New, which is to remain until the Second Coming. Further, the New Testament also indicates that the temporary and prophetic basis of the Old Testament and the various forms of worship that were observed throughout that era were inferior to the reality of the New Testament. In the New Testament we have a better priest, a better sacrifice, a better tabernacle; in every way a better way to worship God than the people of God in the Old Testament had.

Considering that God instituted Old Testament worship, particularly as that worship was defined by Moses based on the Law that God revealed to him on Mt. Sinai, a pertinent question begs for an answer. How specific and detailed were God's instructions regarding the laws and form of worship under that covenant? Did God simply allow anyone who wished to "Self-appoint" himself as priest? Did He allow His priests to go to the tabernacle when they felt like it and offer any convenient animal they wished to offer? Or did God give very precise and detailed directions, requiring that every detail be strictly followed? Read Exodus and Leviticus if you want God's inspired answer to the questions.

Given the precision and details with which God defined the lesser and temporary form of worship under Moses, there is no logical basis on which to claim that God intentionally chose to leave His New Testament worshippers, supposedly under a better covenant, on their own and in ignorance regarding what to do and how to worship Him. Do these folks honestly think that their private "Creativity" (See above) is better than God's specificity?

We might help ourselves immensely, aside from the far more important issue of honoring God, by considering the Old Testament Book of Judges. Despite having God's Law, the people repeatedly chose to ignore that Law, perhaps also pleading ignorance or claiming that God's Law didn't really contain any helpful information for their needs, choosing rather to follow their own private opinions. The rebellious mindset of the people during this era will serve as a lively warning against the errant idea that we here consider.

*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25)*

From beginning to end, Judges records the repeated cycle in Israel of submission and obedience to rebellion and judgment, and back again. The people chose the same precise attitude of the present “Church left in ignorance” folks, choosing to worship God in their own way and according to their own private preferences instead of seeking God’s way. Their own ways always lead them to sin and open rebellion against the Lord. And the Lord always sent His righteous judgment against them. His judgment is never a polite tap on the wrist, followed by a “Naughty, naughty, we shouldn’t do that, should we?” His judgments fell with righteous severity. He got their attention! They fell under the Lord’s judgment, realized their sin, repented, and found their way back. However, within a very short time they forgot the Lord and went back to their own ways. No surprise, the Lord shortly visited their sins again with judgment. The verse cited above is the last verse in the Book of Judges, and it sums up the theme of the whole book. Time after disappointing time, Israel forgot their Lord and chose to do “...*that which was right in his own eyes.*” How did that work out for them? ***It didn’t!*** The Book of Judges will serve to put the present “Church left in ignorance” folks on notice today. God will not robotically intervene and prevent you from ignoring Him and His thorough furnisher unto all good works Book. You will do your own thing for a while, but, in exactly the same way that we read in Judges, the Lord will judge and withhold His blessings from your efforts. You are not in my hands or any other human’s hands. You are in God’s hands. It is His judgment that you should fear, not the politically correct or populist opinions of people in your world. According to Scripture, the Lord has never appointed you as His private “...*pillar and ground of the truth.*” His church holds that office permanently. For a very brief moment, you may find shade under your gourd vine, but prepare yourself. The Lord shall quickly dry it up and leave you in the burning sun of His disapproving judgment. In this outcome, you will discover that you have much in common with angry Jonah.

My extended study of spiritual gifts and the church’s use of them from First Corinthians was not a detour from the present study of the New Testament church. It is a central and essential point of any thorough and New Testament study of that doctrine. If we hope to develop and live by a New Testament model of the faith once delivered to the saints, we must follow Scripture, not ring its nose and try to lead it where we want to go. (Jude 1:3)

If we are to follow the New Testament regarding its teachings on the church instead of enslaving it to our private opinions, we must understand and follow two essential New Testament principles.

1. Paul’s words in our study passage, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, are inspired and accurate. The inspired Scriptures are thorough, complete and in no point deficient in their informing the “*man of God,*” the believer, to every belief and behavior necessary to serve and to glorify God. If Scripture is deficient in one point of central truth, Paul erred, and Scripture is thus deficient and fails to fulfill Paul’s description of it. If this passage is deficient, how many other Scriptures are also deficient or in some way less than truthful or complete? I will defend Paul’s words as inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore truthful in every detail. Scripture does fully—perfectly—inform the man of God to every aspect of the faith that Scripture in any way classifies as a “good work.” I cannot imagine that such a holistic description of good works could possibly omit or ignore the New Testament church, as central as that word, doctrine, and institution is to the New Testament. If this thing called “Church” in the New Testament is at all a good work, Paul’s words apply, so we cannot plead ignorance regarding the church’s godly function.

2. We must equally regard Paul’s words to Timothy regarding the very institution of which we now study.

*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*** (1 Timothy 3:15; emphasis added)

Paul’s introduction to this lesson begins with “*These things write I unto thee...that thou mayest **know** how thou oughtest to behave thyself....*” In effect these words identify the whole Book of First Timothy as specific “Behavioral” instructions for the man of God in the house of God. It confronts and rebukes any notion of Biblical omission or ignorance. The only way a believer can claim ignorance is to refuse to read First Timothy! Not to mention the many other New Testament passages that deal with church. The theory of the “Church in ignorance” contradicts this passage. Advocates of this theory openly claim that the New Testament is silent regarding how a preacher or any other believer should “behave” or conduct himself and his ministry in the church, or how the collective church body should know what to do or how to do it to follow Scripture and serve God as a faithful New Testament church. A word to the wise; after reading through First Timothy, I can’t find a single sentence that even remotely implies that the Lord has left us in ignorance regarding how a New Testament church should conduct its spiritual business, leaving the advocates of the “Left in ignorance” theory once again groundless for Biblical support of their theory.

If we consult the New Testament instead of the folks who cover their eyes, ears, and mouths so they can claim that Scripture teaches them nothing about the New Testament church's spiritual activities, we will discover a wealth of teaching on all points of a church's activity. From how to deal with an immoral member (1 Corinthians 5; don't make the self-righteous claim that, since you are a sinner, you can't support a church doing precisely what Paul taught the Corinthian Church to do in this chapter. By the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Paul claimed to be the chief of sinners, and it is Paul who commanded this action by the Corinthian Church), to errant doctrine (1 Corinthians 15, plus a wealth of instructions to the two young preachers, Timothy and Titus, and most New Testament church letters), the New Testament overflows with clear, timely, practical, and God-inspired directions to a church on its primary "Business" of being the faithful "...*pillar and ground of the truth.*" (1 Timothy 3:15) These Scriptures inform all of us regarding this question. They refute any thought of the church being left in ignorance regarding how to worship and how to minister to hungry sheep. God help us to follow Scripture, to study it with our hearts and eyes open to its teachings, not squeezed shut.

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Worship service each Sunday	10:30 A. M.
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