

Introduction to the Spiritual Revolution

Throughout history God has sent preachers of righteousness to various peoples, but...

*God is now declaring to men that **all people everywhere** should repent*, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)

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. (Matt 28:19-20)

- 1/3 of the world are unreached people groups (JoshuaProject.net)
- 150,000 people die every day (LivingWaters.com)

The first century church reached all the nations in one generation. Why haven't we? Compared with how they did it, I believe the task goes unfinished today because the traditions of men consume the focus, effort, and resources of the church.

Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 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. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. (Mark 7:6-8)

Jesus rejected the host of extra-biblical traditions invented and imposed by hypocrites. This is one of the reasons they rejected Him. He started a spiritual revolution; exactly what we need! Leave out the traditions of men and Christianity is really simple:

Those who had received [Peter's] word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were *continually devoting* themselves to the *apostles' teaching* and to *fellowship*, to the *breaking of bread* and to *prayer*... And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:41-47)

Every Christian is a priest and has received a gift to serve others. (See 1 Peter 2:1-12; 4:7-11) First century Christians *continually* did so. On the first day of the week they gathered to eat the Lord's Supper. (See 1 Cor 10-14) This was like a family get-together in someone's home to enjoy a love feast, and each one had a psalm, a teaching, or an exhortation.

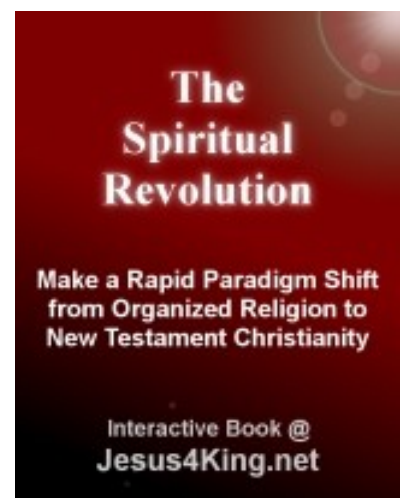
What happened? The church today is burdened with a host of extra-biblical traditions invented and imposed by men. Spreading manmade religion is overwhelmingly more complicated than spreading the good story. So how did we get so far from the simple Biblical pattern that was easily duplicated throughout the first century world in one generation?

Hundreds of years after the first three thousand were converted, power-hungry men claimed to rule the universal church. Through political manipulation they outlawed the Bible for the common people, invented a host of extra-biblical traditions, and persecuted any who did not submit to their reign of darkness (known as the dark ages). Catholic means universal; hence the Catholic Church.

Hundreds of years later, the Protestant Reformation started an effort to reform the Catholic Church but ended up forming denominations, each protesting various Catholic traditions while keeping others. These denominations each developed differing creeds and authority structures. In Protestant countries, many who did not submit to their reign were persecuted.

Hundreds of years later, the Restoration Movement quit trying to reform the traditions and creeds of men and attempted a simple and genuine obedience to the Bible. A wide cross-section of people from different denominations and countries, many unknown to each other, rejected many more Catholic traditions. The main thrust of the Restoration Movement was a plea to return to the word of God as the basis for unity among believers and as the sole authority in everything pertaining to life and godliness.

Today, the gospel is moving forward most rapidly in those places where the trappings of manmade religion are not imposed and believers feel free to learn and apply the word of



God to their unique circumstances. Once again there is an emerging movement of people around the world who are trying to imitate the New Testament church. More practices that date back to the Catholic Church are being rejected, including rigid ceremonial assemblies and the clergy/laity format where the masses pack the pews while the professionals tell them what to think or just tickle their ears.

You can still visit just about any denomination and get some variation of the same basic format that goes something like this: Sunday school hour followed by the main assembly hour which usually includes a prayer, a few songs, communion and/or a collection, and a sermon. Where did this format come from? Not the Bible. Why do so many maintain this rigid ritual as if it were a sacred ceremony? Those wanting to differentiate themselves from manmade religions should be asking many such questions.

Traditions aren't wrong just because they're traditions. For example, some believers may have the tradition of meeting for prayer at 6:00 am on Friday mornings. Good idea. It's also a good idea to review traditions on a regular basis. It may be helpful to think in terms of good, better, and best. If a tradition is no longer profitable, make adjustments consistent with the Biblical pattern.

Those who unquestioningly follow traditions go through the motions in vain, because their heart ends up far away from God. Those who believe God believe that His ways and thoughts are better than man's. (See Isa 55:6-11) Some of the following traditions are wrong, while others are not necessarily wrong unless they are considered to be the ideal model to be duplicated everywhere. Everyone and every church are at various locations on the spectrum with regard to each of these issues.

Biblical pattern	Tradition of men
Churches send preachers out	Churches hire preachers to serve them
Intentional evangelism	Visitors might accidentally learn what they need
Saints build the body in unity	That's why we hired a preacher
Members gifts developed	Members do no more than sit in a pew
Mutual edification	Clergy/laity
Each one has a psalm	Designated song leaders
Each one has a teaching	Designated teachers
Elders lead by example	Elders are a board of directors
Autonomous churches	Corporations and franchises
Adult baptism	Child baptism
Parents teach children	Anyone but parents teach children
Meet together	Divide into age groups
Meet in homes	Maintain a building
Worship in spirit all the time	Worship in a building at designated times
Transformation of character	Go through the motions
Saints are holy new creatures	Sorry sinners are nothing but forgiven
Authentic relationships	Keep it to Sunday
Love feast	Formal ceremony
Freedom in Christ	Divisive laws invented
Full stewardship taught	Don't get too personal
Collections as needed	Collections regardless of needs
Devoted to God's word	Devoted to men's word

Which direction are you moving? With a sincere desire to *keep moving* in the Biblical direction, I have written an interactive book (Jesus4King.net) to discuss what God says in His word about these topics. Maybe you have been thinking about some of these very things or are already involved in the spiritual revolution and have some insight to offer. All who would like to have an honest and mature discussion about dropping extra-biblical burdens for the sake of finishing the task are invited to participate.

I pray for a growing sense of urgency about reaching *all the nations* in our generation. Please let me know how I can help you.

In service of The King,

Chris Stevens

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