

The Fallacy of Church Planting

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In the New Testament there was no church as we know it today (and there was not), there was no “church planting” per se in the New Testament, either. If what we call “church” in the New Testament was not a corporate entity (and it was not), then it cannot be considered biblical to engage in planting corporate entities called churches. But church planting is another of those things about church that people just assume to be biblical, either of command or example, when it is neither.

Think about it.

We don’t plant “an ecclesia,” as there is only one Christian ecclesia – the Body of Christ, the family of God, as it were ... the singular one that Jesus told Peter that He would build upon the foundation of Himself. (Further, “ecclesia” in the New Testament is always singular, never plural.) There is nothing to “plant”: one “joins” the ecclesia by trusting in Christ and, thus, becoming part of the family. There aren’t multiple families of God; there is but one. And it’s not something that can be “joined” locally, as in joining the First Ecclesia of Cincinnati. Now *church*, yes, one can join a church, whether or not one is part of the ecclesia, but such churches, being as they did not exist then, were not “planted” in the New Testament. The corporate entities called “churches” came into being at the time of Constantine, and they weren’t planted, either: they just took on new Christian tenants to replace the pagan ones that had been there.

The idea of the “local church” is sacrosanct to a many Christians, but an honest examination must lead one to admit that it is entirely a creation of man. The best that we can say is that the presumptive “local church” is all of the believers, the ecclesia, collectively, who are in a local area. But that is not what is being talked about in terms of “joining a local church.” It is something else entirely – something that is complete extra-biblical (not in scripture).

If for a moment we concede the term “church” as descriptive of all believers (previous articles have already pointed out that “church” was painted over “ecclesia” as the New Testament was “updated” and modified in subsequent years to make the customs and practices of men that were instituted AFTER the New Testament appear to be God’s designs from IN the New Testament, and that the former is not in any way an actual translation of the latter), how can one say that Paul went into a region to “plant” new believers? He won many, and those new believers in a particular area then began to relate to each other as family members, but he went to win the believers as individuals, not corporately (each individual must make his own decision to come to Christ and, thus, become part of Jesus’ ecclesia; it doesn’t happen to a group collectively) and not to create a new local stand-alone entity that was, by definition, separate and apart from those believers. Paul was not Kevin Costner doing an early version of “If you build it, they will come.” Paul did not go out with the idea of starting local corporate bodies; he went out to share the truth of the gospel with as many as would hear, and then AFTER, those believers who were local to each other started to relate to each other such that he later wrote letters to all of those believers (ecclesia) who resided in such-and-such a particular locale.

Perhaps for some diehard church-defending hold-outs, that realization may start a thought process

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that will lead them to the truth about the difference between the ecclesia (what Jesus built) and the church (what man built). For believers in a local area do not need a building, a pastor, a meeting time – anything – to be the ecclesia in that local area. They already ARE the ecclesia in that local area. But if one focuses on setting up a building, a pastor, a meeting time, etc., he may attract bodies that, collectively, he can call his church, but that does not make it in any way God's ecclesia. It can have ZERO relationship to God and His ecclesia and still be called "a church," because church is not ecclesia, nor is it even along the pathway to one becoming part of ecclesia. Church is One Hundred Percent man-made.

Some might dismiss this as simple semantics. That is the argument that the evil one would have us to believe. (See previous article on the word – "church" – that changed the world.) Jesus did not come to establish (plant) a church; He told of His ecclesia, His family, His body. The church is earthly, fleshly, sensual; envy and strife can rule there. Not so the ecclesia. The ecclesia is His body. Envy and strife are external to the Body of Christ. Where they are present, they are external influences. The church, as external to the Body of Christ, cannot help but be populated by things that are not Christ's; the ecclesia, AS the Body of Christ, is indistinguishable from Him.

This may seem to some to be new doctrine. It is not. The "new" doctrine is that which has been taught for centuries, using crumbs and fragments of scripture but pieced together by the hands of men for the carnal purposes of men. Men have camped on phrases like "sola scriptura," but then have built edifices around the phrase itself, the language in which it is written, or the personalities that have spoken it, forgetting the meaning behind it that contains truth. Likewise, people have "gone to church," appreciated what truth they may have gleaned there, then attached themselves to the church rather than the Source of Truth Himself.

It is time for a revolution – a full 360 degree turning back to what Jesus designed for and gave to us – for the ecclesia as concerns the church. Let us plant seeds of Christ, not seeds of man-made edifices that claim, from time to time, to point people towards some human idea of a semblance of Christ.