

A CASE FOR CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Every wonder where the whole concept of church came from, anyway?

I mean, if you were an alien who just dropped in, knowing nothing of our culture or history, wouldn't it seem strange that people all over the world meet together during the week?

And not only that... they talk about this... *book*. And this... *book*... is thousands of years old!

First of all, if I were the alien, I'd want to know about how that book has lasted so long. There's no doubt it is the most unique book ever written, but there's also the fact that people would actually *die* for it. Now

that might seem strange, if he didn't understand the book's significance.

Things might make more sense to our alien friend when he understands that we meet in what we call *church* in order to worship God and hear this book preached.

Once he got past the book, maybe he'd wonder, "So where did they get the idea to come together and meet? Who's telling them to do that? OH! It must be that book!"

That book is the Bible. In the Bible, God has laid out His plan for all generations to follow, and it is our duty to follow His plan as closely as possible.

Obeying God HIS way is what brings God's blessing.

Our church desires more than anything else to be obedient to God. We believe that as long as we are following His Word and doing everything we can to maintain holiness and purity in the church, God will do His part to bless our ministry.

Can this same thing be said of all ministries: *As long as a ministry maintains holiness and purity and operates with some biblical principles, God will bless it... ?* Is that true?

No. It's not true.

In God's eyes, the biggest question is not that a ministry is *effective* but that it is biblically *legitimate*.

Lots of ministries are *effective*. Not as many are biblically *legitimate*.

Lots of ministries reach a lot of people for Christ. I do not doubt that at all. Further, lots of ministries:

- Build orphanages
- Feed the hungry
- Provide relief/aid to the needy
- Are involved in their community

Lots of ministries are filled with nice, godly people who truly have a heart for others and desire to be a blessing. I LOVE that people desire to help others, and that they come up with ways to provide that help through charities, missions trips, organizations and more.

We have to keep coming back to the main question, though: “In God’s eyes, are they biblically *legitimate* ministries?”

You might be thinking, “Why do you keep coming back to *legitimacy*? What does that have to do with anything? Shouldn’t we be interested in results?”

Before God wants results, He wants purity. Before purity comes obedience.

Back to Mr. Alien: “So, Calvary Baptist Church, you claim to get direct orders from God on what you do? You truly believe that God has laid out a plan and you are following it?”

If we didn’t believe that, what would be the point of continuing? Why waste our time? It

would be a pretty silly plan if it were OUR plan only! If I were starting my own doctrine, I would come up with WAY more profitable concepts: *we can all be gods; send me your money and you'll get rich; worship your leader, not God.*

Are we claiming that ALL other religions, ministries, charities, and helpful organizations are in all ways wicked? No way! Our church appreciates all the efforts of every organization that is set up to help others. It is a valiant and noble duty indeed.

At the same time, however, we want to ensure that we are operating on the foundation that God has set rather than on man's intentions, whether good intentions or not. **A *legitimate* ministry stems all the**

way back to one core concept: Does the ministry have God's authority?

The remainder of *A CASE FOR CHURCH* will rest almost entirely on the basis that **God's authority is needed in order to conduct *legitimate* ministry, and that authority is only received by following His plan.**

**GOD'S PLAN FOR TODAY IS
THE CHURCH**

God is not bound by time, but we are. God is eternal, but WE are not eternal. God sees the beginning AND the end... at the same time! Based on God's eternal foreknowledge, we know that God always has a plan, and His

promises are always good, no matter the time in which He made them.

God's plan included blessing the whole world through Israel. He made promise after promise to His chosen people, knowing that He would fulfill them in His time. When Jesus came as Messiah, He fulfilled some of God's promises, but not all of them.

You see, in the Jews' minds, their Messiah would come and set up this great kingdom that would smash all their enemies. Yes, they were God's chosen people. Yes, they have LOTS of promises still for their nation. Yes, there's a kingdom promised, but it didn't come when they expected.

While they were thinking that their Messiah would be a conqueror, Jesus Christ came to

them with the revelation of a mystery... the CHURCH! Israel at that time had not succeeded in making God's name known among all nations, and even Jesus' disciples had to wonder... where's this "church" thing going?

But Christ's beautiful promise in Matthew 16:18 is that NOTHING would overtake the church. It is God's plan and it is still going today. Matthew 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; **and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**"

The "true church" was never "lost" as some religions teach. To say that an angel had to come and reinvent the church is to say Christ lied and failed.

Further, the church can never fail because it is the “pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15) Logically, without the church we essentially have no basis for *truth* itself! To God, the church is a very important thing, and it is His plan for the time in which we live right now!

1) PROPER AUTHORITY IS NECESSARY TO CONDUCT A LEGITIMATE MINISTRY

“But where did it come from, and what’s the basis of the church?” someone might ask.

Well, it came from Christ. The book of Matthew is written basically for Jews to realize that Christ is Messiah and that He

has *authority* to conduct ministry. In the Jewish mind, *proper authority was necessary in order to conduct a legitimate ministry* (For example, read the story around Matthew 21:23).

The Jewish religious leaders never questioned Jesus' *effectiveness* in ministry. That would be ridiculous... who could say that he didn't perform the miracles he performed?! There was no denying Christ's *effectiveness*, but these leaders led the people away from Christ based on their false teaching that he had no AUTHORITY to do the miracles.

In Matthew 12:22 and following, after Jesus cast out some devils, the religious leaders said that he didn't have the *authority* to do

so, and that his *authority* came from the devil! The key is that *Jesus accepted their premise* and defended His authority—the very foundation of the legitimacy of His ministry. In essence, He was saying, “You are right. No matter how effective my ministry is, without God’s authority I may as well be sent of the devil! Right again... the only biblically legitimate ministry would be one with God’s authority. Here (vss. 25-30) is how you can know that I have God’s authority and not the devil’s...” He then proceeds to show (in vss. 25-30) once again that He is of God and possesses God’s authority.

All through the book of Matthew He shows His authority over sin, death, sickness, nature, man and everything on earth.

Further, He even overturned the Pharisees' teachings by bringing in a new commandment (Mat. 5-7).

In review, the first principle is that proper authority is necessary to conduct a legitimate ministry.

2) CHRIST TRANSFERRED THAT AUTHORITY TO THE CHURCH THAT HE STARTED

If the concept of authority is so important, it would seem logical that it would be in something as monumental as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Thankfully, it is!

*18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All **power** [emphasis mine] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

The word *power* here does not mean “strength, might.” There’s another Greek word that sounds like *dynamite* that is translated to that kind of *power*. The power in Matthew 28:18 is referring to *authority*, as you can see from the context. In essence, Christ is saying, “I have the authority, and now I’m sending you out to conduct ministry

in my name and with my power (authority, blessing, legitimacy).”

With this new responsibility to win, baptize, and disciple all nations, Christ says, “I’ll be with you to the end of the world”—an obvious reference to the CHURCH and not individual believers.

Some would say that Christ was referring here to individuals or just to the apostles, but all the evidence shows that He is referring to the only entity on which His blessing and authority lies... the *church*.

Individuals make up the church, obviously, but this command was not given to individuals. Individuals die over time, and it would be impossible for individuals to win, baptize and disciple others single-handedly.

That is not to mention the impossibility of Christ's promise that He will be with us until the end of the earth, were that promise made to individuals.

Christ's authority rests solely on the church, and Calvary Baptist Church conducts ministry because of Christ's authority. For a man or an organization to claim His authority outside of a local church would be to claim God's authority where He never promised it. These men and organizations might be *effective*, but not *legitimate* – not directly sanctioned and ordered by God to conduct ministry.

3) CHURCHES TRANSFER THAT AUTHORITY AS THEY BIRTH OTHER CHURCHES

Apples produce apples. Wheat produces wheat. Churches produce churches. Acts 13 shows us a neat story of how the church at Antioch sent out some preachers to start other churches, transferring that authority from one church to the next.

The whole book of Acts is literally a chain of churches that can be traced back to a source of authority... Jesus Christ. Without that source, no *legitimate* ministry could be conducted. Sure, their ministries might be *effective*, but results are not the goal... purity is.

4) AUTHORITY CAN BE LOST

Revelation 2 tells the sad story of what was once a legitimate ministry (the church at Ephesus). Somewhere down the line they lost their “first love,” as the Bible calls it, and Jesus warned them that if they did not repent, He would remove their candlestick, or, His authority.

Sure, they might have been able to meet and conduct ministry, but they would no longer have God’s blessing, power, and *authority*. The only way to ensure God’s authority is to ensure that the church is lined up with Scripture in every way possible.

BAPTISM IDENTIFIES A PERSON WITH A SET OF BELIEFS

Baptism identifies you with Christ, but it also identifies you with a certain set of teachings (Acts 2:42). In order to ensure the purity of the church, Baptists through the ages have rejected the legitimacy of other religions and have therefore rejected their members' baptisms.

Would you expect Pastor Rensch to accept as valid the baptism of someone who claimed to be baptized by the Boy Scouts? Of course not! That's not a valid ministry! And they obviously don't claim to be.

We use the Bible as our filter to apply the same principles to other ministries as well. In preaching, Pastor has mentioned Joel Osteen, a pastor who, on national television, rejected that Christ is the only way for salvation... even when he was challenged on it! In Mr. Osteen's teaching, the prevailing message is that sincerity is all that is needed to get you to heaven! That is not what the Bible says!

Based on the Word of God and using the Bible as our filter, we can "judge righteous judgment" and state firmly that Joel Osteen's "church" is not a *legitimate* ministry and does not have Christ's *authority* on it. Yes, they're *effective* at gathering thousands of people, but crowds are not the goal. Purity is the goal.

Are we being mean, judgmental or hateful?
Of course not! Why would it be hateful to say
that at Calvary Baptist Church we believe the
Bible, and we show people what the Bible
says?! It's not OUR Word... it is God's!

So, based on Scripture, should we expect
Pastor Rensch to accept as valid the baptism
of a member of Joel Osteen's church? No.
We *cannot*. If we want to stay pure as a
church and keep the doors closed to impure
doctrine, we cannot go down that road.

BAPTISTS TRACE THEIR LINE OF AUTHORITY BACK TO CHRIST

Someone might ask, “Has it always been that way? Who’s to say what church has that authority?”

From the time that Christ started the church until now, if we are to trust Christ’s Word we have to trust that there has always been a true church represented on earth.

Even in the days of the apostles, error was creeping in. Churches were growing very quickly, and prominent members of communities were converting, or supposedly converting, to a twisted form of Christianity. Eventually, Christianity became such a force

that it became *political*, and in 313 the Edict of Milan was written to name “Christianity” as the official state religion of the Roman Empire. *Catholicism* was born and grew into a world force.

This political type of Christianity (Catholicism) had no semblance of Christ’s authority, because as a political force it neglected Christ’s teachings. It was no longer a church with God’s blessing. Churches had become so far from what God intended a church to be that they had lost their authority, if they ever had it in the first place.

Because of the political power of Catholicism, other religions were not permitted. To not bend to Catholicism meant death, and the political force of

“Christianity” persecuted those who disagreed with them.

Even in *that* day, however, true churches never ceased to exist. These churches rejected the teachings and the authority of the Catholic church and were the sole “carriers” of Christ’s authority. These churches were not yet called *Baptists*, but they strictly held to the Scriptures as their sole guide, bringing them into conflict with the traditions and errors of the Catholic church.

Named after their leaders, these groups like the Montanists, Novations, and Donatists held unwaveringly to the foundational doctrines of what makes a true church. These groups differed on certain aspects of

Bible teaching, but they were unmistakably firm on the core doctrines, particularly the two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two ordinances were the main source of doctrinal conflict all through the ages of persecution, but these true churches never bent to the Catholic perversions and persecutions.

These groups were relentlessly persecuted by not only the Catholic church but also its "Protestant" and "Reformer" off-shoots (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli...). Despite the persecution, these groups of true churches remained strong on the fact that they could NOT accept as valid the baptisms of those who were converted to Christ from other religions. When people came to them who, for instance, had been baptized as an infant,

these believers always “RE-baptized” them after they were saved, rejecting the old baptism as invalid. (The first time they got “baptized” they just got wet!)

Over time, the derogatory term *Anabaptist* was laid on these “RE-baptizers,” and eventually the term was shortened to *Baptist*. From that line of churches, a constant chain back to Christ, we claim our roots, and therefore Christ’s authority to conduct ministry.

AUTHORITY TRUMPS UNITY

A popular opinion says, “Shouldn’t we be more concerned about unity? Wouldn’t we be able to accomplish so much more if we all

worked together? We're all on the same team, right?"

Billy Graham crusades have accomplished a lot, but they often team up people from all different religions. When people are saved at these crusades they are often sent to local churches that do not believe in eternal security, do not believe in Christ's deity, and teach what we would view as false doctrine according to Scripture. With the importance of what the Bible teaches at stake, we constantly want to guard ourselves from any association that would attack our church's purity.

Revelation 13 talks about a one-world government and a unified religion, but its worship and its motivation for being is led by

Satan himself! Yes, one day they will COEXIST, as you see on bumper stickers around town, but I know that it will not be a church I'd want to be a part of!

To be clear on the spirit behind our teaching, we do NOT hate people that disagree with us. Does all this mean the churches or other ministries we have mentioned in this booklet are filled with ignorant people that hate God? Of course not! We make no personal judgments on the character of these individuals at all!

The simple truth is, we want to find out for ourselves what God says in His Word and line our lives up with that as closely as possible. Why would people NOT expect us to teach what we believe as though we

believe it were true? Why be a church that teaches *anything* if you do not believe that you have the truth?

CONCLUSION

We believe that it is important for every member of Calvary Baptist Church to know why he comes to this church. We don't "do church" because of a social agenda or to be entertained. We conduct the services at our church because we strongly believe that we are accomplishing God's goal for the world *solely* through His authority placed on our church.

To neglect our church for the family, for another organization, or for any other reason

is to say that your reason holds more authority than Christ.

Christ has given us the church. Churches start churches, passing on His authority. His authority has been passed to us from a long chain of churches, dating all the way back to the source... Christ. Anything outside that chain might be effective, but does it carry God's authority? On the basis of His Word we say, no.

Praise God for our church. Never do we arrogantly flaunt what God has blessed us with, but never do we want to be ashamed to spread the word that we believe that we are in God's plan for the world... even here in Temecula!