

JOIN THE REVOLUTION



The fundamental calling of the church, and to every believer, is to represent Jesus to the world. To fully represent him, we must do what he did, the way that he did it. Just as his life was a shock and a profound challenge to the prevailing powers of his own time, when his ways are truly followed by the church, they will be no less revolutionary to the prevailing ways and powers of our own time. True Christianity is a revolution.

Jesus did not come to flail at the branches but to put an axe to the root of the tree. He did not call his church to nudge society and whisper to people that they needed to change their behaviour a little so that they could be right with God. The true gospel in the hands of outcasts and uneducated people toppled the most powerful empire the world has ever known. When just two messengers of the gospel limped into one of the great Roman cities, even government officials quaked and declared that *'These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also!'* (Acts 17.6).

1. Anointed

How did so few have so much impact over so many without television? They did not even write any books, just a few letters. How could their influence be so profound? They were anointed.

Almost nowhere is the gospel having the kind of impact on society and the systems of the world that the first century church had. This is not the result of a failure to mobilise the new believers politically. Rather, it is the result of leadership style in the church that is more conformed to the ways of the world than to the ways of the Lord. The typical church government today has more in common with a corporation than with the biblical church. We should rejoice in the great rivers of salvation that are now flowing around the world. Even so, the Great Commission is not fulfilled by just preaching salvation, as we see in Matthew 28.18-20.

'And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising 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."

1. The kingdom

The Great Commission is not just to make converts, but disciples. These disciples are not just individuals, but nations. We must also teach them to observe all that the Lord commanded us. The main message Jesus preached was not salvation and it was not the church. In fact, he only made a couple of brief references to these. His message was the kingdom of God.

Of course, we cannot see or enter the kingdom without embracing the gospel of salvation (see John 3.3,5). If we are to be joined to him, we must be joined to his body, the church. In the New Testament, all of the converts were added to the church. Yet even with some of the most effective evangelistic crusades today, less than 5% of those who make decisions for Christ actually go on to

become members of a local church.

We should rejoice in any who are brought to the Lord and become true disciples, but we must also understand that something is not right. Part of the problem could be the way the gospel is presented. However, the Church must also accept at least part of the blame, for we have been out of step with the times in which we live, as well as being estranged from the true radical nature of the gospel.

Salvation and church life are two great truths that help to compose the foundation of the Christian faith, but they are not the whole building. Both are means to an end, but are not the end in themselves. Although it is wonderful that these foundational truths are spreading throughout the earth, we must also build upon them if we are going to fulfil the Great Commission to teach all that he commanded us.

1. Radical lifestyle

Salvation gives us eternal life and brings us into the church, but church was never intended to just be a club where your name is placed on the church roll so that you get to go to the meetings. True church life is not defined by buildings or meetings; it is a lifestyle that is a radical departure from the ways of the world.

True church life is in session 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This was the power of the first-century church and will again become the power of the last-day church. True Christianity cannot be confined to just being an appendage to our life so that we behave a little better. True faith not only transforms our life it becomes our life.

The book of Ezra is an important book for our times. In many ways we have been like the remnant who returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple destroyed by the Babylonians. The remnant re-laid the foundation to the temple, but then became discouraged and began to build their own houses, failing to complete the house of the Lord. It remained just a foundation. Because their purpose for returning to Jerusalem was to rebuild the temple, this made them and the temple a laughing stock to the nations.

In Ezra 4.24-5.2 we read that the work on the house of God stopped until the prophets started prophesying. Then the leaders arose and began to finish the task, and the prophets stood with them and supported them.

1. Prophetic

This is a primary reason for the many prophetic movements that are now being raised up around the world. They are to encourage the leaders of the Lord. The prophets are not called to lead this work, but to stand with the leaders until it is completed (Ezra 6.14). The prophetic ministry is not here just to prophesy what needs to be done, but to remain faithful to the work until it is accomplished. It is very easy to have a vision, but it is essential that we stay with the vision through the hard work and hard times until it is accomplished.

One of the prophetic words the Lord gave Haggai to encourage the leaders was: "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former," says the Lord of hosts, "and in this place I shall give peace," declares the Lord of hosts' ~(Haggai 2.9). The Lord has likewise made it quite clear in the scriptures that the glory of the last-day church will exceed anything that preceded it. He has saved his best wine for last! He has determined that the last will be first.

1. Why not us?

The church is called to be the vessel through which the glory of the Lord will be revealed. The church is not the glory, but simply the vessel that carries it. It is what is inside of us that counts, not what we look like on the outside. The content of our lives - the way we act at the supermarket, on the job, or in our homes - is far more important than all the buildings, Christian television programmes, or books that we can write. Before the end of this age comes, the Lord is going to have a dwelling place on earth that he can reveal his glory through. Why not us?

1. Why not now?

True Christianity is about much more than getting saved, as glorious and incomprehensibly wonderful as that is. It is about the glory of the Lord being revealed, and his ways being demonstrated through his people. If we are going to be a part of building his temple, we must build the way that he does. This leads us to the first leadership principle of Jesus.

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