

Apostolic Perspectives



Simon Peter Chappell

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This version was published on 2014-04-30



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Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Lord Jesus Christ for saving me and then calling me to serve within the kingdom of heaven.

I would like to thank my wife and family for their support in my many roles that the Lord has called me to fulfill.

Thank you to my congregation for being the best congregation ever. I love you all.

A special thank you to my bible study mentor Karl Wickerath. I miss you greatly and I'll see you around the throne!

Thank you to my pastor Dale Pace (because pastors need pastors as well) and my previous pastor C.G. Lagow. I have learned so much from you and appreciate all of your love and investment in me.

About This Early-Release Edition

Thank you so much for your purchase of the early-release edition of this book. Books and publishing have been a very static industry for hundreds of years and have strongly resisted change during all that time. Electronic books, like this one, have had a challenge making their way into the market, but success has finally arrived and people feel comfortable with the idea that a book is the words that comprise it and not just the paper that they were previously printed upon.

A new change is now upon us, that of the early-release book. This is something that was never previously possible with printed material, because the printed word cannot be changed after publication, yet the electronic word can. It is possible now to release a book early and for its readers to begin enjoying or utilizing it before it's finished.

You, dear reader, are part of this new wave of publishing. The book you virtually hold in your hands is an early-release edition. Depending on how early you have joined me in the journey, there may be whole chapters missing, you'll find sections where the material is still thin or incomplete and final proof-reading and finishing are still ahead of us in the future. My personal idiosyncrasy is to

use “zzz” to indicate where I still have work to do, either in a section or for a whole chapter. Where you see the three *zed*’s (remember, I’m English and still haven’t fully adapted to the *zee*’s yet), this is my promise to you to return and provide more material.

As you join me on this journey, I invite you to provide feedback in the form of emails or tweets. While I am the author, I desire very much that you the customer should be happy. To that end, please let me know what you like and what you wish were different, what you would add to the book and what could be left out. That form of feedback would be greatly appreciated.

And suggesting that your friends buy their own copy wouldn’t hurt either!

Introduction

The scriptures are a treasure trove of eternal wisdom and truth, written specifically by the Lord for his people, his church and all others who love him or desire to know him.

When we read the scriptures, we are treated to a magnificent historical vista. The very history of the world starting with the creation and then following the interactions of the Lord with his creation and especially the history of his chosen people, Israel.

There are many story lines that twist and entwine within the scriptures. And all of them are useful to us if we can only understand them.

¹¹Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

1 Corinthians 10:11

These examples, provided for us by the lives of the men and women of the Old Testament are valuable if we can discern their meanings. The challenge is that the examples are all in the physical, but the lessons to be learned are to be applied to our spiritual lives. This is why along with his

word and its wonderful teachings, the Lord gave us pastors. Pastors are to feed the saints of the most high as a shepherd cares for his sheep. Sheep are unwise feeders and will eat whatever is close to them. A wise shepherd will lead his flock to pastures that are right for his sheep. No old scrubby pastures because that would not be nutritious. No fresh young shoots either because the sheep would also eat the roots and kill off the pasture. The shepherd brings them to pasture that is grown enough to survive being grazed, yet has everything that the flock needs. The wise pastor leads his congregation through the scriptures in the same caring way. At the risk of mixing our metaphors, Paul describes some scriptures as milk and some as strong meat and a pastor has to match the scriptures to their congregation and even individuals in the congregation so that all are fed with what they are able to handle.

The scriptures when taught well are a marvelous thing, but when taught wrong are a source of eternal anguish. As Paul wrote to Timothy, as a pastor it was vitally important to study the word of God carefully and teach it correctly.

¹⁵Study to shew thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

Jesus was quite plain in his displeasure about the scribes and Pharisees and their wrong teachings.

¹⁵Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Matthew 23:15

So, what do we preach? Well Paul tells us quite clearly what we should preach by even more clearly telling us what we should not preach.

⁸But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Galatians 1:8-9

Paul is adamant that nothing except what the apostles taught be preached. And he used the Hebrew idiom of repetition to underscore the importance of his point. Because it was repeated, to a Jew this is the modern equivalent of highlighting, using a large bold font and underlining! Paul understands that the Devil will try to infiltrate the church and water-down the gospel. He wants the churches to be on guard for such false or weakened doctrines.

There is exactly one way to get to heaven and that is the way taught by the apostles. Now and then I run across people who say that they only want to obey the words of Jesus. And this sounds good on the surface, but what did Jesus say?

²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

John 17:20

At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed these words in the context of his larger prayer after the meal and before he and the disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane. The context is that he had prayed for his disciples and was now praying for all those who believe on Jesus through their word. Jesus was praying the the true church that would abide by the teaching (the doctrine) of these disciples. The disciples were known as the apostles after the ascension of Jesus, so we can say that Jesus prayed for those who follow apostolic doctrine. And that prayer was needful because as Paul warned the elders in Ephesus:

²⁹For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Acts 20:29-30

The church and its teachings were, and still are, under attack both from outside and within. The church must hold fast to true doctrine. The apostles doctrine is all that we can trust to bring us safely into an eternity with Jesus.

It is with the importance to our souls of the apostles doctrine foremost in mind that I bring you this book. It is not an academic work for we are greatly blessed to have many fine academic writers in our midst and I will not attempt to replicate their work here. It is instead a collective of important and distinctly apostolic scriptures, each examined by a pastor and the apostolic perspective given in a way that I trust will be accessible, yet not watered down, to the greatest number of people.

Modeling The Early Church

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:42

Pastoring is a huge endeavor, especially when you are new to it. I liken it to being a new parent. When your first child arrives, so does the responsibility to care for them. Now, usually you receive a little help in the first few days. We were blessed that my mother-in-law came and helped us for a week. But then, she left and everything was down to us.

As an analytical kind of guy, I quickly figured out the principles of caring for a baby. The key skills necessary are to quickly and efficiently get food into the top end and diligently keep the other end as clean as possible. Oh, there are a few other details, but when they're brand new, those are the big two.

Six and a half years ago, I took over the pastorship of New Life Church in Dodgeville. This was my first pastorate and I had about twenty souls looking intently at me for spiritual nurturing. I understand that having multiple children can

be challenging enough, but now I had twenty spiritual charges to feed and clean and raise in the Lord.

The wonderful thing about the Lord is that he does not leave us floundering in our time of need. Before I had preached my first sermon, he had already given me a guide to running an apostolic church. We had striven to be helpful to the founding pastor, so we knew how to conduct a service through their wonderful examples, but a church is not just a series of services, any more than a baby is just a series of feedings.

I needed principles of church operation and the Lord provided. The Lord had caused a distilled analysis of the actions of an apostolic church body to be written in his word and he pointed me at it.

This verse is an amazing scripture for a number of reasons. The first is that it describes the operation of the early apostolic church. This is how the church operated when full of the Holy Ghost. This is pure church, conducted exactly the way that the Spirit guided it. The Devil, through worldly influence, hadn't affected it yet. There weren't even any human problems at this point, such as the Grecian widows murmuring or Ananias and Sapphira lying about money.

The second reason that it is amazing, is that it can be viewed as four principles of being an apostolic church. In the same way that caring for new babies can be distilled down to two principles, apostolic church can be expressed in four principles. And this is how I understood that the

Lord intended me to receive this scripture.

I do not believe that the principles are listed in degree of importance. If that was the case, then either apostolic doctrine or prayer is the least important part of operating a church congregation. Rather, I believe them all to be equally important. The amount that each principle is applied and the manner that it is applied is left to the discretion of the pastor, as they know best the needs of their assigned congregation.

The important thing with these principles is that they should be applied continuously and steadfastly. The Greek word behind steadfastly is *proskartereo* and it means “to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing” and “to persevere and not to faint”. These principles are not a fad or a new technique to be tried and discarded when tired of, but to be bedrock behavior for the church going forward.

Let’s examine each of these principles and see how the early church practiced each of these principles.

Apostolic Doctrine

Doctrine is teaching, so apostolic doctrine is simply the teaching of the apostles. This is important for the church because the Lord intended it to be this way. Jesus personally selected the core disciples, knowing that eleven of them were going to be the founders of his church. Like any

founder of a modern organization, he carefully selected and diligently trained his leadership team.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

Luke 24:45

Further, he gave them supernatural understanding of the scriptures. He did this with the specific understanding that they would be teaching the future members of the church. To use a modern business analogy, he had trained the trainers.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

John 17:20

After Jesus had prayed for his disciples, that final night in the Garden of Gethsemane, he immediately prayed for those who would believe on him through their word, that is, their teaching. He desired that the world would receive the apostle's teaching. This is why he had spent three and a half years with them. They, with the others of the one hundred and twenty that would be gathered for prayer in that upper room fifty one days after that prayer, were going to be the only source of salvation instruction for the new dispensation.

Jesus conducted his entire earthly ministry under the dispensation of the Law. Yet everything he did was to prepare for the dispensation of grace. Everything that he taught was in the form of principles. Everything that the apostles taught was the fulfillment of those principles. They taught physical actions that people should take to draw near to God and seek his salvation.

The classic example of this is that Jesus taught Nicodemus the principle of salvation, in that he needed to be born again of water and of spirit. Peter solidified that during his sermon on the day of the founding of the church, when he taught that salvation involved baptism in Jesus' name and receiving the Holy Ghost.

Fellowship

The Greek word translated fellowship, *koinonia*, is also translated as communion in a number of places. The dictionary helps us understand that communion can mean an “intimate fellowship or rapport”. This is the kind of fellowship that the church is supposed to have.

The church is a family. Any time the church comes together, it is like a family gathering. I understand that every family has some eccentric relatives, but you generally love them anyway, just because they’re family. It’s the same in the church.

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one

another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*.

Colossians 3:13

We are to *forbear* our brothers and sisters. Forbear is a delightful Olde English word that is occasionally explained to mean “put up with”. I think that’s a little rough. I would prefer to describe it as working diligently to be at peace with someone and as we like to say, fellowshipping the differences.

There are some who say that you should never talk about politics or religion. While it’s hard not to talk about religion in the church, the general principle of avoiding contentious subjects in your conversations with your church family holds.

Breaking Of Bread

There is something special about eating with someone. It can bring two people closer together. I make a point of rotating through the men of my congregation to take them for breakfast periodically. The coming together over food and with a cup of coffee helps to forge a bond of fellowship that lasts beyond just that morning.

Not all fellowship involves the breaking of bread, but all breaking of bread is fellowship. Eating together brings a closeness and a sharing that often doesn’t happen under

other circumstances. And it is a wise pastor that encourages these opportunities.

At our church, we love any excuse to fellowship. One of our more popular service ideas is the fifth Wednesday service. Any time there is a fifth Wednesday in a calendar month, we hold a fellowship evening centered around food. There are generally four such fifth Wednesdays a year. We will usually pick a theme based around a particular cuisine. In the past we have held a number of chili fests, ice-cream socials and evenings centered on Spanish or Italian foods. No matter the cuisine, the evenings are very popular. We find that guests are very willing to visit when there is food advertised.

Other fellowship events include our summer Sunday School department picnic in one of the local parks and we always have a Christmas party in addition to the Christmas service. Again, these are easy to invite people to as there is no preaching during the fellowship events and it makes for a fun and comfortable environment for visitors.

Prayers

Prayer at its simplest is a conversation with God. It's verbal fellowship with the Lord. We communicate with him. We share our feelings, our concerns, our dreams and our needs. The Lord loves our company. And he cares about our situations and needs.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

1 John 5:14-15

We can pray for many reasons. The Lord is comfortable with any subject that we wish to talk about. James gives us a number of different topics that we can take to the Lord in prayer.

Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

James 5:13

In times of trouble or joy, it is always appropriate to take that emotion to the Lord. And make no mistake, singing the psalms is a form of prayer. It is communication to God of the joy in your life using the words that he has already provided.

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven

him. Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

James 5:14-16

While praying for needs or forgiveness of sins is always appropriate, the majority of prayer seems to be for healing. James addresses this wonderfully and with his characteristic practicality. The elders of the church are the church leaders. In our day, the church leaders generally go by the title of pastor. The pastor will anoint you with oil and pray for you and call over you the name of the Lord Jesus. The powerful thing about this pastoral prayer is that the scripture teaches us that it brings both healing and forgiveness of sins.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

One final point to make about prayer is that we are not to be reticent about it. The writer of Hebrews explains that we have a high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who understands our situations because he has also lived a life robed in flesh. And because of this understanding, we may be bold in our approach to his throne. The Lord is quick to provide mercy and grace to those who seek it.

The Power Of Doing It Right

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Acts 2:43

This is a cool enough verse in its own right. Wonders and signs are always good. But while the content is very important, the first thing to notice about it is the context. At the risk of pointing out the obvious, this verse comes right after the one before it. And this is what makes it special.

The proceeding verse, as discussed in the chapter “Modeling The Early Church”, explains how the early church operated. It provides for us the four key elements they operated by. This verse then, reveals to us the natural outcome that should be expected from operating an Apostolic church carefully, according to the scriptural guidelines provided.

Not only is there a right and a proper way to operate a church congregation, but there is also a proper and expected result of so doing. Any congregation that abides by the apostle’s doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer can expect a certain outcome. And that outcome includes the fear of the Lord coming upon every member

of that body of believers and the presence of signs and wonders done by the leaders of the congregation.

Let's examine both of these expected results. And let's start looking for them and expecting them in our normal operations. As a spiritual entity, the church is not like the world. We must stop measuring ourselves by the world's yardstick. We are a supernatural organization and we should expect both the supernatural and the power of the Spirit of God to be in operation during every gathering. To expect anything less is to fail to live up to the apostolic heritage that we strive to carry forward from the book of Acts.

Fear Of The Lord

The Greek word behind "fear" is *phobos* and it has two seemingly different and unrelated meanings. The first is "fear, dread, terror". And certainly, this seems to fit well with the English word "fear". Yet the second meaning is "reverence for one's husband". How do these two very different definitions both fit the same word at the same time, yet seem to be appropriate?

The Lord is a powerful God. He holds the capability to create or destroy in his hand. He can even speak creation and destruction into being. A God of this power should be feared and there should be a healthy quantity of dread or terror in his presence. This dread is appropriate in those who do not have a right relationship with him, but it is also

appropriate in those who do, because of the sheer power he holds over us.

Yet, the Lord is also described as the bridegroom of the church. The church, as the bride of Christ, should be understood for holding a deep reverence for the one who watches over it, provides its power and is waiting to spend eternity with it.

So I see through this apparent contradiction and see that those who are described in this verse having a deep reverential respect for the Lord, as their savior, edged with an appropriate amount of dread in recognition of his mighty power and authority.

Signs And Wonders

The challenge that the church has always had is to be more desirable or interesting than anything that the world offers. This seems harder than ever these days. The world offers technology and special effects to increase the appeal of everything that it does offer. Some of these can seem to be difficult to top.

Yet, even with the advantages that the world seems to offer, the church has one serious advantage in that it has genuine power. The world's technology is cool and the special effects possible today are truly astounding. But cool and astounding can hardly cover the fact that what the world offers is fake.

As the world pushes a more and more brazen version of reality, people tend to start seeing through the facade. People when aware of the choice will strongly tend towards the more genuine of any options. People are jaded. They need to see something genuine.

I believe this is why the Lord provides signs and wonders at the hands of his ministers. He confirms the preaching of his word with power. Because even in this day and age, nothing gets peoples attention like a display of genuine power.

Whether it is a tongues and interpretation, a prophetic word or a miraculous healing. The power of the moving of the Spirit of God never fails to command attention. This is how the church overcomes the false promises of the world ... with the true power of the Spirit.

None Other Name

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

Peter is in trouble again. And this time John was with him. Peter healed a lame man, in the first recorded miracle of the new church. Proving that no good deed goes unpunished, the religious authorities have them arrested. Next time Peter, don't heal anyone in front of the temple! But if you do, don't let him dance around in the temple courtyard praising God. And if that happens, certainly don't start preaching about how Jesus is the Messiah and really, really don't remind the Jews that they killed him.

Naturally, Peter did all of these things. I love that guy. And not just because we share the exact same name. Five thousand men believed him that day before the captain of the temple reached him and provided a closing for the sermon.

The next day, the high priest and the rest of the religious leaders came to question them on the matter. Their first question was by what power or in what name had they performed the miracle of healing in. They knew that miracles occur only because of power and that power is only

released by authority. And that authority is always in a name. So which name was it?

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

Acts 4:10

A perfectly straight-forward question and one that a Spirit-filled Peter was happy to answer. This miracle was performed in the name of Jesus. And just to make sure that they understood precisely which Jesus he meant, he specified Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The name Jesus was not uncommon at that time, but by making sure that they knew it was Jesus of Nazareth, he narrowed it down. And surnames were almost totally unheard of at that time, so by appending Christ to his name, he was ensuring that the council knew he was describing Jesus as the Messiah.

Names are far more important than most people today understand them to be. In Old Testament times, names were given to capture life circumstances. Periodically, names were changed to reflect changes in a life. We see this in several of the patriarchs. Abram to Abraham and Jacob to Israel. We also saw it in the New Testament with Saul to Paul. And we know that Jesus changed the emphasis of Simon Peter's name from Simon to Peter.

Peter went on to let the council know that this was the ultimate revealed name of God. Jesus means *Jehovah is our salvation*. No other name is able to provide our salvation. No alternative names have been provided from heaven. There is exactly one saving name. And only through the name of Jesus can we be saved.

This is important to us both for what it tells us the saving name is and for letting us know what it is not. The saving name is Jesus. That name is a name of power and authority. This is why the miracle occurred. The use of the name of Jesus by a Spirit-filled believer allowed the power of the Spirit to flow. When we have the name of Jesus we have all that we need to seek salvation.

Knowing that the name of Jesus is the ultimate revelation of the name of God helps keep us from continuing to seek other paths to heaven. We do not fall into the trap of believing that there are many paths leading to heaven. Only the path that includes the application of the name of Jesus during baptism will have the desired effect. Our search finishes with the name of Jesus!

Further Reading

The New Birth by David K. Bernard. Pentecostal Publishing House. ISBN-13: 978-0912315775

About The Author

Pastor Simon Peter Chappell is the pastor of New Life United Pentecostal Church in Dodgeville, Wisconsin in the United States of America. Pastor Chappell moved to the United States from England in 1994 and has lived in Dodgeville since 1998, pastoring the congregation there since 2007. He describes himself as a “recycled atheist” and gives the Lord all the glory for bringing him out of the hopelessness of unbelief.

Pastor Chappell is happily married and keeps busy raising three minions. He loves God, writing, guns, cats, bacon, good tea, photography, esoteric programming languages, martial arts and lots of other guy stuff.

Pastor Chappell’s personal blog may be found at <http://simonpeter.org/>, a mix of interesting projects may be found at <http://simonpeter.com/> and he tweets at <https://twitter.com/SimonPChappell>.

The church website is at <http://newlife-upc.org/> and the church tweets at https://twitter.com/NewLife_UPC.

Colophon

The cover image is a photograph by the author, taken on the outskirts of Dodgeville one lovely fall evening when taking pictures of the sunset. It is grass seed, but here represents the good seed that we find in the Word of God.