

APOSTOLIC TEACHING AND PRACTICE

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We live in the 21st century! Should we be practicing 21 hundred year old religion? Jesus came into the world and appointed 12 men whom He called apostles. Those apostles were commissioned by Jesus Christ to "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16 ESV) Does your religion practice that apostolic "gospel"? Have you heard the gospel that the apostles preached?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

The religion of Jesus Christ, which the Apostles preached, is called Christianity. That word is not in the Bible, but it is the title that people in the world most frequently give to the religion of Jesus Christ. However, Jesus used the word "kingdom" to talk about His religion. He referred to His religion most frequently as the "Kingdom of Heaven," but he also called it the "Kingdom of God."

Another word associated with the religion of Christ and used most frequently by Jesus' apostles is the word "church". Jesus Himself used the word when He promised His apostles that He would build his church. (Matthew 16:18) In that passage, Jesus called it "My Church." Jesus' Kingdom and His Church are the same religion. I know this because of the words of Jesus and His apostles. After promising His apostles that He would build His church, Jesus told the apostle Peter what He would do for all the Apostles (cf. Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23), "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19 NASB) You see, the religion of the Kingdom and the religion of the Church are the same. This is seen also in the teaching of the "latecomer" apostle Paul. Paul wrote to the Colossian Church members and said that, "[God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13-14 ESV) To whom was the Apostle writing? Church members in the city of Colossi, in Asia! **Members** of Christ's

Church have left the kingdom of Satan, the "domain of darkness", and have become **citizens** of the Kingdom of God's Son. So the Church of Christ and the Kingdom of Christ are the same.

The word "church" is the English translation of a Greek word that means "called out." In ancient times a "call" was necessary as the final step in an invitation. For instance, a man plans a feast for his guests. He sends an invitation to his guest list without knowing the exact hour when all things will be ready. (You see, the man must kill one or more animals and prepare the meat for the meal. And so the man has a multitude of preparations to make and does not know the exact hour when everything will be ready.) The invitation is the "heads up, I'll be calling." And so, the "call" is the last step in the invitation process. Every guest has already been invited, and when everything is prepared, the man sends someone to "call" his friends to the feast.

Jesus told a parable that is based on this ancient custom. Jesus said, "**The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.**" (Matthew 22:2-3 ESV) You see, the people were already invited, and then as a final step, when everything was ready, the servants were sent out to "call" those who were invited.

The apostles of Jesus Christ are Jesus' servants charged with "calling" every human being to the feast of the King's son. The feast is the feast of salvation! Have you heard the apostles' "call"? Have you answered the apostles' "call"?

Friends, the apostles are still calling! That's right! I do not have the authority to invite you or to call you, but if I relay to you the apostles' invitation and call, then you can answer it! Jesus told his apostles to "**Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**" (Mark 16:15-16 ESV) When I preach the apostles' doctrine, the apostles are still "calling" people to Christ through that gospel. When you believe the message and is baptized you are answering the call!

The word "Gospel" literally means "good news." Go tell the world the "good news," Jesus commanded. God's invitation to the world is to "come and be saved

from sin"! Jesus put it this way, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 ESV)

That invitation is found in the good news that the apostles preached. When the apostles preached they were not only telling people that they were invited, but the apostles were also "calling" the people to the feast. Come share the salvation that God has prepared! Come, sit down at the table, the feast of salvation.

In 1895 Charles Gabriel wrote a song that was rooted in Jesus' parable about the feast. Gabriel wrote, "All things are ready, come to the feast. Come, for the table now is spread. Ye famishing, ye weary, come, and thou shalt be richly fed. Come for the door is open wide; a place of honor is reserved for you, at the Master's side. Come, while He waits to welcome thee. Delay not while this day is thine, tomorrow may never be. Leave every care and worldly strife; come feast upon the love of God and drink everlasting life. (The Chorus pleaded) Hear the invitation, Come 'whosoever will'; Praise God for full salvation for 'whosoever will.'"

The Catholic theologian Augustine and the Protestant John Calvin taught that the invitation was only for the elect! They believed and taught that Jesus died only for a few predestined people in the world. But that is NOT apostolic teaching. That doctrine is inconsistent with Jesus' commission to His apostles! The apostles were told to preach to the whole creation! Why? Because the good news is that Jesus Christ suffered death for every human being who has ever lived. That is what the apostles believed and practiced! The Apostle John wrote that "Jesus Christ, the Righteous One...is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2, NIV) John also said, "We (meaning John and the other apostles) have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world." (1 John 4:14 NIV)

Jesus' apostle Paul put it this way, "The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from

God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." ([2 Corinthians 5:14-21 ESV](#))

Friends, through the crucifixion of Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them. What is that? That's forgiveness! God has granted the world "forgiveness" through His Son, Jesus Christ. That "grant" of forgiveness is still in the world! Christ entrusted this message of reconciliation to His Apostles and to His Church. Jesus' Church should always follow the Apostles teaching and practice. The church of Christ must practice apostolic teaching. If my teaching does not originate with the Apostles, I have no business teaching it!

Friends, apostolic teaching, which is 21 hundred years old, is the only thing that can bring believers in Christ together again! That's right! The denominations of the world practice religion accumulated through the centuries. Their religion is not old enough! Their religion is not always the religion of Jesus Christ because they do not follow the teaching of the apostles. Is there any wonder then that Christianity is so divided? Division of believers is Satan's work! When church leaders leave the apostles doctrine and teach the doctrines of men we become something other than the church of Christ. It takes the apostle's teaching and practice to be the church built by Christ.

The apostles started with this gospel into "all the world" from Jerusalem. When the apostles first preached the gospel there in Jerusalem almost 3,000 souls were baptized into Jesus Christ. Jesus then added them to His church. That's right! Those 3,000 people were a part of the huge crowd that gathered to hear the apostolic message for the first time. Not everyone in that crowd obeyed the gospel that day. Even though they all heard Peter command, "Repent and be baptized every one of you." But those who were baptized into Jesus Christ that day received forgiveness of their sins. They received something that the whole crowd could have received, because the sacrifice of Christ was on the behalf of every soul present that day! But not everyone believed that apostolic message.

And some who may have believed the sermon were not willing to obey the Apostle's command to repent and be baptized.

What about you? Can you believe and practice a 21 hundred year old message? Is that message too old for you to believe? Are you too modern to practice it? The world is divided, believers are divided, and it will stay divided as long as we refuse to follow the apostolic preaching and practice of the first-century Christians.

After those nearly 3,000 people were baptized on the birthday of the church of Christ, it is recorded that "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." ([Acts 2:42 ESV](#)) Are you faithfully devoting yourself to these things, the apostles' teaching, and their fellowship? Are you faithfully "breaking bread" with the saved? (A reference to the Lord's Supper.) Are you devoting yourself to prayers? The apostle Paul taught that praying is a big "first" job for Christians in 1 Timothy 2:1-4. "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." ([1 Timothy 2:1-4 ESV](#))

Visit a church of Christ near you where you can answer the call of apostolic teaching.