

Structure-Shift

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/structure-shift/>

The Saul-David Transition Part 5/8

But he removed Saul and made David their king ...

Acts 13:22

Structure-shift

God is not only messing with our main-game – the [purpose-shift](#) – but also with our structures! There is a *structure-shift* underway, re-shaping the contemporary church. He is replacing the old order of Moses' tabernacle with the new — he is restoring David's tabernacle (Acts 15:16-18).

Saul presided over an old structure, Moses' tabernacle, devoid of God's presence. The ark had gone into captivity under this old structure and its delinquent priesthood. However, it did not return to either. God raised up a new structure and a new priesthood. David's tabernacle, unlike Moses', had no prescribed pattern, nor an intermediary priesthood. In fact, because there was no prescribed pattern, simplicity was the order of the day. It was only a one-man tent. The complexity of the old order (Moses' tabernacle) was gone, and now it was simply about his presence. There was not even a veil—everyone had open access to the presence without a priest. The implications of this are revolutionary.

During the 3rd and 4th centuries the church reverted to Old Testament patterns of priesthood to legitimise the shift to Saul-type leadership—to the 'monarchical bishop'. Based in official authority, instead of spiritual, this became the pattern for today's position of senior pastor. He effectively, along with all the clergy, became intermediary priests. With the restoration though of David's tabernacle, in which there was no animal sacrifice and therefore no intermediary priesthood, everyone becomes a priest. There is no human covering between Christ and the believer, for the "head of every man is Christ" (1 Cor 11:3). As in David's tabernacle we all now offer spiritual sacrifices of prayer and worship (1 Pet 2:5, 9). This is not to say there is no authority in the church, but it does beg the question as to what kind of authority it should be. Very simply, the authority of Jesus and the apostles was supernatural. It came from God by the Spirit and functioned relationally. It was therefore not official or hierarchical in any way. It was not dependent on human structures, nor could it be devolved or delegated through them. The authority was resident in the *person* not a *position*.

Jesus taught this when he said:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

Matthew 20:25-26 NASB

Here he is explaining that there are two kinds of authority for two distinct spheres: *secular* authority for the 'Gentiles' and *spiritual* authority 'among you' (i.e. the disciples). The former is based on 'lording' (i.e. on position and hierarchy), the latter on 'serving' (i.e. on character and relationship). The former is legitimate for the secular spheres (i.e. civil, state, business), but not for the house of God.

Just as Israel surrendered the priesthood to Aaron and their kingship to Saul, the church too surrendered its king-priest role to a professional caste—the clergy. With the emergence of the 'monarchical bishop', through Ignatius in the 2nd century and the confusion of authorities through Constantine in the 4th, secular styles of leadership replaced true spiritual authority. But now, in the fullness of reformation, God is working a final and revolutionary *structure-shift* from *secular* to *spiritual*.

Previous [Purpose-shift](#) Next [Leader-shift](#)

Print-friendly pdf: [The Saul-David Transition](#)

Copyright © 2025 Lifemessenger Inc.

www.lifemessenger.org

Facilitating biblical teaching & thinking for church & culture

REPRINT AGREEMENT: Duplication and re-transmission of this writing is permitted provided that complete source and website information is included