

Paradigm-Shift

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The Saul-David Transition Part 2/8

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

Acts 13:22

Paradigm-shift

There is currently a *paradigm-shift* in how we view 'church'. God is 'fussing' with our *ecclesiology*—our concepts of the *church*, the *ecclesia*. We have viewed the church through our particular theological or denominational lens, unwittingly investing the term *ecclesia* with extra-biblical meaning. Consequently, the word triggers, for many, less than positive connotations. At best it conveys a somewhat institutional concept. It is therefore time to recover the biblical content of this term and therefore the reality of what the church is—"his body" (Eph 1:22-23). Tragically we have produced Sunday events and religious structures, including Pentecostal ones, which call themselves "church" but can be as devoid of the presence and attributes of God as the local supermarket. We may fill them with excellent management and musical skills, historic liturgy or the latest songs, and the best technology, we might even experience stirring religious emotions in our services but without the presiding presence of God directing us we are functionally disconnected from the head of the body, Christ. Our appearance of Pentecostal/Evangelical or Traditional orthodoxy is increasingly belied by the absence of God's presence. In fact, despite our best intentions, we have become expert at conjuring an atmosphere that we mistakenly take to be God's presence!

It is therefore time to issue a call to the church of the Western nations to return to the Lord and to his presence. Without his manifest presence governing our gatherings and councils we are merely another corporation or club. When the Holy Spirit is both *residing* and *presiding* in Christ's body our fractured humanity is healed and we are conformed to his image (2 Cor 3:16-18). Our union with him in the Spirit imparts to us his nature. His perfected humanity becomes ours as he "brings many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10). He is not alone in his perfection: "*For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all of one*" (Heb 2:11). It is inclusive of all those who in Christ have received and yielded to the inner work of the Spirit—this alone defines the true *ecclesia*.

The church, his body, is where he dwells. In fact, a body without a spirit is a dead body! We are mistaken to define the church by any other criteria. Doing so creates idolatries of doctrine, structure, ministry, or men. This is not to say these things may not be helpful, but they are merely the means not the source nor the end. All these things have their place in growing God's people, but it is God who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:5-7). The Father who put all things in subjection to Christ and his body is the one who "fills all in all" (Eph 1:23); for "*from him, through him, and to him are all things*" (Rom 11:36). It is all about him—he is the ultimate corrective.

In summary, our paradigm of the church is shifting from *structure* to *spirit*, from *institutional* to *communal*, from *programmatic* to *charismatic*; and therefore from *activity* to *adoration*. All the while God has been longing for a 'resting place' for his presence we have been busy building him a 'working place' (Ps 132:13-14). Even prayer meetings have been possessed by the so called 'protestant work ethic'. We have forgotten how to wait on the Lord, sending him instead on incessant errands—"Lord go heal this, bless that, and protect the other thing". Perhaps the final paradigm shift will be from *petition* to *contemplation*, assuming prayer is still part of our corporate culture.

In contrast to Saul, on coming to the throne David's first priority was the restoration of the ark of God's presence as he aptly critiqued, "*... we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul*" (1 Chr 13:3b). Saul was not concerned for the presence. David by contrast, however, vowed:

Surely I will not enter my house, nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, Until I find a place for the LORD, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.

Psalm 132:3-5 NASB

The church as the `community of the anointed' – that is, the 'body of Christ' – is by definition the dwelling place of God's presence!

Previous [New Order of the Kingdom](#) Next [Heart-shift](#)

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