

AS LONG AS WE HAVE THE PATTERN

When God wanted the Hebrews to build him a house of worship, he provided them specific instructions on how it should be built. He specified even the kinds of materials to be used. The exact dimensions were given for the tent, and the furnishings thereof. Nothing was left to the creative minds of the craftsmen.

The wood was to be acacia, the cloth was to be linen. The metals used were gold, silver and brass, each used in the object specified. The details were written down for the workers and are preserved to this day in the Book of Exodus chapters 35-38. God straitly instructed Moses, and he those who did the work, that they make the tent and its fixtures "after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount" (Ex. 25:40). They wrought according to the pattern and God blessed and accepted their efforts. He placed his glorious shekinah in the most holy place of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34).

Ponder the question, what if the tabernacle had been destroyed, by fire, storm or war? What would the Hebrews have done? The answer is simple, so long as they had the Book of Exodus in their possession they had the pattern and could have rebuilt it just as it was in the beginning.

Christ built his church and recorded his will for us in his New Testament (Matt. 28:20). He specifically tells us it is to be regarded as his pattern for his disciples and his church (II Tim. 1:13). Borrowing the very words God spoke to Moses, the Holy Spirit led the writer of Hebrews to say, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee..." (Heb. 8:5).

By the third century men were openly ignoring the divine pattern for the church. One by one, over a period of time, virtually every doctrine and practice ordained by the Master was changed. Eventually the Bible itself was effectively removed from the reach of the common man. It was locked in a dead language (Latin) which none but clerics spoke. It was declared to be the exclusive property of the priesthood of the corrupted church of Rome. Penalties were attached for possessing a Bible. Men were forbidden to translate it into the vernacular of the people.

The great gift of the Protestant Reformation was that the power of the pope to keep the Bible from the masses of humanity was broken. In virtually every country of Europe brave men set about to put the sacred book into the language of the people. Gutenberg's printing press made it possible to produce Bibles in large numbers and at prices many people could afford. Although the church that Christ built had long be corrupted and obscured, the people now had the divine pattern in hand. By carefully studying it, they were able to rebuild that which had been lost. Using a slightly different figure, the author of The Revelation was given "a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar and them that worship therein..." (Rev. 11:1).

The divine measuring rod was the Scripture. To be acceptable to God the church must meet the divine standard given in God's Word.

Two centuries ago, with the heavenly pattern in hand, our fathers set about to restore the church, her faith and worship, as they were in the beginning.

Today we still possess the pattern. Those who want God's acceptance and blessing will be diligent to see that all things are done according to the pattern.

One last question: How do you think God would have dealt with Bezalel and Oholiab, if the master craftsmen had taken it upon themselves to change various aspects of the tabernacle to make them more pleasing to themselves and the people?

JHW