

The Pattern Principle

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Is it important to strictly follow the New Testament's teaching about the church? Most religious people have been led to believe it is not. The crux of the matter is, does God have a pattern for the church or did He leave man free to establish any sort of religious society he desires and claim it to be the church of God?

To answer this question, it will be helpful to study an Old Testament event. When God gave Moses the command to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, He was very specific in His instructions. At the time that He gave these plans to Moses, God said, "And see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount" (Ex. 25:40). Just as a builder is bound to follow a blueprint in building a house, so Moses was specifically warned not to alter God's pattern for the tabernacle.

The New Testament it is frequently calls our attention to the fact that it is vastly superior to those of the Old Testament. This teaching is especially pronounced in the eighth chapter of the book of Hebrews. The Old Testament is depicted as a mere shadow of the Heavenly and True things to be found by following the New Testament (Heb. 8:5). In this very context, the inspired writer quotes Exodus 25:40 to establish that Moses was required to build the old tabernacle according to God's precise pattern. Then the writer immediately reminds us that Christ has obtained a ministry more excellent than that of Moses and the covenant God gave through him (Heb. 8:6). It is unreasonable to suppose that God would be so careful to specify a pattern for an inferior system (the tabernacle) and then be totally unconcerned about how the church was built. If God was concerned about the tabernacle, **how much more** concerned he is about the church. It behooves every Bible-believer to follow the divine pattern in worship, work, behavior, organization, the plan of salvation, and all other matters pertaining to the church.

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