

The Church Should Have Failed

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By all human standards the church Jesus established through His apostles should never have “gotten off the ground.” Everything seemed to be against its success and survival. The men charged with establishing it all over the world were so few – only twelve in the beginning and a thirteenth added later. But what could such a small number of men do? Then there was the problem of its founder. Most people outside of the tiny areas of Judea and Galilee had never heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Many who knew of Him despised Him or, at best, regarded Him with nonchalance or curiosity. He never held a public office, started a college, or wrote a song. The only thing He ever wrote, as far as we know, He wrote in the sand – and we don’t even know what He wrote. To build something that would last, He seemed to go about it in the wrong way.

Even if people would listen to the message of His apostles, how could they possibly accomplish the task? The most rapid overland transportation was horseback, but which of the apostles could afford a horse? The most rapid travel by sea was by slow sailing vessels. Communications were no better. The apostles could personally speak the message orally or they could write it and send it on its way by personal messenger. In either case, they were limited by very slow travel methods.

And what about the severe racial prejudice among the first converts, even affecting the apostles? Christ had sent them to all nations, but their Jewish background caused them to consider the Gentiles as unworthy of their evangelistic efforts for years.

Had it been but a human enterprise, then it would surely have failed. Herein lies a convincing proof that the New Testament church is indeed a Divine institution. Could it be that the Lord designed it to appear weak and foolish to men, so that its success would be indisputable proof that it was of God? Is not this hypothesis an illustration of the principle Paul stated?

But God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

If men would only listen, they would not marvel that the Gospel and the church that it produces are equally indestructible. Jesus built His church on the fact of His own Deity and promised that death—Satan’s strongest weapon—against humankind—would not prevail to prevent its establishment and perpetuity (Mat. 16:16-18). How foolish are men who try to “improve” it to make it more appealing to the masses. Wise men will not tamper with it. Ought we not to press on in full confidence that Christ is with His faithful church until He comes again (Mat. 28:20)?

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