

The Pattern Principle

Dub McClish

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 — otherwise there would not be thousands of distinctive denominations in the world. The crux of the matter is, does **God** have a pattern for the church or did He leave mankind free to establish any sort of religious society he desires and then claim it to be the church of Christ?

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 dictated a very specific blueprint for its construction and charged Moses: "According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exo. 25:9; conf. 25:40). Just as a builder is bound to follow a blueprint in building a house, so Moses was specifically warned not to tamper with God's pattern for the tabernacle.

The New Testament frequently calls our attention to the fact that it is vastly superior to the Old Testament. This teaching is especially pronounced in Hebrews 8. The Old Testament is depicted as a mere shadow of the Heavenly, true, and abiding things to be found by following the New Testament (v. :5). In this context, the inspired writer quotes Exodus 25:40 to establish the fact that Moses was required to build the old tabernacle precisely according to God's 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 inconceivable that God would be so careful to specify a pattern for an inferior institution (i.e., the tabernacle and Judaism) and then be totally unconcerned about how His church, "the true tabernacle" (v. 2) was/is to be built. If God was so concerned about the detailed construction of the tabernacle, a mere type of His church, **how much more** concerned must He be about the church. The New Testament reveals this pattern in its fullness, including its worship, work, organization, the means of entrance, and correct behavior of its members. It behooves every Bible-believer to follow this Divine pattern rather than the flawed, countless "patterns" invented by men.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the "Bible Thoughts" Column for the *Hood County News*, Granbury, Texas, August 14, 1977.]

Attribution: From *thescripturecache.com*; Dub McClish, owner, curator, and administrator.