

Christ in Prophecy

Conference 4: “Gendron on the Bible Driven Church”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: What kind of church do you attend? Is it market driven? Purpose driven? Tradition bound? Or do you attend a church that is based on God’s Word and led by the Holy Spirit? For a great presentation about the importance of a Bible driven church, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. For the past few weeks we have been in the process of showing you excerpts from sermons presented at our recent Bible conference which was dedicated to the theme of, “Spiritual Apostasy in the End Times.” One of those presentations was entitled, “The Bible Driven Church.” It was made by Mike Gendron who is considered to be an outstanding expert on Christian Doctrine. Mike is the founder and director of Proclaiming the Gospel Ministries located in the Dallas, Texas area.

Before establishing his ministry in 1991, Mike was a very successful businessman. Although he had gone to church all his life, he did not have a personal relationship with the Lord. When he finally found the Lord, he gave up his business career, entered Dallas Theological Seminary, and then began to teach and preach about Christian doctrine. Mike began his presentation at our conference by pointing out that the Bible Driven Church has been replaced by the Seeker-Sensitive Church, the Market Driven Church, the Purpose Driven Church, the Emerging Church and the Tradition Bound Church. He then proceeded to present nine characteristics of a Bible driven church. As he presents these, check them against the church you attend.

Gendron Presentation

Mike Gendron: Well as these emerging church leaders try to reinvent the church in a post-modern era it will do us well to revisit the characteristics of the First Century Church. Can we look back at the nine strategic characteristics? And I’m not for a moment saying that these are all inclusive, these nine characteristics, but I think that

you would agree they are probably some of the most important. So when we look at the key marks of the Lord's Church it has to have a high view of God and His purpose for the Church. The Church exists to reveal God's glory, to exalt His Majesty, and to carry out His purpose and reverence.

So what do we know about the purpose God gave us for His Church? Think you could say that it is like a three legged stool. First it needs to be a sanctuary for His people to worship in reverence and to be edified and equipped for service and evangelism. The purpose for the Church is also to make known wisdom, the wisdom of God to rulers and heavenly places. And to provide a body for the head, the Lord Jesus is the head of the Church we are His body. The Church exist for the purpose of gathering the body of Christ together which will one day be presented to Him glorified and holy without blemish. So this is the purpose as we say for the church: equipping, edifying, and evangelizing. It should be a sanctuary from the world, where believers can come together and worship God in reverence and to be equipped to go back out into the world for the purpose of evangelism. And I hope you realize that all three of these functions must be in balance, or what happens? The stool tips over. Many churches today have turned their focus away from feeding the sheep and they are now entertaining the goats. But God's purpose has always been to equip the Saints, and never to entertain the world. If we make friends with the world we set ourselves at enmity with God. And this is affirmed in Scripture in First John 2:1, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world, if anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him."

So I want to look real briefly at one of the legs of the stool. After we are brought together to be equipped and encouraged and we are sent out into the world for the purpose of evangelizing for God's glory. And we all know that people must hear and believe in God's holiness, His righteousness, and justice before receiving the blessings of His love, His mercy, and His grace. We must start with God as our Holy Creator that He is sovereign over all of us, that one day every knee will bow every knee will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, until the unbelieving world understands that, they will never be interested in receiving the blessings of His love, mercy and grace. Yet an emerging church leader said, "Evangelism is no longer about persuading people to believe. It is about shared experiences, each person with their own tradition and culture, but with the possibility of encountering God and truth from one another." This is how the emerging church wants you to evangelize. You see an unbeliever, you walk up to him and you engage in a dialogue, you don't try to persuade them to believe the Word of God, you simply dialogue with them and hope that in your dialogue truth can come out of your conversation. You see there is no objective truth anymore in this post-modern era.

Well we find God's blueprint for building His Church in Acts 2:42 where Luke writes, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer." That is the blueprint. We come together with the

purpose of doing that and then they make the Lord's last command our first concern. And that is to break huddle and go out into the world to rescue those who are perishing. And I hope you all realize that these vital elements that we see in Acts 2:42 are vital for the life and the health of the Church.

We know from Scripture that God's Church is not a market driven church, or a social club, it is not to be driven by man's methods or ideas. And it should never conform itself to the emerging culture, on the contrary the Church must seek to conform the culture by being the salt and the light. When the Church is following God's blueprint it will be radically different from any organization that man has ever devised because man didn't devise it. The Church is the only institution our Lord promised to build, promised to bless, and promised to protect. And when we look to the Master Builder of the Church we know it is the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 16:18 He said, "I will build my Church." It does not do man any good to follow his own ideas or strategies to grow the Church we must look to the Master Builder. In fact we can learn from Peter can't we in this passage of Matthew 16 he thought he had a better idea to build the Lord's Church. Remember in Matthew 16 immediately after Jesus announced He would build His Church He said first of all I must go and die for it. First He had to purchase His Church with His own blood. In other words before the first nail was hammered to construct the Church, nails had to be driven into the hands and the feet of the Master Builder. What was Peter's response to this? He quickly rebuked the Lord saying, "Lord this shall never happen to you." But Jesus seeing His blueprint was already being challenged by man's ideas turned and said to Peter, "You are a mouth piece of the Devil. Get behind me Satan for you have in mind the things of man rather than the things of God."

This should be a convincing rebuke for any pastor that tries to build his church, his own way, instead of following the Lord's blueprint. I think Peter's brashness is especially shocking because he was standing in the way of Jesus going to the cross to purchase His Church. In essence he was proposing a Church without a cross. Isn't it interesting the more things change, the more they remain the same? Today there are many pastors who are down playing the importance of the cross they want a social club without a cross. Well that is the condition of the Church today we need to turn back to the Master Builder because it is He who is adding to His Church daily those who are being saved. He is baptizing them into His body with the Holy Spirit, as we see in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

When we look at the Church that the Lord is building we know its foundation. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 Paul said, "No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." No matter how beautiful the structure of the church is it will crumble if it's not built on the foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 2:20-22, Paul writes, "The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a holy temple unto the Lord.”

It is really interesting isn't it that the seeker friendly churches are filled with people who do not want to hear the hard truths of our Lord Jesus Christ. But yet that is exactly what the Church is called to proclaim. It is indeed the pillar and support of truth. It is the household of God, the Church of the Living God the pillar and support of truth. We see that in 1 Timothy 3:15, when Paul writes, “For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.” This is what the Church of Jesus Christ is made up of, members who do anything for the truth and stand against anything that opposes the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears Jesus, but so many people today have their ears plugged up and they do not hear the very words of Christ.

Well another characteristic of the Bible driven church is that it lives on God's Word. This should be obvious but not in our emerging culture. The Church lives on God's Word, it loves God's Word and it can't exist apart from God's Word. In fact the Bible is a love letter from God to all of His children. And God's children always love to hear the words of our Savior. My very first trip to Israel I was over there for over a month, thousands of miles away from my sweetheart back in Dallas. And I always remember each day going to the mailbox to see if I had a letter from her. And when I received a letter from her I read it and couldn't put it down. I reread it, I reread it, I cherished every word that she wrote, I was lonesome. But this is the attitude that all of us should have about the Word of God to realize that it is a love letter to cherish every word to be reluctant to put it down and just live and thrive on the very Word of God.

The Bible driven church preaches the Word of God. We see the importance of faithfully preaching the Word in Paul's solemn charge in 2 Timothy 4:1-3, he wrote, “Preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.” I think that the inner circle in Heaven will be pastors who faithfully preached the Word of God and didn't follow every fad that came down the pike. Yes those other pastors are drawing larger crowds, but the ones that faithfully preached the Word of God are the ones that are going to be in the inner circle.

And praise God if you belong to a church that faithfully preaches the Word of God. Pastors will never be judged on the size of their church because that's the Lord's business He is the one that adds to their number those who are being saved. But pastors will be judged for how faithful they were in feeding, and protecting the flock that was entrusted to them. Preachers who exchange the Word of God for positive messages that tickle the ears and never offend anyone need to look to the apostle Paul. He never avoided preaching Christ crucified just because it was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. He faithfully preached Christ as the power and

wisdom to those who are being called by God. You see the Word of God has a polarizing affect; those that love the Word of God and have been given ears to hear the Word of God will come and hear more of God's Word. But the unbelievers who have their ears stopped up and can not see because the prince of this world has blinded them from the light of the Gospel, they will go to a church that preaches man's opinion and tickles their ears.

But how is the Word of God to be preached. The Bible gives us clear examples. Paul was our example, "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." We need to preach verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, that is the best way to make every man complete in Christ and to reveal God to His people. Whenever the Word of God is preached Christians are edified, encouraged, and equipped. It is through the preaching of the Word that Christian are reprovved and restored, and it is through the hearing of the Word that unbelievers are confronted, convicted, and converted. Nothing else, our words are void of power, but God's Word can bring conversions.

The Bible driven church also submits to the Word of God. In fact the true Church submits to the head of the Church which is the Incarnate Word the Lord Jesus Christ, He and His Word is the supreme authority in all matters of faith. Every teaching, every tradition, every spirit and everyone's individual faith must be tested by the Word of God that is the plumb line for knowing the truth. We see examples here in Acts 17:11 when the apostle Paul preached to the church in Berea the synagogue of Berea. As he was preaching he noticed that people were searching the Scriptures to find out if what He was teaching was really true. They were testing the veracity of an apostles teaching with the Word of God, with Scripture a great example for all of us. In Mark 7:13 we see how traditions were nullifying the Word of God. In 1 John 4:1 we see that we are to test every spirit. How do we test them? With the Word of God. In 2 Corinthians 13:5 Paul exhorted us all to examine ourselves to make sure we are in the faith. How do we do that? Does our faith line up with Biblical faith? Have we believed the objective truth of God's Gospel?

Well all the problems that Dr. Reagan talked about this morning, all of the problems that you have seen in the condition of the Church today can really all be blamed on this one fatal flaw; the Church not submitting to the supreme authority of God's Word in all of their faith and practice. And I know this from personal experience. I was in a tradition driven church for 37 years, tradition reigned supreme, the infallible teaching of the bishops reigned supreme over the Word of God. But the true Church of Jesus Christ submits to the Word of God.

It also abides in the Word of God. Jesus said that's the mark of a true disciple of mine if you abide in My Word then you are truly disciples of mine and you shall know the truth

and the truth shall make you free. Free from what? Free from religious deception, free from the bondage of legalism, free from the bondage of sin, knowing the truth sets you free. And the Lord Jesus said, "If I set you free, you are free indeed." Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teachings of Christ does not have God. The one who abides in the teaching he has both the Father and the Son. More than ever in these times of spiritual apostasy we need to be abiding in the Word of God so we can know the truth and not be prone to deception.

Bible driven church also reads the Word of God. The life the growth and the strength of the local church is dependent upon hearing and applying the consistent reading of God's Word. Knowing this Paul wrote, "Until I come give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and to teaching," 1 Timothy 4:13.

So let me ask you this: How is your church doing so far? Are they upholding the characteristics of a Bible driven church? I know that this church is a Bible driven church because for the first time in my life I walked into the men's restroom of a church and there was a Bible hanging on the wall, as you washed your hands you could be reading Scripture. I don't know if that is true in the woman's room or not, but we've got it in the men's room.

Well the Bible Driven Church also sings the Word of God. Paul instructed us to sing with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. Hymns with Biblical theology and Scriptural phrases not only glorify our Lord and sanctify His church but also helps us remember great Biblical truths. Unfortunately many of today's hymns do not glorify God with sound theology. You notice many of the hymns are all about I, I, I and me, me, me. Praise God for Marty and for Jack for uplifting the Word of God in their hymns and songs, exalting the Lord Jesus Christ and magnifying our Lord. What a great ministry they have.

The Bible driven Church also believes and proclaims the glorious gospel of grace. And I hope you all realize that a church that believes and faithfully upholds a clear and complete gospel will not only welcome converted sinners into the church but it will discourage counterfeit Christians from becoming members.

A constant proclamation of the Word of God every Sunday is the mark of a true Bible church. We are living in times though when nobody really knows the gospel. You know a lot of interviews and surveys have been done asking professing Christians to define the Gospel their responses are so inadequate. What are the divine promises of the Gospel? Why is the Gospel the greatest news anyone could ever hear? Because it promises eternal life with God, it promises the complete forgiveness from the guilt and punishment of sin. It promises the power to live a victorious life in Christ Jesus. It promises a permanent right standing before God. Hebrews 10:14 tells us that by the

one sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ He has made us perfect for ever, those who are being sanctified. The divine promise of the Gospel includes every spiritual blessing that we have in Christ Jesus. Why aren't we shouting this from the roof tops? There is a huge mission field outside the doors of this church. We really believe in literature evangelism, sowing the seed, sowing the imperishable seed of God's Word. Everywhere we go we are giving the Gospel; even if only have a few minutes with people they will receive the Gospel just by the opportunity they had to engage somebody who cared about their eternal destiny. Did you realize that over half of professing Christianity denies these divine promises? We've got a lot of tares in our churches if they are not believing the promises of the Gospel have they really heard the Gospel?

Well what else does the Bible driven church do? They are devoted to prayer. We read in Acts 2:42 that believers continually were devoted to prayer. The early Christians remembered the Lords' promise, "If you ask me anything I will do it," John 14:14. As they demonstrated dependence upon the Lord the results were astonishing. The Lord said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," Matthew 21:13. Members of the early Church were continually devoting themselves to prayer. And Jesus taught us to pray with words and praise to the Father, honoring Him as the source of all blessings. Sadly the same devotion to prayer that the early church participated in is rarely found today. Churches can draw large crowds with entertainment but when a prayer meeting is held very few faithful trickle in for the prayer meeting.

Have you heard about contemplative prayer? That's part of the emergent church movement the post-modern era. Their idea is to empty your mind of everything and focus on one word. What is wrong with this practice? The Bible says that were to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, if we empty our mind of anything, then anything and everything can come into our minds. We need to stay focused on taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Yet proponents of this; contemplative prayer methods say it is the means of communing with God without any conscience or intellectual attempt to encompass God. Well what you end up encompassing if it's not God?

We also see a mark of the Church is to observe the ordinances that the Lord gave to the Church, we know what those are. Baptism, it is the initial act of obedience identifying the one baptized as a new creature in Christ. It symbolizes our death to sin and our resurrection to a new life in Christ. As the baptized goes down into the water it symbolizes our death to Christ, coming out of the water our resurrection to a new life in Christ. We also know the second ordinance is the Lord's Supper; it is a symbolic remembrance of the atoning death of our Savior, the longing for His return and a time of self examination.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy. You have been watching a presentation by Mike Gendron, the evangelist for Proclaiming the Gospel Ministries, located in the Dallas, Texas area. This presentation was made at our annual Bible Conference. I'm sorry to say that we do not have time to allow Mike to present all nine of his characteristics of a Bible Driven Church. The six characteristics he presented were: A high view of God and His purposes, second a commitment to God's blueprint, third constant nourishment on God's Word, four a belief in the Gospel of Grace and a commitment to proclaim it, number five a devotion to prayer, and number six observance of the ordinances of Scripture, specifically baptism and the Lord's Supper. The other three additional characteristics he proceeded to mention in his presentation were: Number seven the exercise of discipline, both spiritual discipline and remedial discipline, number eight a willingness to content for the faith, that is, to defend the basic doctrines. And number nine a commitment to the practice of love.

As we bring this program to an end, I would like to invite you to be back with us again next week. Until then, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program