

The Gospel Herald

“As the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21)

For The LORD’S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS
by
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Traditional Ministerial Ordination

I write this article as a seeker of truth on the matter as I examine the scriptures as to the Old Baptist practice of “laying on of hands” ceremony by a presbytery of ministering brethren.

As I read the Acts of the apostles, I find the initial ordination of those chosen of the assembly, seven men of honest report and filled with the Holy Ghost and wisdom (Acts 6:3-4) that the apostles would be able to give themselves to prayer and ministry of the word. These brethren were to assist the widows and other daily administration, even the serving of tables (ascribed as “deacons”).

In my reading of the Acts of the apostles I find where Saul (Paul) and Barnabas were set apart as recorded, “As they (the believer’s at Antioch) ministered to the Lord (in prayer), and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, SEPARATE ME BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE WORK WHERE UNTO I HAVE CALLED THEM... And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3). Then Paul and Barnabas “had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord (assumed by the laying on of hands) on whom they believed. And after they passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia” (Acts 14:23-24).

Now, as I write the following observations and ponderings on the scripture record, I ask, if we are to follow the scriptural example, where is FASTING exercised in our “setting apart ceremony”? Has the Holy Ghost audibly spoken to us as to whom to set apart as in Acts 13:2,3,4?

As I read the Acts of the apostles, I am reminded that they DID NOT have the compiled written Word of God as we are blessed with in this dispensation of time. Keeping this

in mind, I began to realize that for the ministry of the apostles to be that which was delivered to them by our Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Peter and others as the revelation of the gospel was given them through the means of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, they went out preaching and teaching CHRIST.

I see where the apostles as well as the Evangelist Philip were given the ministry of preaching the gospel throughout the vast regions and as God prepared hearts to receive their message and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ, there were gatherings in every city where God had sent them. Among these believers were chosen men who would be ordained as elders to continue in the teaching and preaching of the apostles' doctrine of the gospel of Christ. These ordained of the apostles were determined as men sound in the doctrine and of a good report. This was NOT to establish an "apostolic Succession", but to establish a means of credential of those "chosen among the various assemblies" as men gifted with proclaiming the Good News of Christ Gospel. As the apostles in time were persecuted and suffered death, is there scriptural evidence that the churches called for a presbytery of brethren to ordain other brethren to minister as God raised up other assemblies in distant locations?

We find the apostle Paul writing to Titus, his own son in the common faith and said, "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee". (Titus 1:4-5). From this direction of Paul, he followed by setting forth the qualifications of the elder/bishop.

There is no mention by Titus instructed to call an "outside" presbytery together for the ordination of the elders? Could it be that Titus was ministering to the assembly and they (the Church) were to call men of good character, filled with the Holy Ghost, apt to teach and gifted with a knowledge of the gospel of Christ to be set apart for the work of the ministry? In my study I do not find throughout the writings of the apostle any places where there was a presbytery called "outside" the local church for the ordination of any other brethren other than the record where the disciples and apostles initially traveled and as Churches were established, brethren were set apart as instructed by the apostles/disciples using those believing brethren in each locality.

In all Three of Paul's journeys to Greece, Thessalonica, Philippi, Ephesus, and Asia minor in general, I find no scriptural evidence where Paul was involved in any ordination of any Elders/Bishops/Deacons in all of his church building endeavors as an itinerate minister of the gospel. It would appear that the remote assembly's of believers in the message of the Gospel of Christ were given the authority to chose out among them a brother or brethren which were sound in the "apostles doctrine" of the gospel of Christ and set them apart for the work of the ministry as Elder(s) to minister to the local churches, preaching and teaching those truths of which were corresponded to them through Paul's epistle writings.

In my pursuance of what is an acceptable means of setting apart the Elders and Deacons in the new Testament local assembly(s) in this dispensation since the absence of the apostles, it would appear that a local called out assembly of believers in Christ Jesus that are blessed to agree in the foundational doctrines of the NT, are given the authority to set apart brethren as elders/deacons as their gifts are recognized among the assembly of the saints.

I ask the question, if a group of believers in Christ have been brought together in fellowship of the truth of the New Testament doctrine “as once delivered to the saints”, and are convinced that a brother is blessed with the gift(s) of the ministry, apt to teach, with all the qualifications the apostle Paul had been blessed to set forth in the epistles, what would keep the local assembly from agreeing to “Set apart” the brother designating him as an Elder/Pastor/Bishop as a God called minister to serve the assembly? Does not the Word of God give the assembly the qualifications and guidelines in choosing one called of God from among the local believers to Pastor and shepherd the Lord’s flock?

As the signs and wonders that accompanied the apostles ministry ceased upon their death, and as the churches were established and ministered to by those which have carried on the “apostles doctrine” of the gospel of Christ as Paul (the last of the apostles) ministered to the various churches by his written epistles as to spiritual instruction in dealing with various issues that each church was confronted with.

Paul said to Timothy, “Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the “presbytery” (the ONLY place the word presbytery is used in scripture).

I see where the “commending” of those being set apart (ordained) for the gospel ministry is exemplified by the “Laying on of hands” as a symbol of “commendation” of the one being set apart by the local Church assembly. I do not see a problem with this exercise being carried out in the local Church of Jesus Christ, although I am persuaded that the “presbytery” should be those of that particular church assembly made up of the bishop/pastor/elder and spiritual brethren approved of the local church assembly. May each church assembly carry on it’s business without the incorporation of an association and or another Church assembly unless there is no ministering brethren within the assembly of which is desiring to set a brother apart for the gospel ministry.