

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Is there a “fade away church” movement?

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Is the local church on the way out? Some think so, and others promote it. Terry Mattingly recently wrote an article that appeared in the July 12th. Daily Record in Rogers, Arkansas exploring the changes that are occurring in religion regarding the church.

He quotes Harold Camping, a religious broadcaster, as saying to his listeners, “No longer are you to be under the spiritual rulership of the church...This message should be clear. We must remove ourselves from the church... The church has ceased to be an institution or divine organism to serve God as his appointed representative on earth.”. Camping is encouraging removal from any church because in his opinion they have all gone apostate. His solution, according to the article, is to form fellowships with no pastors that exist to support mass-media evangelism.

So, when the church as we know it goes apostate, we should do away with “church” as God ordained it? Why not go back to organizing local churches as God has ordained in his word.

“Elders” were appointed in “every church” (Acts 14:23). In Scripture, these men were known as “elders, “pastors” and “bishops” who were limited to oversee the flock, among them (Acts 20:17,28, I Peter 5:2). Also, there was no such thing as just one pastor over a local fellowship of believers in the New Testament. Encouraging people to go back to the Scriptures to see how God authorized His church to organize itself and work is an essential starting place to have God’s blessing. The solution is not for the local church to fade away, but false concepts and unscriptural practices to immediately end.

How popular do you think Camping’s proposal is today in the religious world? Let’s see...I will not have to get up on Sunday morning and drive all the way to some building, sit for two hours on a pew, and hear pointed reminders of my responsibility to my brethren in, and my fellow man outside the church. I can prop myself up in bed, read the Sunday newspaper, check out one of those “mass media” televangelists and when the address pops up on the screen, I can send in my money to help support “mass media evangelism”.

It is a convenient, practically effortless, guilt free way of serving Jesus. I think Camping’s proposal will sell in a heart beat.

In the local churches of the New Testament, brethren “provoked one another unto love and good works” by consistently “assembling together” (Hebrews 10:24-25). When together, Christians partook of the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 11:20-34, Acts 20:7), and gave cheerfully as God had prospered them (I Corinthians 16:1-2). Believers spoke to one another by singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in their heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). The righteous would pray together (Acts 12:5,12), as well as hear God’s word proclaimed (Acts 20:7, 2:42). God authorized these avenues of worshipping Him and edifying one another.

Gene Veith, a religious scholar says, “Some churches are doing everything they can do to eliminate anything that might make them seem like churches.”. May it never be with the New Testament church.