

Jesus commissioned his apostles theology religion essay



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Jesus commissioned His apostles to go into the world to spread God's MESSAGE OF LOVE. From that first Pentecost when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit and Peter spoke in front of a crowd where he proclaimed that Jesus was indeed the Messiah; the Apostles went where God sent them. When Peter spoke during that first Pentecost, he ended his discourse with an exhortation, 40" Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day. 42They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. 43Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. (Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2, NAB)As discussed in the first session, the Apostles and the disciples they trained went to many countries, established churches and were martyred for the cause of spreading the Good News of Christ. Simon Peter felt that he was unworthy to suffer as Jesus did so was crucified in an inverted cross. Others were hung, beheaded, thrust with lances and swords, stoned to death and shot with arrows. St. Paul, known as the Apostle to the Gentiles, was also beheaded. He has become one of the greatest evangelists of his day in spreading the Gospel of Christ. We know much about him, his life, journeys and martyrdom through the New Testament.(www. biblepath. com - the apostolic age)

II. MORE THAN PRESENCE NEEDED

Despite Paul's perseverance and being hands-on in evangelizing, he continued to give reminders. He sent disciples he trained. He sent letters to the leaders and members of the Churches he established. He was very frank

about their weaknesses, he did not mince his words. He was very clear about what was expected of them as followers of Jesus. This is explicitly detailed in his letters to the Churches he built.

Paul's first issue with the CORINTHIANS was their divisiveness, their being proud and self-serving:

(Paul's voice)10I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.

11For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you. 12I mean that each of you is saying, " I belong to Paul," or " I belong to Apollos," or " I belong to Kephas," or " I belong to Christ." 13Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? SPEAKER: - Even as early as then there were rivalries! In CHAPTER 5, Paul cautions them on immorality:(Paul's voice)It is widely reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of a kind not found even among pagans—a man living with his father's wife. 2And you are inflated with pride... 11But I now write to you not to associate with anyone named a brother, if he is immoral, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a robber, not even to eat with such a person. SPEAKER: In CHAPTER 6, he continues about immorality:(Paul's voice)9Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals 10nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. 13" Food for the stomach and the stomach for food," but God will do away with

both the one and the other. The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; SPEAKER: In Chapter 7, Paul has many reminders that address one's state of life - single or married. This message up to this day is relevant for us. Paul reminded the GALATIANS about loving and the need for the Holy Spirit's power in living a righteous life: (Chapter 5) (Paul's voice) 14For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, " You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. 19Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. 25If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. 26Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another. To the Ephesians Paul continued the message of a life of righteousness and the effect of anger in speech and actions (Chapter 4)(Paul's voice) 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, 27and do not leave room for the devil. 28The thief must no longer steal, but rather labor, doing honest work with his (own) hands, so that he may have something to share with one in need. 29No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear. 30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed <https://assignbuster.com/jesus-commissioned-his-apostles-theology-religion-essay/>

for the day of redemption. 31All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. 32(And) be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. **SPEAKER:** This same message of loving one another, holiness, uprightness, righteousness and living a new life with Christ is reiterated in his letters to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Hebrews and in his reminders to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon .

II. MORE REMINDERS FROM JOHN

The time span may have covered so many centuries, but the GOOD NEWS OF LOVE preached by the Apostles; lived and exemplified by the first Christians were still supposed to hold true as time passed. St. John, the Beloved Apostle's messages to the Churches of Asia in the Book of Revelations were also as appropriate in the succeeding centuries as when they were first written.

SPEAKER: To the Church of EPHESUS, John asks mostly -- Where is the love?

(powerpoint) 4Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. 5Realize how far you have fallen. Repent and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

SPEAKER: To the Church of SMYRNA, John reminds them of the developing evil ways-- the Devil's ways.

(powerpoint)9...I know the slander of those who claim to be Jews and are not, but rather are members of the assembly of Satan. 10Do not be afraid of

anything that you are going to suffer. Indeed, the devil will throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will face an ordeal for ten days. Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

SPEAKER: To the Church of PERGAMUM, John reiterated that they should guard against idolatry.

(powerpoint)14Yet I have a few things against you. You have some people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the Israelites: to eat food sacrificed to idols and to play the harlot. 15 Likewise, you also have some people who hold to the teaching of (the) Nicolaitans.

SPEAKER: To the Church of THYATIRA, John reminded them to guard against immorality and hypocrisy.

(powerpoint)20Yet I hold this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, who teaches and misleads my servants to play the harlot and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21I have given her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her harlotry. 22So I will cast her on a sickbed and plunge those who commit adultery with her into intense suffering unless they repent of her works. 23I will also put her children to death. Thus shall all the churches come to know that I am the searcher of hearts and minds and that I will give each of you what your works deserve.

SPEAKER: To the Church of SARDIS, John called for repentance and vigilance

(powerpoint)2Be watchful and strengthen what is left, which is going to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.

3Remember then how you accepted and heard; keep it and repent. If you are <https://assignbuster.com/jesus-commissioned-his-apostles-theology-religion-essay/>

not watchful, I will come like a thief, and you will never know at what hour I will come upon you.

SPEAKER: To the Church of PHILADELPHIA he asked them to be on guard against Satan's deception.

(powerpoint)9Behold, I will make those of the assembly of Satan who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying, behold I will make them come and fall prostrate at your feet, and they will realize that I love you. 10 Because you have kept my message of endurance, I will keep you safe in the time of trial that is going to come to the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

SPEAKER: To the Church of LAODICEA, John reminded them to make a firm stand and not to be apathetic.

(powerpoint) 'The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God's creation, says this: 15" I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. 16So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17For you say, 'I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,' and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

III. MORE THAN A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN

(creatives : Parade of Saints who established the orders – Benedict, Francis, Dominic, Ignatius, etc.; Men and Women Doctors of the Church. Song accompaniment: Prayer of St. Francis—Gregorian Chant style... Could they remain onstage, stand and leave after their century is done?)

After the Apostolic Age, there rose distinguished Catholic Christians who truly felt that it was their mission to continue to spread the Good News as

the Apostles did. Even in the midst of the conflicts, discords, turbulence and disturbances and despite not being of the majority, they persevered. They remained steadfast in spite of the fact that what they were preaching was for many people, counter-culture: counter to how the world worked and how many thought at their particular time or era. 1st - 5th century: Amidst the continuing persecutions against Christians; St. Ignatius, Bishop of Lyons developed a creed and established a theology of apostolic succession. His work primarily was Against the Heresies. St. Anthony of Egypt and St. Pachomus were hermits and monks of that time. It is during this time when the Nicene Creed was done; the Creed which we still use at this time. Emperor Constantine paved the way towards freedom to practice Christianity and the Blessed Virgin Mary was officially defined as THEOTOKOS - "Mother of God". Other Holy men and women of these times were St. Augustine, St. Monica, St. Leo the Great and St. Patrick of Ireland, among others. (creative: video of Santacruzán?) 6th - 10th century: Pagan practices increased during this period. Islam was established by Mohamed in Mecca (570-611AD). In the 10th century Feudalism was born, where the powerful Kings and Lords turned Europe into small states to easily protect their turf. This was the time when the Church was called to evangelize the barbarians. The 2nd Council of Nicea restored the veneration of Icons that was prohibited by Emperor Leo III. It was also here when Charlemagne began the alliance that would exist between Church and State for centuries. Great men who lived and exemplified righteousness were St. Benedict, St. Columban, Pope Gregory the Great and St. Boniface, among others. (creative: video Muslims in Mecca?) 11th - 15th century: This period marked many abuses that plagued the Church. Three of these grave abuses were: SIMONY - trading, buying and <https://assignbuster.com/jesus-commissioned-his-apostles-theology-religion-essay/>

selling of sacred things; the act of paying for sacraments and consequently for holy offices or for positions in the hierarchy of the church; NEPOTISM -- when a King or Lord gave a vacant religious office to one of their relatives regardless of merit; and LAY INVESTITURE -- when a King or Lord would make someone Bishop without the approval of Rome.

(creative: video of Brother Sun, Sister Moon – Francis removing his robe)

The Crusades started in the 11th century. The rise of Mendicants replaced the time of Monks and Hermits of the previous period. Two influential saints came from this time - Saints Francis of Assisi (Franciscans) and Dominic de Guzman (Order of Preachers). These mendicants renounced possessions and properties. They were renowned for their vow of poverty and desire to take the Gospel into the heart of Society. It is also in this era where the Albigensian sect blended Christian beliefs and practices with pagan beliefs and practices. It was during this time when God called upon St. Dominic and his followers. And primarily because of their preaching and life of poverty, many Albigensians were led out of heresy and into the fullness of truth. In the 14th century, the Papacy moved to France. During the Western schism, St. Catherine of Siena performed heroic acts of charity, caring for the sick and unfortunate. Her prayers brought about many miracles. One of her greatest accomplishments was to help Pope Gregory IX bring the Papacy back to Rome.

(creative: Joan of Arc, leading to battle, trial and execution)

The end of the 15th century saw the rise of St. Joan of Arc. She received messages from St. Michael the Archangel, St. Margaret and St. Catherine.

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She led a small French army successfully defeat the English in Orleans. She was captured by the English eventually, was tried and executed for being a heretic. In 1456, the Church declared her innocent of all charges. The Church's missionary outreach came through the Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites - 1st, 2nd and 3rd orders (Priests, Nuns and Laity). These orders embraced a life of poverty, contemplation and evangelization; which bore fruit for Christ and His Church. 16th - 19th century: The Jesuit order was established by Don Inigo Lopez de Recalde, better known as Ignatius de Loyola. During this period, many physical, intellectual and spiritual revolts still occurred. The Church faced a number of challenges that threatened its stability. Some of them were: Protestant Revolt; Jansenism - opposition to frequent communion, confession and prayers to the Saints and the Blessed Mother; Gallicanism - limiting the power of the Papacy and put that power in the hands of government; Febronianism - attempted to revive the heretical teaching that the Pope was subject to the authority of a Church Council; Josephism - named after Austrian Emperor Joseph II, did its best to transform the Austrian Church into an instrument of the government; It was also during this time when the Jesuits, who were already amassing a great amount of power, were expelled from a number of countries and in 1773 were finally suppressed by Clement XIV. (Summary of Catholic Church History, Revolution of Love. com)

IV. MORE CONFLICTS THROUGH GENERATIONS

(creative: Images of " pomp and circumstance", Crusades, Knight Templars, Borgias, Henry VIII, Martin Luther, Russia)

As already stated earlier, Simon Peter, on that first Pentecost said, " Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." The passage of time has proven that corruption has remained as " par for the course". A life of holiness and righteousness became more difficult to achieve from one generation to another. Let's look at the history of Catholicism again...After the Apostolic age, the number of Christians grew exponentially. From the initial 3000 baptized in the first Pentecost, thousands believed in Jesus as the Christ and the Gospels, primarily because of the evangelistic efforts of the Apostles and the missionary work of the disciples who followed after them; not to mention the legions of men and women who spread Christianity by word and example. But there was a downside to this phenomenal growth. By the end of the early Christian period, the Church had hundreds of Bishops. There was an overlapping of duties and responsibilities of overseers, elders, ministerial servants, priests, ministerial priests, presbyters, etc. There were so many titles... there was so much pomp to cover their so-called " circumstance". The growth rate forced Christian communities to evolve in order to adapt to the changes in the nature of the communities - in political, socio-economic areas, etc. Disputes regarding titles and roles of Church leaders became one of the major causes of schisms within the Christian Church. According to sociologist Rodney Stark, the number of Christians grew by approximately 40% a decade during the 1st and 2nd centuries alone. (Rodney Stark, Cities of God, Harper, 2006)As the number of Christians grew, the Christian

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communities became larger, more numerous and farther apart geographically. Compromises were reached. Form replaced substance. The passage of time moved some Christians farther from the original teachings of the Apostles. New interpretations came to be. Pagan rituals to appease new "barbarian" converts became part of Church rites. These led to the rise of teachings that were considered heterodox that sowed controversy and divisiveness within the Church and between Churches. A history of disagreements and differences dating to as early as the 2nd century led to the great schism between the East and West Churches in the 11th century. This led to two branches which later became known as the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western (Catholic) Church. Some of the differences were Ecclesiastical and theological. These were brought about by a breach through centuries and stemmed to a considerable extent from cultural and political factors. The conflicts did not end there. After the Great Schism of 1054, a split within the Roman Catholic Church lasted from 1378-1417. This was when two men simultaneously claimed to be the true pope. This schism was driven by politics rather than any theological disagreement. The decline of Christianity (Catholicism) could no longer be stopped. Many more reasons came about in the succeeding centuries: communism, social revolution, fundamentalism, rise of extremists, continuing power struggles, continuous building and protection of turf, just to name a few. (Rise and Fall of Christianity - Smashing the Sacred Myths, Robert Charles Stewart @2005)

V. CONCLUSION

When we read Deuteronomy 28: 1-68, we are told that if we heed and hearken to the voice of God, He will raise us high above the heavens and his

blessings will come upon us and overwhelm us. We are told that if we keep the Commandments of the Lord, God will affirm His blessings to " you, your barns, your undertakings." This was God's promise PROVIDED that we keep the Commandments of the Lord. God also said that " If we do not hearken to His voice..." curses will reign down upon us. The Church that Christ built and which the Apostles spread into the whole world may have been accursed because the next generations did not heed nor hearken to the voice of God; this despite the efforts and examples of the many Holy Men and Women who unwaveringly worked so very hard to spread God's Gospel of Love. There were also anointed leaders of the Church who did not remain faithful to their anointing. There were influential members of the Church who professed to be faithful to God and His edicts but did the contrary. They, too, did not pay heed nor hearken to God's Word. These people and their ilk misunderstood, whether deliberate or not, what God's message was. So many of those who promised to love God above all and one another failed miserably because they understood and followed selectively. History records the many instances when the Leaders and Members of the Church deviated from the original teachings of the Apostles. They rationalized. They intellectualized. They nitpicked. They preyed on man's weaknesses. They did not faithfully heed the continuous call to be holy and righteous. They periodically turned deaf ears to the constant reminders to remain faithful and loving. They looked for loopholes and took advantage of them—the rise of many opposing sects that stemmed from Catholicism manifests this. The call and the message have remained the same through time. The Book of Revelations says; 20" Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he

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with me. 21I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne. BUT in order for us to be one with the Lord, we have to remain faithful: 7" Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I will give the right to eat from the tree of life that is in the garden of God." (Book of Revelations, NAB) According to Church tradition, when the apostle John was an old man and had to be carried around by his disciples; he would always say, " Little children, love one another." The disciples who wearied of this reminder asked him, " Master, why do you always say this?" John would say " It is the Lord's command and if this alone be done, it is enough." (www.biblepath.com - the apostolic age)Was love enough? Let's look at the signs of the times... Paul's reminders remained unheeded. Living a life in the Holy Spirit that he taught as absolutely crucial to man was not perpetuated through the years and decades to come. Apparently, preaching about love was not enough... the constant reminders from the Apostles was no longer seen, felt nor practiced even as early as two to three centuries after their death and that of the disciples they sent. The Gospel messages became diluted. The mighty efforts of the holy men and women in the succeeding centuries seemed to go for naught. The Gospel of Love apparently was really not received as it should have been. It was not sustained and did not stand the test of time. It was clearly not enough to overcome corruption, differences of opinion, adversities, personal agendas and ambitions. The passage of centuries and signs of the times showed that love was not enough and because of this, the decline of Catholicism was the price that was paid.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: (flash onscreen)

How faithfully do I heed the voice of the LORD? In what instances are His words adverse to how I feel?

How do I hearken to His commandments? What causes me difficulties?

Do I fully manifest His message of love in my life? Am I selective in living out His message?

Prayer

Reflection Song: DAY BY DAY (Godspell)

DAY BY DAY, DAY BY DAY

OH DEAR LORD, THREE THINGS I PRAY

TO SEE THEE MORE CLEARLY

LOVE THEE MORE DEARLY

FOLLOW THEE MORE NEARLY

DAY BY DAY

(repeat all)

DAY BY DAY BY DAY BY DAY

Glory Be...