

The Anatomy of a Church (38)

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[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 11/23/14)

Fundamental Priorities of a Good Church

A. The Description of the Church, [1 Timothy 3:14-16](#)

[1 Timothy 3:14-16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴ I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;

¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

¹⁶ By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

[Matthew 16:18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸ “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

It's the only institution Jesus ever promised to build, the only one that He is building. And so we have to be committed to the church. But obviously not all churches are committed to what they should be. So let me give you some principles, okay? What you want to look for in a church. Not just now but certainly now and for the rest of your life. These are not unrealistic expectations. These are not methods, nothing to do with that. These are not formats. These have nothing to do with style. I've been all over the world, I've been in church from the high mountains of the Andes in Chile, South America, to a house church in China, to churches in the Middle East, to churches in Europe, to churches in Asia and Africa. I've been all over the world. Everywhere I've gone I've been in churches and I've seen every imaginable kind of style of church. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about substance. Don't look at style, it's seductive. It's, at best, style can only appeal to the flesh. **Substance is what you're after.**

The first thing you look for in a church is a high view of God....a high view of God. And this one could spend his entire life discussion...a high view of God. [Proverbs 9:10](#) says, “**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.**” Everything starts with fearing God. That's the beginning of everything. And that's crystal clear in Scripture. The holiness of God is the first and central element in the church. The glory of God, the exaltation of God.

In the Old Testament, this, of course, is established I think in the writings of Moses most specifically in [Leviticus 18](#) to [20](#). If you would look at that for a moment, this is just...there are a lot of places you could go but...we'll start...just to look at [Leviticus 18](#) for a moment.

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There's a principle that comes out of this very interesting text.

Leviticus 18:1-5 (NASB)

¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

² Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'I am the LORD your God.

³ 'You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.

⁴ 'You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God.

⁵ 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD.

etc. And goes on to talk about various other things.

Comes to **verse 30**,

Leviticus 18:30 (NASB)

³⁰ "Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the LORD your God."

This is the kind of thing the pagan world does. "Don't defile yourself. I am the Lord your God."

In **chapter 19**, repeats the same scenario.

Leviticus 19:1-4 (NASB)

¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

² Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

³ 'Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the LORD your God.

⁴ 'Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the LORD your God.

Verse 12, "I am the Lord."

Leviticus 19:12 (NASB)

¹² 'You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

Verse 14, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ 'You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.

Verse 16, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ 'You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.

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Verse 18, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

Verse 25, "I am the Lord your God," 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37.

Leviticus 19:25 (NASB)

²⁵ 'In the fifth year you are to eat of its fruit, that its yield may increase for you; I am the LORD your God.

Verse 28, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:28 (NASB)

²⁸ 'You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the LORD.

Verse 30, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:30 (NASB)

³⁰ 'You shall keep My sabbaths and revere My sanctuary; I am the LORD.

Verse 32, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:32 (NASB)

³² 'You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.

Verse 34, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:34 (NASB)

³⁴ 'The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

Verse 36, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:36 (NASB)

³⁶ 'You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt.

Verse 37, "I am the Lord,"

Leviticus 19:37 (NASB)

³⁷ 'You shall thus observe all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them; I am the LORD.'"

Always your conduct goes back to the fact that you have God for your God.

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In [verse 7](#) of [chapter 20](#), “You shall consecrate yourselves before...or therefore, and be holy for **I am the Lord** your God. Keep My statutes and practice them, **I am the Lord** who sanctifies you.”

[Leviticus 20:7-8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷ 'You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, **for I am the LORD your God.**

⁸ 'You shall keep My statutes and practice them; **I am the LORD who sanctifies you.**

And it goes on like that. Down into [verse 26](#) for example,

[Leviticus 20:26 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁶ 'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for **I the LORD** am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.

There's more of this in [chapter 21](#). There's more of it in [chapters 22](#), [chapter 23](#), [chapter 25](#), it goes on. Now what I'm saying to you is this, **the foundation of all conduct is built on your understanding of who your God is.** If you understand the glory and the holiness of God, that becomes the main motivation for how you live your life.

It was said by Paul, and it's a really profound insight, in [Romans chapter 10](#), it's worth remembering. It was said by the Apostle Paul of the Jews of Israel, this amazing statement, [Romans 10:3](#),

[Romans 10:1-3 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

³ For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

You know, this is really amazing...amazing. What was wrong with Israel? Why were they apostate? Why did they reject John the Baptist? Why did they reject Jesus? Why did they reject the Apostles? Why did they reject the gospel? Why did they execute their own Messiah? Weren't they religiously astute? Didn't they know the Old Testament? Hadn't they made commitments, particularly the Pharisees and the scribes, to a fastidious study of every single detail of the Law of God? How could they go so wrong? How could they reject their Messiah? How could they reject the gospel? How could they therefore reject the fulfillment of all that they had anticipated, promise to Abraham and to David? How could it happen?

And the bottom line is, [Romans 10:3](#), “**You didn't know about God's righteousness.**” Bottom line, they did not understand how righteous God was. Over and over again in the Old Testament God said, “**I'm holy...I'm holy...I'm holy.**” But they thought He was less holy than He was and they were more holy than they were. God being less than He was, and they being more than they were, they thought their righteousness was enough. It is always a flawed understanding of God that leads to iniquity.