

Positively

First of all, from Adam until Moses, the people of God appear to have been externally expressed in family congregations (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, the Children of Israel in Egypt). From Moses until Christ, the people of God were externally expressed in a twofold manner: first, as a religious community of professing believers in Jehovah, whose worship was governed by His laws and administered by His appointed religious officials; and second, as a political state ruled by Jehovah, governed by His laws, and administered by His appointed civic officials. From Moses until the Exile, all religious exercises (in the narrow sense) took place either at the Tabernacle or Temple, or in the home (although it is highly probable that local gatherings of believers met regularly under the leadership of the Levites for the purpose of hearing and understanding the Word, prayer, and singing of psalms). During the time of the Exile in Babylon, when the temple lay in ruins, these gatherings (called synagogues) were the centers of expression of religious exercises in the narrow sense; and appear to have developed into organized form, with officers and structured worship formats that were highly visible by the time of Christ.

Under the New Testament the people of God are externally expressed as a religious community, but not as a political entity (either a state, or a state within a state). At first, the professing community was administered only by the apostles chosen by Christ Himself. However, it soon became apparent that oversight of the temporal needs of the gathered community was necessary, and thus the apostles appointed the first deacons to administer this area of need. A little later, when the disciples (at first without the apostles) were scattered by persecution, and congregations were established in various parts of the empire, including Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, it became apparent that some kind of administrative oversight and leadership was necessary, and elders and deacons were appointed in these congregations, either by apostles, representatives of apostles, or by the people employing apostolically-formulated criteria for the appointment of these officers. Although worship under the New Testament is to take place primarily in the context of the gathered professing community, this does not rule out the appropriateness or utility of family or private worship.

Under the Old Testament, during the period from Adam to Moses, the head of the household appears to have been the administrator of religious exercises. During the period from Moses to the Exile, the administration of religious exercises was committed to divinely appointed religious officials, including priests and teaching Levites. During the period from the Exile to Christ, the administration of religious exercises connected with the Temple was in the hands of priests and Levites (once the Temple was rebuilt), but the administration of the religious exercises connected with the synagogues was in the hands of ruling elders (with one head elder), synagogue attendants, and teaching Levites.

Under the New Testament, the administration of religious exercises is committed to divinely appointed religious officials, including teaching elders (ministers in the technical sense), ruling elders, and deacons.

Second of all, in addition to these differences in external administration of religious exercises between the Old Testament professing religious community and the New Testament professing religious community, there are clear differences in the external form of religious exercises between the two professing religious communities.

Under the Old Testament, from Adam to Moses family and personal worship seems to have been fairly simple, centered mainly in believing contemplation of God and believing obedience to the revealed will of God, chiefly by means of sacrifices and offerings. From Moses to Christ corporate, family, and personal worship was centered mainly in the sacrifices and offerings connected with the Tabernacle and Temple, the celebration of the regular religious festivals, and the observance