

THE CHURCH

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

Introduction:

1. The New Testament uses many terms and concepts to describe the church of Christ.
 2. As members of the church, it is important for us to know what the church is – and what the Lord expects it to be.
 3. Thus, as we study these divine descriptions of the church, we will learn how we are to conduct ourselves individually and as a congregation of God's people.
 4. Before we discuss the specific terms of designation, there are a few fundamental facts that must be considered.
 5. First, we must understand the role of the church in God's plan of redemption...
- I. The Church and the Wisdom of God
- A. The book of Ephesians focuses upon the church and its place in God's plan of redemption.
 - B. It shows the church to be the revelation of the mystery of the ages (3:1-7).
 - C. It shows the church to be the body of Christ in which fellowship is possible (3:8-9).
 - D. Thus, the wisdom of God in planning the church is revealed (3:10).

Notes from Ephesians Study...

- A. The goal of God's plan was to reveal His wisdom to all creation.
 1. This was also the purpose of Paul's preaching of the Gospel.
 2. Furthermore, it was the purpose of creation.
- B. The "principalities and powers" are the angelic beings that dwell in the spiritual realm.
 1. The angels have an interest in man and his salvation (Luke 15:10; 1 Peter 1:12; cf. Daniel 8:13; 12:5-6).
 2. Yet, the truth and purpose of God's plan had not been revealed unto them.
 3. They only learned of it as it unfolded in the history of the world.
- C. The culmination of that plan was the church.
 1. The church was purposed (Acts 3:12-26; Matthew 25:34; Eph. 1:4).
 2. The church was planned (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:26-29).
 3. The church was prophesied (Isaiah 2:1-4 [Heb. 3:6; 12:22-29]; Amos 9:11-12 [Acts 15:13-17]; Isaiah 66:18-24 [1 Peter 2:9-10]; Isaiah 49:6 [Acts 13:47]; 2 Samuel 7:12-17 [1 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 16:18-19]; Daniel 2:44 [Luke 1:22-23; Col. 1:1, 13]; Zechariah 6:12-13 [Heb. 6; Acts 2:29-36]).
- D. All of this reveals the wisdom of God; for, no man could have conceived and carried out such a plan.
- E. God's wisdom is manifold.
 1. This word means, "Variegated; multicolored; many-tinted or hued."
 2. In the LXX, this word was used for Joseph's coat (Genesis 37:3).
 3. It refers to the many facets of the wisdom of God – all of which are revealed in the church.
 4. This word is used only here; but, its root is found several times (Matt. 4:24; Mark 1:34; Luke 4:40; 2 Tim. 3:6; Heb. 2:3-4; 13:9; Jam. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:6; 4:10).

Biblical Description of the Church

Lesson One

Ephesians 3:11-12

- F. Thus, the church reveals the wisdom of God.
 - 1. We must demonstrate fellowship with God.
 - 2. We must demonstrate fellowship with one another.
 - 3. We must seek fellowship with the lost – not by compromise but conversion.

- II. The Church and the Purpose of God
 - A. The fact that the church would reveal the manifold wisdom of God was God's eternal purpose.
 - B. His purpose was eternal.
 - 1. As long as God has had a plan for the redemption of man, the church has been a part of it.
 - 2. The church was not an afterthought or contingent due to the postponement of another plan or purpose.
 - 3. Throughout the dispensations of time, God worked in the history of the world to bring the church into existence – as fulfillment of His plan.
 - C. The church was the purpose of God.
 - 1. This Greek word for 'purpose' is found 12 times in the New Testament.
 - 2. Four times, it is translated as "showbread" (Matthew 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4; Hebrews 9:2).
 - a. The root idea of this word is, "A setting forth; placing of a thing in view."
 - b. Thus, the showbread was "the bread of setting before," or "the bread placed in view before God."
 - i. The Jews made bread every day.
 - ii. But, the showbread was planned and purposed for its place in the Tabernacle and Temple.
 - c. When it came to the redemption and salvation of man, God "set forth" a plan.
 - d. Thus, much like the showbread was a memorial, the church is a memorial to God's wisdom by revealing His eternal plan.
 - 3. Eight times, it is translated as "purpose" (Acts 11:23; 27:13; Romans 8:28; 9:11; Ephesians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; 3:10).
 - D. The word "purposed" means, "To make, do, accomplish, produce, etc."
 - E. God's eternal purpose was made and accomplished in Jesus – our Lord.
 - 1. The existence of the church is impossible without Christ.
 - 2. Thus, the church and the Christ cannot be separated from one another.
 - F. If the church is the eternal purpose of God, how can some...
 - 1. Claim that it is an 'afterthought' or 'contingency plan'?
 - 2. Claim that it is unimportant? ("Christ, not the church")
 - 3. Claim that denominationalism is acceptable?
 - 4. Claim that "one church is as good as another"?
 - 5. Claim that membership is unnecessary?
 - 6. Claim that faithfulness is not required?
 - 7. Claim that service is not needed?
 - G. As members of the church, we must live to manifest God's eternal purpose.

- III. The Church and the Son of God
 - A. The wisdom and purpose of God came together and were revealed in the church.
 - B. Yet, this was accomplished "in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Biblical Description of the Church

Lesson One

Ephesians 3:11-12

- C. The church does not exist apart from Jesus.
- D. To preach the church is to preach Christ (cf. Acts 8:5, 12).
- E. To be in fellowship with Christ, one must be in the church (cf. Eph. 5:23).