

THE CHURCH AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST

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...
 - a. Eternal purpose
 - b. Connected to the crucifixion

I. The Shame of the Cross

- A. Historically, the cross was an instrument of shame, torture, and death reserved for the vilest of criminals.
 1. Crucifixions were public for the shaming of the offender.
 2. They were meant to be a deterrent to others.
- B. Death upon a cross was considered to be the most horrible that a man could suffer.
- C. Before the crucifixion, several other means of punishment were usually employed.
 1. The guilty person was often beaten or scourged – whipped severely.
 2. The offender was forced to carry or drag the crossbeam to the place of crucifixion.
 3. Along the route, bystanders would mock and spit upon the criminal.
- D. At the place of crucifixion, the condemned man was stripped of his garments and his hands were affixed to the cross (by ropes or nails).
- E. When lifted up on the cross, his feet were then fastened to it as a means of support to prolong the slow suffering and death of crucifixion.
 1. For many, death would not come for several days.
 2. To hasten the death of a criminal, his legs could be broken.
- F. Imagine the sinless and pure Son of God enduring such a shameful and agonizing death! (Cf. Phil. 2:8; Heb. 12:2)
 1. Imagine living the life that He did – knowing that crucifixion awaited Him at the end of it (cf. Matt. 16:21; 26:1-2)!
 2. Imagine betraying the Son of God to such a death (Matt. 26:47-50)!
- G. Knowing what was to come, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper to memorialize His death (Matt. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 11:26).
- H. Knowing what was to come, Jesus agonized and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:38-39; Luke 22:44).
- I. Knowing what was to come, Jesus remained silent before His accusers – only stating the truth that He was the Son of God (Matt. 26:59-66).
- J. Then, Jesus willingly submitted Himself to death upon the cross.
 1. He was spat upon, mocked, and beaten (Matt. 26:67-68).
 2. He was denied by His followers (Matt. 26:69-75).
 3. He was rejected for a thief and murderer (Matt. 27:17, 22-23).

Biblical Description of the Church

Lesson Two

Acts 20:28

4. He was scourged (Matt. 27:26).
 5. He was mocked with a crown of thorns (Matt. 27:27-31).
 6. He was crucified (Matt. 27:35).
 7. He died (Matt. 27:50).
- K. On the cross, Jesus suffered terribly (Psalm 22:1-20).
- II. The Blood of the Cross
- A. In His suffering, Jesus changed the cross from an image of shame to a picture of love and grace (cf. John 3:16).
 - B. By shedding His blood upon the cross, Jesus purchased redemption for man (John 19:34).
 1. His blood ratified the New Covenant (Matt. 26:28).
 2. His blood is the propitiation for sin (Rom. 3:25).
 3. His blood brings justification (Rom. 5:9).
 4. His blood creates communion (1 Cor. 10:16).
 5. His blood gives forgiveness of sin (Eph. 1:7).
 6. His blood restores fellowship (Eph. 2:13, 16).
 7. His blood redeems (Col. 1:14).
 8. His blood makes peace (Col. 1:20).
 9. His blood removes the Old Covenant (Col. 2:14).
 10. His blood gives eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12).
 11. His blood purges (Heb. 9:14).
 12. His blood grants boldness (Heb. 10:19).
 13. His blood sanctifies (Heb. 13:12).
 14. His blood cleanses (1 John 1:7).
 15. His blood washes away sin (Rev. 1:5; 7:14; cf. Acts 22:16).
 16. His blood grants victory (Rev. 12:11).
 - C. Therefore, the blood of Christ is precious (1 Peter 1:19)!
- III. The Church and the Cross
- A. Yet, that same blood of Jesus – shed upon the cross – also purchased the church (Acts 20:28).
 - B. Thus, when one's sins are washed away by Jesus' blood, that same blood makes him a part of the Lord's church (cf. Acts 2:38, 41, 47).
 - C. If the blood is precious, then that which was purchased by the blood is just as precious!
 - D. We must learn to love and to treasure the church as much as the cross of Christ (cf. Heb. 10:25-31)!
 - E. The church of Christ cannot be separated from the cross of Christ!