

Viewpoints Of The Church #2

Introduction. We saw earlier five different statements in Ephesians which describe the church. We further remarked that Christians ought to never lose sight of what the church really is about. A study of the book of Ephesians is beneficial because it stresses the church and doctrines central to the church more than any other book in the New Testament. Let's look at six more viewpoints of the Lord's church.

I. ***The Church Is A Holy Temple (Ephesians 2:20-22)***

- A. The church is made up of living stones to become a temple or a dwelling place of God (1 Peter 2:5-9). Therefore, we ought to view ourselves as holy and consecrated to the service of God. As priests, Christians offer up spiritual sacrifices with their bodies (Hebrews 13:15-16; Romans 12:1-2).
- B. Different materials may be used in the framing and construction of a house, but they are all fitted together to form a durable and beautiful edifice.
 - 1. So in the church the different materials of the Jews and Gentiles, who were formerly separated and discordant, now become united and form a harmonious society.
 - 2. They believe the same doctrines, worship the same God, practice the same holiness, and look forward to the same heaven.
 - 3. Such meshing of persons adds meaning and beauty to the continuously growing spiritual house of God.
- C. The word for "temple" refers to a shrine or an inner sanctuary. Neither the meeting place of the church nor any other physical place is special to God in the gospel age, except as Christians are gathered there to worship and praise His name (John 4:19-21).

II. ***The Church Is The Manifestation Of God's Wisdom (Ephesians 3:1-13)***

- A. The mystery, which was not made known to men in previous generations, has now been revealed. The manifold, or many variegated, wisdom of God is now made known through the church. This calls attention to the infinite diversity and sparkling beauty of the wisdom of God.
- B. It was not enough that God's wisdom was amply shown in the physical creation. God's most dramatic display of wisdom was in the spiritual creation. By what it is, it serves as a school to teach God's wisdom to the hosts of the spirit realm.
- C. This is like a panoramic view passing before the mind which excites admiration. There was wisdom manifested in the plan, the selection of

the Redeemer, the incarnation, the atonement, and the renewing of the heart and the sanctification of the soul. God's wisdom is not seen in our imperfect human activity, but in the infinite plan of God. The rulers and authorities in the heavenly places can now see the evidence of God's wisdom.

- D. The preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ and His having been, from all eternity, the focal center of God's redemptive purpose are affirmed in this verse. The church is in accordance with the eternal purpose of God. Teaching which makes the church an "afterthought" (as in Premillennialism) is false teaching.

III. ***The Church Is The Exhibition Of God's Glory (Ephesians 3:20-21)***

- A. Paul pauses to utter an ascription of praise in the midst of his argumentation. "Exceeding abundantly" is one of Paul's "super-superlatives" coined to express God's capacity to transcend all that we ask or think. There is no limit to the ability of God. His power is exhaustless. God can do much more than is necessary and then go beyond that!
- B. "Glory" is given unto God in the church and in Christ Jesus. "Glory" should never be given to men (Psalm 115:1). "Glory" means "praise, honor." The glory of God is the worthiness of God -- the presence of God in the fullness of His attributes in some place or everywhere.
- C. So the church is to be the instrument by which the glory of God would be shown; and it was by the church that His praise would be celebrated. To do things in a way so as to give the church the glory is wrong. Those who are outside the church cannot give proper glory to God!

IV. ***The Church Is The One Body (Ephesians 4:1-6)***

- A. If unity is ever going to prevail, saints must walk worthy of their calling. It is a heavenly calling. It includes humility, gentleness or meekness, patience, forbearance, and diligence. Paul gives the example of unity in vss. 4-6. Unity is expressed in the idea of seven "ones."
- B. Because the church is the body, Paul now declares that there is just one. This agrees with what the Lord had said earlier (Matthew 16:18). When religion is divided into many groups with different forms of worship, different rites and ceremonies, different standards of morality and righteousness, different names, etc., there can be no unity.
- C. Jesus did not die on the cross for all these different religious groups. Jesus died so that we might all be one (John 17:20-21). Christ came to join all who would be saved under one rule in one body, the church. By saying that there is "one body" Paul is declaring a unity of member-

ship among Christians in a single church which shines as a great light pointing the lost to Christ.

V. *The Church Is An All-Sufficient Institution (Ephesians 4:11-16)*

- A. Christ gave "gifts" to men in order that the church may be fully equipped to carry out His purpose. These gifts included apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These functionaries are specific workers in the kingdom given specific work to achieve and execute.
- B. These "gifts" perfect the saints so that the church might do its work and the body might be edified or built up. Members of the church must press forward unto perfection and the fulness of Christ.
- C. The true purpose is that we are no longer thrown around by the false doctrines of men. There are two things which contribute to the seduction of Christians away from the faith:
 - 1. The natural instability of many persons who are captivated and swayed by false teaching (James 1:6).
 - 2. The deceivers themselves who appear in sheep's clothing but are truly ravaging wolves (Matthew 7:15).
- D. The Lord desires that we hold to and obey the truth. When we all "speak the truth" in wholesomeness and integrity, then the body will all be joined and fitted together properly and in love. But each member must contribute his full extent to the growth of the body. No one is excused and no one is useless.

VI. *The Church Is The Bride Of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33)*

- A. In this marriage figure, Christ is the husband and the church is His bride. The church is to be subject to Christ as head. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. The sanctification mentioned is the original consecration of the alien sinner to God's service at the time of conversion. We are cleansed by baptism, or the washing of water, in response to the preaching of the gospel or "with the word" (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18).
- B. Purity is imperative. The Christian is to avoid all moral or spiritual stain and defect (2 Peter 2:13; Psalm 118:1). As the bride of Christ the church has the responsibility to be faithful to Christ in all things, and to bear fruit. Observe how this ties in with point number one. Paul has made a "full circle" in thought.
- C. Just as Christ provides for every need of the church, nourishing and blessing her in all times and places by all means, so also the husband is obligated to make the care of his wife his principal concern and most urgent business in his life. In loving her, he is, after all, only loving himself.

D. So Paul makes known a comparison between marriage and spiritual union with Christ. This comparison is intelligible when exposed. It is great and wonderful when comprehended through the words of divine scripture.

Conclusion. I pray that we have seen the importance of the church in God's eternal purpose. Let us never take this for granted or overlook the significance of the church. If you obey the gospel, the Lord will add you to this wonderful institution (Acts 2:47). If you have committed a transgression of God's law, then be restored back to God by your confession and repentance. Demonstrate to God by your faithfulness the gratitude that is due Him.