

# The Mission Of The Church

**Introduction.** In Jesus Christ, we have the fullness of the Godhead summed up. Jesus is able to supply every spiritual need of man. The church is the fullness of Christ and is made up of those who have been “called out” of the world by the gospel of Christ (Ephesians 1:15-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). The citizens of the kingdom of Christ have assembled themselves under His authority to do His will. The church is the most wonderful organization on the face of the earth. Because of the preciousness of the church, we need to have a full knowledge of the church. This lesson emphasizes the church as a divine arrangement with a divine purpose. This fact should dispel from every mind the common concept that the church was planned by human wisdom, brought into existence by human will or ruled by human authority.

## I. ***The Church Is The Result Of God’s Eternal Purpose***

- A. The manifestation of God’s wisdom which had remained a mystery from eternity is now made known in the preaching of the gospel of Christ and in the very existence of the church as a part of God’s plan (Ephesians 3:8-10).
- B. Such was the purpose and plan of God from eternity (Ephesians 3:11). The church was God’s plan from before the foundation of the world. That plan is carried out in Jesus Christ. Is this not a wonderful attestation to the importance of the church?
- C. God is the supreme architect of the church.
  1. The pattern is divine and is the result of divine wisdom and planning. Just as the strength and beauty of a great building manifests the wisdom of the architect; and a great feat of engineering, such as a great bridge, evidences the wisdom of the engineer; so the church evidences in its very nature and existence the wisdom of the God of Heaven who planned it.
  2. The pattern represents not only divine planning but divine will which cannot be disregarded. Note these examples:
    - a) God gave Noah a pattern for the ark (Genesis 6:13-22). Noah followed the pattern and was saved (Genesis 7:1-5; 1 Peter 3:20; Hebrews 11:7).
    - b) Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle according to the pattern God gave him (Exodus 25:9-40; 26:30; Numbers 8:4).
    - c) God gave the pattern for bearing the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:14; 37:5). David did not follow the divine pattern and Uzzah lost his life when he touched the ark (2 Samuel 6:3). David acknowledged his sin (1 Chronicles 15:11-15).

- D. The church was built by Christ in harmony with God's purpose and pattern (Hebrews 8:1-5; Matthew 16:18).
- E. The church is ruled by divine will and authority (Matthew 28:18-20). Christ is the head over "all things to the church." There is no other authority in the church but His (Ephesians 1:18-23).

## II. ***The Church Follows A Divine Plan In Accomplishing God's Purposes (Ephesians 4:11)***

- A. Apostles and prophets -- Their work was of divine revelation or making known the will of God (Acts 1:2; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 3:3-5). We have their work preserved in the providence of God in the New Testament and it is accessible in its completeness.
- B. Evangelists -- Their work was propagating or proclaiming the gospel (Romans 10:14; 2 Timothy 4:1-2, 5).
- C. Pastors and teachers -- Their work was within the congregation. Pastors, bishops, and elders were all the same. Each local church is to have a plurality of pastors (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Acts 13:1). The New Testament authorizes no organization smaller than or larger than the local church for the functioning of the saints in the work of the church.
- D. Divine wisdom has given this arrangement through which the church is to accomplish its divine mission. Each of these gifts have in common the function of teaching. From this one should be able to draw the conclusion about the main purpose of the church.

## III. ***The Church Has Been Given A Divine Program Of Work Or Activity (Ephesians 4:12)***

- A. "For the perfecting of the saints." The word "equipping" means "to place the parts of any machine or body in their proper order and to unite them in such a manner as to render the machine or body complete." This indicates then what we call the work of edifying the body -- the work of educating or training Christians in right living and acceptable service to God.
  - 1. The church is edified by the strengthening, growth, and development of its members. The purpose of every child of God is to do all things for the purpose of edification (1 Corinthians 14:26; Romans 14:19).
  - 2. The proper objective of its members is not numerical growth alone but the development of spiritual strength (Ephesians 6:10-18). We are no longer to be children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14-15). We are no longer babes to be fed on milk but mature (Hebrews 5:12-14).

3. We must grow in godliness and ability to overcome temptation and lead pure lives. We must establish our hearts unblameable in holiness (1 Thessalonians 3:13). We must build up ourselves on our most holy faith (Jude 17-23). We must resist the devil and draw nigh to God (James 4:7-10).
  4. The congregation may edify its members through worship (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 2:5; Colossians 3:16), through faithful teaching, by proper discipline (Titus 3:10; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Romans 16:17-18), and through proper love and consideration of the members one for another (Ephesians 4:29-32; Philippians 2:3-4; 4:2; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 12:25).
- B. "For the work of the ministry." Here "service" comes from the Greek *diakonia*. It is the word translated "deacon." This includes ministering to the poor saints and it also includes any service rendered in behalf of anyone needing help physically or spiritually.
1. The work of benevolence was never used as a means of introducing the gospel. Benevolence is the fruit of the gospel, not the means of propagating it. Food and clothing were never offered by the early church as a means of getting people to listen and accept the gospel.
  2. Much of the teaching in the New Testament on this subject is directed to individuals and not to the congregation (1 Timothy 6:17-18; 1 John 3:17-18; Matthew 25:31-46; Galatians 6:10; James 1:27).
  3. There is a work of benevolence which churches of Christ can and should do in harmony with God's will. Congregations can provide for those among their number who are needy saints (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37; 11:27-29; Romans 15:31; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12-13).
  4. The church never set up a benevolent institution to care for the needy. No church handled the money of any other church or became the messenger of any other church. Secular agencies engage in benevolent work with God's approval and in harmony with His plan while only the church is to preach the gospel.
- C. "For the edifying of the body of Christ." This is the same word used by Jesus in Matthew 16:18 (*oikodomeo*) when he promised to "build my church." Paul uses the word here in the sense of planting, establishing where it is not known, and enlarging the borders thereof by bringing others into it by the preaching of the gospel. It sets forth that a primary work of the church is evangelizing the world with the gospel.
1. It has been God's plan from eternity to save the world by the preaching of the gospel. All mankind is in need of salvation (Romans 3:23). The gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16; James 1:21).

2. The church is God's agency in preaching the gospel. The church was taught to observe the commandments of Christ and the apostles (Matthew 28:18-20). The members of the church is compared to sowers in the world (Matthew 13:3-9).
3. Local congregations were the only organization through which this work was done in first century times. The church at Thessalonica was a wonderful example to other churches in evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:3-8). The church in Philippi was also outstanding in this work (Philippians 1:3-5; 2:25-30; 4:14-20).
4. Congregational activity in evangelism did not preclude individual Christian activity in such work. We have many examples of private teaching (Acts 5:42; 18:24-26; 20:20). Evangelists went out of their own accord preaching the gospel (Acts 8:5).
5. The church as the only organization designed by the wisdom of God for the work of evangelism. When God has given a specific arrangement for this purpose, when men form another they add to God's word. Any additional order for such work arranged by the wisdom and will of man would be a rejection of God's ways.

#### IV. ***What The Mission Of The Church Is Not***

- A. The mission of the church is not social. The gospel of Christ is not a "social gospel." The church of the Lord is not a "social institution." While the gospel, with its principles of truth, will work social reform, it does so by reforming the individual's manner of thinking and living. The church did not become a social institution or the center of social activity. It did not wage a campaign for social reform or social equality.
  1. Paul taught that if the gospel found a man either slave or master, it was to make a better one out of him (1 Corinthians 7:20-22). He also taught that the home is to be the center of social activity -- not the church (1 Corinthians 11:20-22).
  2. The increasing tendency to socialize church services and church work by having "fellowship banquets," a social hour with refreshments after the service for various groups, a church fellowship hall or cafeteria to entertain visitors and accommodate social functions, serving refreshments between Bible classes and worship to attract greater attendance is purely sectarian and leads directly to what Paul condemned upon the part of the Corinthians.
  3. Certainly there is good to be derived from Christians associating and eating together but it should be kept on the basis of home and individual Christian activity and not church activity.
- B. The mission of the church is not to provide and serve as guide in recreational activity. Church basketball teams, church-sponsored skating

parties, facilities for recreational games, etc., are a perversion of the resources of the church. It is not the business of the church to furnish entertainment or recreation for either young or old.

- C. The mission of the church is not to make money. The church has no business in business. God gave the pattern for raising the funds to do the work of the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). It should be respected. Merchandising, manufacturing, farming, or any other economic endeavor is outside the function and work of the Lord's church. All legitimate business should be kept in the field of individual enterprise.
- D. The mission of the church is not to serve as a school of domestic relations. Whatever the Bible teaches should be taught whenever and wherever it is needed by any Christian and by the church. But parent education, psychology, sociology and such related subjects that are not taught in the word of God are not the task of the church.
- E. The mission of the church is not to teach secular subjects such as science, mathematics, history, literature, etc. This does not come within the scope of the mission and work of the church and should be made no part of its work.
- F. The mission of the church is not political. God ordained civil government to meet all such issues and resolve them and they should be left there (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). The church is not a platform arena for political posturing.

**Conclusion.** No one has the right to take away from the energy, strength, zeal, or resources of the church of our Lord to serve human aims or purposes. The church should be kept faithful to the divine mission that was God's purpose from eternity for her to serve. It is the all-sufficient instrument of God to carry out His purpose. If we deny the adequacy of the church to do the work God has assigned, we admit that the saints have not been perfected, and this in turn argues that Christ did not give the necessary gifts to get the job done. Such thinking is a serious blow to the wisdom of God.