

The Church: God's Eternal Purpose

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10f).

Two thousand years before Jesus was born, God promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his seed (Gen. 22:15). The promised seed was Jesus (Gal. 3:16). The promised blessing was *"the turning away every one of you from your iniquities"* (i.e., salvation, Acts 3:26). The result of that blessing is the church for to the church are added the saved because Christ is the savior of the body (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23). The church is the called out (1 Pet. 2:9); Christ's body (Eph. 1:22f); God's flock (Acts 20:28); the temple (1 Cor. 3:16); God's family (1 Tim. 3:15); the kingdom (Mt. 16:18-20) and Christ's bride (Eph. 5:23). In being these things, through God's eternal purpose, it offers to man that which no church built and designed by man can do. We are told in many places that Christ died for our sins; that He purchased the church with His blood (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Acts 20:28). Christ alone was the fitting sacrifice, He alone could offer Himself as a sinless, spotless Lamb. There is no man who can do what Jesus did. Churches designed and built by men are powerless to remove the sins of men. Membership in such a church offers no real profit of an eternal nature to those who are members thereof.

Jesus said, *"Every plant which my heavenly father planteth not, shall be rooted up"* and *"In vain do they worship men, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Mt. 15:13, 9). The psalmist said, *"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it"* (127:1). Often a new denomination begins and is added to the list of hundreds of existing ones. To what profit? Jeremiah said, *"My people have committed two evils against me. They have rejected me the fountain of living waters and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water"* (Jer. 2:13).

God's eternal purpose was that Christ build His church (Mt. 16:18). Men may imitate Him by building their own and millions may follow them, but it is all to no avail. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life. No man goes to the Father, save through Him (Jn. 14:6)!

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