

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session XXV

April 10, 2011

“The Church”:

The “Body” and “Bride” Of Jesus Christ!

Part One: “What Is The Church?”

“The importance of the Church can scarcely be overstated. It is that which God purchased with the blood of His own Son (Acts 20:28). It is that which Christ loves, nourishes, and cherishes (Eph. 5:29,29), and that which He shall present to Himself blameless in all her glory one day (Eph. 5:27). Building His Church constitutes Christ’s principal work in the world today (Matt. 16:18) through His giving of spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:12). Thus the exercise of those gifts by Believers aligns us with what Christ is doing today.”

--Charles C. Ryrie

A. The Unique Place of the Apostle Paul in the Revelation of “Church” Truth.

*“Two separate, dissimilar, and unmistakable ‘**revelations**’ were given to the Apostle Paul, namely:*

- 1) that, through the death and resurrection of Christ, a perfect and eternal salvation into a heavenly state is provided for, and offered to, Jew and Gentile alike and on the sole condition of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). . . . The unique and incomparable character of the Gospel is directly declared by the Apostle when he says by inspiration that it is a specific ‘**revelation**’, and is implied in the warnings which demand the preservation of its purity by those who proclaim it.*
- 2) Just as definitely and as supernaturally a **second ‘revelation’** was given to the Apostle Paul and this disclosure concerns the divine purpose of this present age. It is the subject of Ecclesiology. He writes, ‘For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery . . . that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel’ (Eph. 3:1-3,6).”*

--Lewis Sperry Chafer

*“That the Gentiles were to be saved was no mystery (Rom. 9:24-33; 10:19-21). The **mystery** (‘hid in God’) was the divine purpose to make of Jew and Gentile **a whole new thing** – **‘the Church, which is His (Christ’s) body,’** formed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:12-13) and in which the earthly distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears (Eph. 2:14-15; Col 3:10-11). The revelation of this **‘mystery’**, which was foretold but not explained by Christ (Matt. 16:18), was committed to Paul. **In his writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the Church.**”*

--C.I. Scofield

*“Just as God chose Moses to be revelator to Israel of all connected with the Law dispensation; so God chose Saul of Tarsus to be the revelator and unfold of the great body of doctrine for this age; those mighty truths connected with our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, and His ascended Person. All the **‘mysteries’** or **‘secrets’** revealed to God’s people in this dispensation by the Holy Ghost are revealed by Paul. Finally, Paul is the great unfold of the great company of God’s elect, called the **‘Church’**, the **‘Body of Christ’** – **members of Christ Himself.**”*

--William R. Newell

B. Definition.

1. The Greek Word: “ekklesia”.

*“The English word **Church** translates the Greek word ekklesia, which is from ek, meaning ‘out of’, and kaleo, which means ‘to call’, hence the Church is ‘a called out group.’”*

--Paul Enns

2. Biblical Use:

“Ekklesia appears 114 times in the New Testament – 3 times in the gospels, and 111 times in the epistles. In the gospels it appears only in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17 (twice). The latter two occurrences are probably used in the non-technical sense of a Jewish congregation. Thus in a technical sense, ekklesia is used only once in the gospels, and in that passage it is a prophetic reference to the Church. This helps establish the fact that the Church began after the ascension as recorded in the book of Acts and is a particularly Pauline doctrine.”

--Paul Enns

3. Conclusion:

*“The word ekklesia, however, does not indicate the nature of the called out group; it can be used in a technical sense of the New Testament Church, or it can be used in a nontechnical sense of any kind of group. . . . Most often, however, the word is used in a technical sense to designate the New Testament Church, **a group of ‘called-out’ Believers in Jesus Christ.**”*

--Paul Enns

C. Prophetic Statements Concerning the “Birth” of the Church.

1. Observation: There is no mention of the “Church” as the Body of Christ in the Old Testament.

--The ‘**Mystery**’ character of the one body was unknown in Old Testament times.

- a. “By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.”
Ephesians 3:4-5

“Chapter 3 of Ephesians defines the ‘**Church**’ as a sacred secret, hitherto unrevealed, which provides for the forming of a new Body by making Gentiles ‘fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.’ There is no ground for contention about whether the ‘promise in Christ by the gospel’ is a note never sounded before. **It is new to Jew as it is to Gentile.** . . . According to verse 5, this Pauline revelation is the unfolding of a ‘**mystery**’, or ‘**sacred secret**’, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. No better definition of a N.T. ‘**mystery**’ will be found than that set forth in this context. **A N.T. ‘mystery’ is a truth hitherto withheld, or ‘hid in God’ (v. 9), but now revealed.**”

--Lewis Sperry Chafer

“That the Church is a new purpose of God could not be more clearly stated than it is in verses 3-9, yet certain schools of theology contend that the Church in her present form is but a continuation of God’s one purpose from the beginning of the human family. They speak of an ‘O.T. Church’ and seek to relate this to the one Body which constitutes the N.T. revelation. The fact that Jews are now invited into fellowship in the one Body with Gentiles is no warrant for belief the O.T. saints are included in this new divine purpose.”

--Lewis Sperry Chafer

- b. “Of this Church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the Word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints.”

Colossians 1:25-26

2. Prophetic Statements Made by Jesus Christ:

a. Matthew 16:18.

"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

"During His earthly ministry our Lord announced that He would do a new thing in building His Church (Matt. 16:18). 'I will build' is clearly future tense, indicating that this was something Christ had not yet done up to that time. . . . What was the Lord's relationship to the Church since during His earthly life it was not yet in operation?"

In one word, He was the Founder. It is His Church (Matt. 16:18). He is the Foundation (I Cor. 3:11).

- 1) As Founder He chose the disciples, Eph. 2:20;*
- 2) As Founder He taught the disciples, John 13-17;*
- 3) As Founder He also became the cornerstone by His death and resurrection, Acts, 4:11; Eph. 2:20;*
- 4) As Founder He also was the One who sent the Holy Spirit who activated the Church into a functioning entity, Acts 4:8.*

What is the 'Rock' on which the Church is built? (Matt. 16:18) Some (Roman Catholic Church) understand it to refer to Peter. If so, Christ was playing on the words petros (Peter) and petra (rock). The first word is 'masculine' and means a stone, while the second is 'feminine' and means a massive rock. Because of these differences in words and genders, it seems unlikely that the reference is to Peter."

--Charles C. Ryrie

"If Peter is not the 'Rock', then what is? If we stick to the context, the obvious answer is that the rock is Peter's confession that Christ is the Son of the living God, the truth on which the Church is founded." --William MacDonald

"He (Jesus) said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Matt. 16:15-16

Note: We understand the 'Rock' to be Peter's confession of Christ in v.16.

b. Acts 1:5.

“For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

*“In Acts 1:5 Jesus stated, ‘You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ This indicates the work of the Holy Spirit in placing Believers into union with Christ had not yet begun – but was anticipated imminently. The context clarifies the event and indicates it began at Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). When Peter reported what had happened in Cornelius’ house in Caesarea, he indicated to the Jews in Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles just as He had on the Jews ‘at the beginning’ (Acts 11:15). This latter phrase identifies the beginning point of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit and thus identifies the beginning of the formation of the New Testament Church. **The Church began at Pentecost (Acts 2).**”*

--Paul Enns

D. Important Distinctives of the “Church”.

1. In Relation to “Israel”:

a. “The Church is a separate entity from Israel and remains distinct from Israel.

--Israel always means a physical descendants of Jacob.

b. Paul retains a distinction between Israel and the Church.

--In warning Believers not to offend others, he mentions ‘Jews’, ‘Greeks’, and the ‘Church’ (I Cor. 10:32) Also see: Acts 3:12; 4:8;10; 5:21,31,35; 21:19.”

--Paul Enns

2. In Relation to the “Kingdom”:

a. “Some Christians believe that the Church is synonymous with the Kingdom and that the Church inaugurates the Kingdom.

--This is a misunderstanding of the word kingdom . . . The basic meaning of ‘kingdom’ involves three things: a ruler, a people who are ruled, and a territory over which they are ruled.

b. The Church is not the Kingdom.

--The Church exists in this present age, whereas the Kingdom, which is future, will be inaugurated at the Second Coming of Christ.

--The terms ‘Church’ and ‘Kingdom’ are never used interchangeably in Scripture. Of the 114 occurrences of the word church (Gr. ekklesia), it is never equated with the Kingdom. Jesus came to offer the Kingdom to the Jewish nation, hence, the proclamation, ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Matt. 4:17). When the Kingdom was rejected, it was held in abeyance, to be introduced at his Second Advent (Matt. 13). Jesus announced He would ‘build’ His Church after the offer of the Kingdom was rejected (Matt. 16:18).”

--Paul Enns