

ECCLESIOLOGY: GOD'S PLANS AND PURPOSES FOR HIS CHURCH

WEEK 4: DESCRIPTIONS, MISSION, AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

CLASS SCHEDULE

- September 7: Introduction and the Nature of the Church
- September 14: Parachurch Ministries and Missions Agencies
- September 21: The Beginning of the Church and Distinctions with the World and Israel
- **September 28: Descriptions, Mission, and Purpose of the Church**
- October 5: What Defines a Healthy and Faithful Established Church?
- October 12: The Leadership of the Church
- October 19: Ordinances and Worship

INTRODUCTION

- In a Christian culture that is caving more and more to the world's values of happiness, social justice and numerical growth, we must have firmly founded convictions about the purpose and mission of the church. If we do not, seemingly innocent or even positive distractions constantly knock at the door, clamoring for our attention.

Ephesians 4:14 ~ *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...*

- What does Scripture say the purpose of the church is?

DIVINE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

- To help understand the purpose of the church, Scripture uses a wide range of metaphors and images to describe what the church is like.
- These descriptions say much about our personal and corporate relationship with Christ.

The Shepherd and the Sheep

John 10:1-18

- Jesus calls the sheep and leads them (vs. 3-4)
- Jesus is the door through which the sheep enter (vs. 9)
- Jesus is the shepherd who lays His life down for the sheep (vs. 11, 15)
- What does this tell us about the purpose of the church?

A Temple

Ephesians 2:19-22 ~ *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

- Israel had a temple; whereas, the church is a temple.
- This temple is not built with literal stones but with people who are "living stones".

1 Peter 2:5-6 ~ *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

- The church is built on the "cornerstone" who is Christ Jesus.
- What does this tell us about the purpose of the church?

The Head and Body

Ephesians 1:22-23 ~ *And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Ephesians 4:15-16 ~ *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

Colossians 1:18 ~ *He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (Members of the body are each essential and work together, using their spiritual gifts)

- Christ is the head; believers are the body.
- As a member of Christ's body, they each contribute to the overall functioning of the body.
- What does this tell us about the purpose of the church?

The Bridegroom and the Bride

Ephesians 5:25, 32 ~ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*

- Christ is the bridegroom...notice the 3 expressions of His love for the church:

Past – **Ephesians 5:25** ~ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,*
Present – **Ephesians 5:26** ~ *so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,*
Future – **Ephesians 5:27** ~ *that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*

- The responsibility of the church to the bridegroom:

Subjection – **Ephesians 5:24** ~ *But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*

Respect – **Ephesians 5:32-33** ~ *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.*

- What does this tell us about the purpose of the church?

Family

Ephesians 2:19 ~ *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,*

1 Timothy 5:1-2 ~ *Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.*

2 Corinthians 6:18 ~ *"And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.*

- What does this tell us about the purpose of the church?

Pillar and Support of the Truth

1 Timothy 3:15 ~ *but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

- What does this tell us about the purpose of the church?

74. Analogies of Christ and the Church

Christ	Church	Reference	Terminology
Head	Body	Colossians 1:18a	"And he is the head of the body, the church."
Cornerstone	Temple	Ephesians 2:20-21	"... Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."
Beloved	Virgin	2 Corinthians 11:2	"I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."
Bridegroom	Bride	Revelation 21:9	"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."
Ruler (implied)	City	Revelation 21:9-10	"He ... showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."
Owner	People	Titus 2:14	"... to purify for himself a people that are his very own."
Shepherd	Flock	1 Peter 5:2-4	"Be shepherds of God's flock ... And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown. ..."
Firstborn	Household	Ephesians 2:19 Colossians 1:18b	"... members of God's household." "He is the beginning and the firstborn."
Creator	New Man	Ephesians 2:15	"His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two."
Founder (implied)	Chosen People	1 Peter 2:9	"You are a chosen people ... a holy nation, a people belonging to God."
High Priest	Royal Priesthood	Hebrews 4:14 1 Peter 2:9	"We have a great high priest ... Jesus the Son of God." "... a royal priesthood. ..."
Heir	Inheritance	Ephesians 1:18	"... his glorious inheritance in the saints."

DIVINE MISSION FOR THE CHURCH

Matthew 28:18-20 ~ *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

- The main mission is to make disciples.
- The other actions are the necessary parts of making disciples:
 - Go (or "After going," not, "As you go"... As Daniel Wallace clarifies, this isn't the main point, but it is a necessary prerequisite to making disciples. Jesus is not relieving His disciples of their duty to go out of their way.)
 - Baptizing
 - Teaching to keep Christ's commands
- Where do baptisms and teaching happen?
- The basic mission of the church is to evangelize the lost, make disciples and plant churches.
- Question: How do we know the Great Commission is for us and not just for the Twelve?
- Question: How should this church planting mission inform our priorities of which missionaries to partner with?
- Question: What about parachurch organizations? Should we value their ministries?
 - Christian camps?
 - College campus ministries?
 - Missions agencies?
- Does it support and serve the church or sidestep it—doing the ministry of the church on its own?

DIVINE PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH

- Three overarching duties

Exalting God (Worship)

Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14 ~ *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved...to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory...who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Ephesians 3:20-21 ~ *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.*

1 Cor. 10:31 ~ *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God.*

- The ultimate reason for anything, including the church, is to glorify God.
- How does the church uniquely glorify God as it gathers for corporate worship? What are important components of that worship?

Singing

Eph. 5:18b-20 ~ *"Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father*

Colossians 3:16-17 ~ *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, singing to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual*

Commented [1]: These are arbitrary (no Scripture passage will give these categories), but they give a good overview of what is in Scripture.
Three circles illustration

songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord.

- Our singing is for God's praise and for each other's encouragement.
- Singing to God's praise was a big deal in the apostolic church, as it has been in all movements of God's Spirit ever since.
 - Paul and Barnabas, along with praying (aloud), sang hymns in the prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25).
 - And the New Testament contains a number of what appear to be hymn fragments (Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; and others).
 - The "new songs" of Revelation are both numerous and exuberant, indeed ecstatic (Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-13; 7:10, 12; 11:15, 17-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 19:1-8; 21:3-4).

Prayer

Acts 2:42 ~ *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

1 Timothy 2:1-4 ~ *First of all, then, I exhort that petitions and prayers, requests and thanksgivings, be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.*

Preaching

Acts 2:42 ~ *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

1 Peter 4:11 ~ *Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking actual words of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

- More on the topic of preaching later

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ~ *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*

- God does not prescribe Christian worship in the detailed fashion of Old Testament times, but the New Testament shows clearly what the staple ingredients of corporate Christian worship are, namely praise ("psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," Eph. 5:19), prayer, and preaching, with regular administration of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7-11).
- Any local church anywhere that is spiritually alive will undoubtedly take its singing, praying, and preaching very seriously indeed and guard all three.

Equipping the Saints (Work)

Hebrews 13:20-21 ~ *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, {even} Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will.*

Ephesians 4:12 ~ *For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*

- The word “equipping” means literally “to put in order, restore, make complete, to prepare”
 - This term was used in the Greek OT in Ezra in connection with the rebuilding of the wall and the temple after the Babylonian exile (Ezra 4:12, 16; 5:3, 9; 6:14).
 - This term is found in the secular sense of mending fishing nets, like in Matthew 4:21. Equipping is to repair or make complete.
- God’s desire is that His people be prepared, trained, built up and made complete in Christ through the church.
- Let’s read this whole passage: Eph. 4:11-16
- Question: Who is called to equip whom?
- Question: What are the equipped called to do?
- Question: What would this look like in real life?
- Obviously the leaders share in serving, and many of the congregation share in equipping, but God’s basic design is for the equipping to be done so that the saints can serve each other effectively.
- Spiritual service is the work of every Christian, every saint of God.

Evangelizing the lost (Witness)

Matthew 28:19-20 ~ *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Acts 1:8 ~ *but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

- Both local and global aspects of evangelism should be present in a healthy church.

Locally

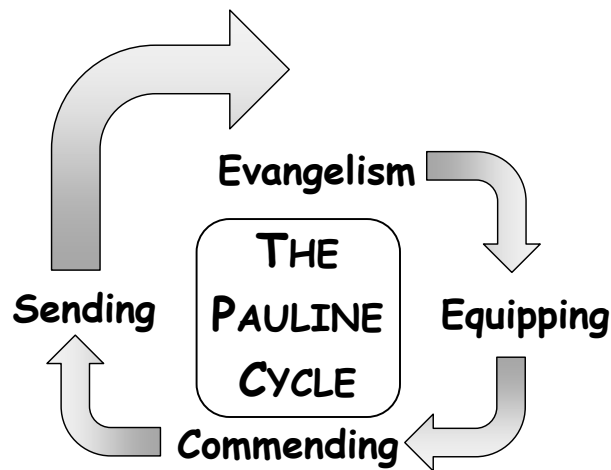
- Prayer is a great place to start.

Colossians 4:2-3 ~ *Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned*

- Rehearsing the gospel is a great way to prepare for evangelizing.
 - Pray thanks to God for what He has done (get specific).
 - Practice explaining it among family and/or friends.
 - Apply it to your life.
 - If you delight in the gospel and are burdened for others as you pray for them, you will see the opportunities and be more ready to take them.
- This is not just an individualistic task but also a corporate one (e.g. day camp and Kids Equipped).

Globally (missions)

- Going to help long-term missionaries or to become a missionary
- Paul’s cycle in Acts 13-14 serves as the model for a local church’s global outreach strategy
 - *Sending: 13:1-5*
 - *Evangelizing: 13:5, 16-49; 14:3, 7*
 - *Equipping: 14:21-22*
 - *Commending: 14:23*



- Another way we participate in global missions is by partnering with missionaries through hospitality, support and prayer

3 John 1:5-8 ~ Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brothers and sisters, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may prove to be fellow workers with the truth.

Final note:

- Exalting and Equipping especially occur in the gathered church, while Evangelism especially occurs in the scattered church. Each of us has a part we get to play in each of these three purposes God designed for His church.