

TITLE: NATURE OF THE CHURCH
-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BODY

TEXT: Eph 1:3-23

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to teach and reaffirm the true nature of the church of Christ, specifically in relation to the establishment of the church.

INTRO: Establishment of the BODY. Eph 1:22-23 – CHURCH=BODY.

There is one and only one church (Eph 4:4 – one body and one Spirit). As we will see, Christ died to establish his church (singular) and this is the only group of people who will be going with Him to Heaven (1 Cor 15:24). THEREFORE, it is imperative that we know everything about this group that we can.

I. ESTABLISHED WHEN?

A. When planned?

1. Not an afterthought (not a Plan B)
 - a. Premillennialism (Christ came to establish a physical kingdom, but was rejected, so set up the church)
 - b. However, the kingdom & church are the same (and the Kingdom *was* established)
 1. Mt 16:18-19 – used interchangeably
 2. John the baptist and Jesus both preached that the kingdom was “at hand” (Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17)
 3. Paul was in the kingdom (Col 1:13 – he *has translated* us into the glorious kingdom of his dear son)
 4. John was in the kingdom (Rev 1:9 – I John am your brother in the kingdom)
2. Kingdom prophesied – Dan 2:44; 7:13-14; 2 Sam 7:12-13; Isa 9:7; Oba 21, et al.
3. Kingdom planned from the beginning of time
 - a. 1 Pet 1:10; 18-20 – ...before the foundation of the world
 - b. Eph 3:10-11 – the church was part of God’s *eternal purpose*

B. When established?

1. We’ve already seen there were numerous OT prophesies of the coming kingdom (prophets didn’t know when)
2. In the gospels, we’re pointed to its coming
 - a. Mt 3:2 – it is at hand
 - b. Mt 6:9-10 – disciples to pray for its coming
 - c. Mt 16:18 – Jesus will build it (still future)
 - d. Mk 9:1 – it will come with *power*, and it will come before all of those people had died
3. In Acts, the kingdom comes!
 - a. Acts 1:8 – Jesus promised his apostles would receive this *power* from the Holy Spirit soon
 - b. Acts 2:1-4 – Holy Spirit comes upon them with power (they speak in languages they had never learned)
 - c. Acts 2:41 – 3000 added; 2:47 – the Lord added to the church those being saved
4. Therefore, the church/kingdom was established on the Day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem (So, we don’t pray the “Lord’s prayer” any more – “thy kingdom come,” when it has already come!)

II. ESTABLISHED BY WHOM?

A. By Christ

1. The church is a Divine institution
2. Mt 16:18 – Upon this rock *I* will build *my* church (Eph 1:22-23 =body; only 1, not multiple bodies)
3. On the proper foundation (Mt. 16:18 – on this rock (petra – mass of rock), not on Petros (a stone)
On the fact that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God!

B. Not by any man or woman

1. We have no earthly founder (the church could not have been started by man (Luther, Calvin, Smith))
2. Mt 15:13 – Every other plant, not planted by my heavenly Father, will be rooted up
3. AND, not by Campbell. He was instrumental in the restoration. But, the seed is the word of God (**Lk 8:11**)
 - a. It’s the same seed today as it was then. If we plant it today, it will produce what it produced then.
 - b. With some it produced absolutely nothing. But w/ others (proper soil), it produced Christians (the church).

III. ESTABLISHED WHY? PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH:

- A. Reconciliation needed – to be reconciled (“religion” – means to bind together again)
 - 1. From the beginning (e.g., Cain) mankind recognizes the problem of being driven from God’s presence.
 - 2. A child needs to feel that loving relationship after he has been punished for disobeying his parents
 - 3. We need reconciliation with our Creator. We have a desire to restore that relationship.
 - 4. This reconciliation can only be found in the church (Eph 2:16—we are reconciled in the body of Christ (church))
- B. In order to give us all spiritual blessings (in Christ)
 - 1. “In Christ” means “in the church”
 - a. Baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27)
 - b. Baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13)
 - c. The church is the body (Eph 1:22-23)
 - d. Therefore, “in Christ” = “in the body” = “in the church”
 - 2. Eph 1:3-14 – All blessings are in Christ (in the church)
 - a. Chosen
 - b. Adopted as children
 - c. Accepted
 - d. Forgiveness of sins (riches of his grace)
 - e. All wisdom and prudence
 - f. Gathered together
 - g. Inheritance
 - h. God’s purchased possession (God bought us – this means we are valuable to Him)
- C. In order to be a blessing to the world
 - 1. Gen 12 – blessing for all nations (all will come together in this kingdom)
 - 2. Mt 5:16 – Christians are to be a light to the world
 - 3. Mt 13:33 – the kingdom is like leaven – designed to influence and affect the world, not vice versa

IV. HOW? PURCHASED WITH BLOOD:

- A. Saul was persecuting the church (Acts 8:1-3); Jesus said, “why are you persecuting *me*?” (Acts 9:4)
- B. This is because the church was purchased by Christ with **his own blood** (Acts 20:28)
 - Are athletes overpaid? Something/someone is worth what someone is willing to pay for it.
 - Do not let someone tell you that the church doesn’t matter.
 - Do not let someone tell you that it doesn’t matter which “church” you go to – there is only ONE!
 - It *does* matter! It mattered enough for Christ to die for it.
 - The church is worth the blood of Christ!!

CONCLUSION: Can we now see how important the church is? Its purpose was to bring all people back to God (reconciled). It cost Jesus his life! It is very important...too important to ever say that one is just as good as another. There is only ONE! And most people today do not even claim to be that ONE.

We have seen some defining characteristics of this ONE church. We’ve seen **when** it was established, **where** it was established, **by whom** it was established, **how** it was established, and **why** it was established.

We’ve seen the importance, then, of being in it...in Christ. *Are you in Christ today?*