

Loris First Baptist Church
“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”

Doctrine #36 – The Church: Her Purpose and Commission

Note: Most information based on pages 242-246 of the book “Major Bible Themes” by Lewis Sperry Chaffer.

Introduction

1. By means of the church in the present age, God is now making known His “wisdom” and manifesting His “grace” to the angelic host.

Ephesians 3:10 *“His intent was that now, through the church, THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...”*

2. In heaven the church will eternally be “the illustration” of what the grace of God can do.

Ephesians 2:7 *“...in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of HIS GRACE, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

3. Strictly speaking, however, **the divine commission of the church is given to “individual” believers rather than to the corporate body.**
 - a. Christ as the Head of the church is able to direct each believer in the paths of the Lord’s will in keeping with His personal gifts and the plan of God for the individual life.
 - b. All of this, however, is in harmony with God’s general purpose for the church in the present age.
4. In the church corporately, God is fulfilling a present divine purpose which is unfolding exactly as prophesied in the Scriptures!

The Present Divine Purpose in the World

1. The present divine purpose of this age is *not* the “conversion” of the world, but rather the “calling out” *from* the world those who will believe in Christ to form the body of Christ which is the church.
2. It is true that the world will be converted, and there is yet to be a kingdom of righteousness in the earth; but according to the Bible, that day of a transformed earth, far from being the result of Christian service, is said to follow rather than precede the return of Christ, and is said to be made possible only by His personal presence and immediate power.

3. It is *after* the smiting of the Stone—a symbol of the return of Christ—that the God of heaven sets up an everlasting kingdom in the earth.

Daniel 2:44-45 *“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven WILL SET UP A KINGDOM that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. IT WILL CRUSH ALL THOSE KINGDOMS and bring them to an end, but IT WILL ITSELF ENDURE FOREVER. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”*

4. It is *after* the Lord returns and sits on the throne of His glory that He directs the sheep on His right hand to enter the earthly kingdom prepared for them.

Matthew 25:31-34 *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on HIS RIGHT, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU since the creation of the world.’”*

5. In like manner, it is *after* He is seen descending from heaven that Christ reigns a thousand years on the earth (Revelation 19:11—20:9; cf. Acts 15:13-19; 1 Corinthians 15:20-25).
6. When anticipating the peculiar features of this age (Matthew 13:1-50), the Lord made mention of three major characteristics:

- a. Israel’s place in the world would be as a treasure hid in the field:

Matthew 13:44 *“The kingdom of heaven IS LIKE A TREASURE HIDDEN IN A FIELD. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*

- b. Evil would continue to the end of the age:

Matthew 13:4 *“As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.”*

Matthew 13:25 *“But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away...”*

Matthew 13:33 *“He told them still another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is LIKE YEAST that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.’”*

Matthew 13:48 *“When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, BUT THREW THE BAD AWAY.”*

- c. The children of the kingdom—who are likened to wheat, to a pearl of great cost, and to good fish—shall be gathered out:

Matthew 13:30 *“Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”*

Matthew 13:45 *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.”*

Matthew 13:46 *“When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”*

Matthew 13:48 *“When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.”*

7. Of these three characteristics of the age, it is disclosed that the last, or the gathering out of the children of the kingdom, constitutes the supreme purpose of God in this age.
8. In accordance with this, it is stated in Romans 11:25 that Israel’s present blindness is only “until” the completion of the church (note Eph. 1:22-23 just below), the end of the age of special Gentile blessing.

Ephesians 1:22-23 *“And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for THE CHURCH, which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.”*

9. Likewise, the mystery of “iniquity,” or evil in the present age, is declared to continue, though restrained, until the Restrainer—the Spirit of God—is taken out of the way.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 *“For THE SECRET POWER OF LAWLESSNESS is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so TILL HE IS TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY.”*

10. As the Spirit will depart only when He has completed the calling out of the church, the immediate purpose of God is NOT the “correction” of the evil in the world, but the “out-calling” of all who will believe.
11. Israel’s covenants will yet be fulfilled (see Rom. 11:27), and evil will be banished from the earth (see Rev. 21:1); but the present purpose of God, for which all else evidently awaits, is the completion of the church.

Romans 11:27 *“And this is MY COVENANT WITH THEM (i.e. “Israel”) when I take away their sins.”*

Revelation 21:1 *“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY SEA (i.e. “activity of evil”).”*

12. In Acts 15:13-19 the substance of James’s address at the conclusion of the first council of the church in Jerusalem is given.
 - a. The occasion of this council was to determine these same questions to the present purpose of God.

- b. The early church comprised largely Jews, and these were confused with regard to their own national position in the light of the fact that the new gospel was flowing out to Gentiles.
- c. James states that, according to Peter's experience in the house of Cornelius the Gentile, God is first visiting Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.
- d. "After this," James continues, the Lord will return and then will fulfill all His purposes for Israel and the Gentiles.

Acts 15:13-19 *"When they finished, James spoke up: 'Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed His concern by taking FROM THE GENTILES A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: 'After this I will return and rebuild DAVID'S FALLENT TENT (i.e. "the nation of Israel). Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO BEAR MY NAME, says the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages.' It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.'"*

- 13. The practical bearing of all this upon the subject of this study is that, in the present age, never is the individual believer (much less the church) appointed of God to a *world-improvement program*; but the believer is called to be a witness in all the world to Christ and His saving grace, and **through this ministry of gospel preaching** the Spirit of God will accomplish the supreme divine purpose in the age.

The Formation of the Church

- 1. Christ prophesied that He would *build* His church.

Matthew 16:18 *"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

- 2. The Apostle Paul likened the church to a structure of living stones growing "unto an holy temple in the Lord" and "fitted together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"

Ephesians 2:21-22 *"In Him the whole building is joined together and rises TO BECOME AN HOLY TEMPLE UNTO THE LORD. And IN HIM you too are being BUILT TOGETHER to become a dwelling in which GOD LIVES BY HIS SPIRIT."*

- 3. Likewise, the believer's ministry of soul-winning and edification of the body of Christ continues, not forever, but "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"

Ephesians 4:13 *"until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST."*

4. The “stature of the fullness of Christ” does not refer to the development of Christ-like men, but rather to the development of THE BODY OF CHRIST to its “completion”.

Ephesians 1:22-23 “*And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, THE FULLNESS OF HIM WHO FILLS EVERYTHING in every way.”*

5. The same aspect of truth is restated in Ephesians 4:16, where the members of the body, like living cells in the human body, are represented as being unceasingly active in soul-winning and are thereby making “increase of the body.”

The Believer’s Commission

1. Christ gave a prediction that the seed-sowing which is to characterize the present age would result in but a fourth portion becoming “wheat” (Matt. 13:1-23).
2. Nevertheless, though the preaching of the gospel relates to death as well as to life:

2 Corinthians 2:16 “*To the one we are an aroma THAT BRINGS DEATH; to the other, an aroma THAT BRINGS LIFE. And who is equal to such a task?”*

- a. The child of God is commissioned to be instant in season and out of season in his efforts to win the lost.
 - b. He is appointed to go *into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15), knowing that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God* (Romans 10:17).
 - c. It is also stated in 2 Corinthians 5:19 that God who was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, has committed to us the word of reconciliation. “*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*” (2 Cor. 5:20).
3. This ministry rests upon “*every believer*” alike and may be exercised in many ways.
 - a. The Gospel may be presented to the unsaved “through sacrificial gifts”.
 - 1) Evidently there are many earnest believers who would rejoice to win a soul for Christ who have not awakened to the effectiveness of giving their substance to this end.
 - 2) The messenger cannot go except he be sent, but the one who sends him is a partner in the service and has taken stock which will pay eternal dividends.

- b. The Gospel may be presented to the unsaved “in answer to prayer”.
 - 1) He who has said “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14) will certainly thrust laborers into the harvest in answer to prayer.
 - 2) It is easily proven that there is no more fruitful ministry possible to the child of God than prayer; yet how very few seem to realize that souls are saved through that service.
- c. The Gospel may be presented to the unsaved “by word of mouth”.
 - 1) Since all are commissioned to this task, there are certain imperative conditions to be observed:
 - (a) The messenger must be willing to be placed where the Spirit wills;
 - (b) The messenger should be instructed as to the precise truths which constitute the gospel of grace which he is appointed to declare;
 - (c) The messenger must be Spirit-filled, else he will lack that impelling passion for the lost which alone prompts one to fearless and tireless soul-winning service. “*After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you,*” Christ said, “*...ye shall be witnesses unto me*” (Acts 1:8).
 - (d) Apart from this filling, there will be no disposition to witness. But, being filled, there is no staying the outflow of divine compassion.

Acts 4:20 “*As for us, WE CANNOT HELP SPEAKING ABOUT what we have seen and heard.*”

- d. The Gospel may be also presented “by various mechanical means” such as literature, the radio, television, and sacred music.
 - 1) Regardless of means, the truth must be presented in such a way that the Holy Spirit can use it.
 - 2) Undoubtedly, God uses many other means to promote the Gospel such as educational institutions where men are trained to preach, missionary aviation which serves to transport men who are carrying the Gospel, and the printed page.

NOTE: Although every Christian may not be equally effectual in preaching the Gospel directly, every Christian bears a portion of the “responsibility” of seeing to it that the Gospel is preached to every creature on earth as long as he or she is alive.

Loris First Baptist Church
“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”

Doctrine # 36 - “The Church: Her Purpose and Comission”

1. Read Pages 1-6 from the Doctrine#36 Study Guide by next Wednesday.
2. Answer the following Questions about “The Church” as you read:

a. Introduction

- 1) What is God now making “known” to angels by means of “the church” in the present age?
(page 1, top; Ephesians 3:10)

- 2) In heaven, “the church” will eternally be the “illustration” of what? (page 1, top; Ephesians 1:7)

- 3) True or False. The “divine commission” of God to the church was given to the “corporate body” to only accomplish as a group project. (page 1, middle)

- 4) The divine purpose of God is being fulfilled in the church “corporately” in accordance with what?
(page 1, middle-bottom)

b. The Present Divine Purpose in the World

- 1) True or False. The present divine purpose of God for the church of this age is for the “conversion” of the world to Christ. (page 1, bottom)

- 2) What is set up on earth after what Daniel revealed as “the smiting of the Stone” (i.e. “the return of Christ”)? (page 2, top; see Daniel 2:44-45)

- 3) When does the Lord Jesus direct “the sheep on His right hand” to enter the earthly kingdom prepared for them? (page 2, top; see Matthew 25:31-34)

- 4) What are the “three” major characteristics of the peculiar features of “the age” we are currently living in as mentioned by the Lord? (page 2, middle - page 3, top; see also Matthew 13)

- 5) Of the three characteristics of this age, which one constitutes the “supreme” purpose of God for this age? (page 3, top)

- 6) In accordance with Romans 11:25, Israel’s “blindness” (i.e. “failure to recognize Jesus as the ‘Messiah’”) is only until what happens? (page 3, middle; see Ephesians 1:22-23)

- 7) What is the “mystery of iniquity” and how long will it continue to be “restrained” in this present age? (page 3, middle; 2Thessalonians 2:7)

- 8) True or False. The immediate purpose of God is primarily the “out-calling” of all who will believe in Christ and be saved rather than the “correction” of all of the evil that is in the world. (page 3, bottom)

- 9) According to Acts 15:13-19, the Apostle James pointed out to the early believers that God is “first” visiting Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. “After this” (i.e. “the completion of His church), according to James, what is God going to do? (page 4, top)

- 10) Based on the revealed divine purpose of God in this age as being the “completion” of His church (the body of Christ), what can we be assured that neither individual believers, nor the church “herself”, appointed by God to accomplish? (page 4, middle)

c. The Formation of the Church

- 1) According to Matthew 16:18, what did Christ prophesy He would do on this earth?
- 2) According to Ephesians 2:21-22, how to Paul describe “the church”?
- 3) True or False. The “Great Commission” (i.e. “God’s divine command for His church to witness to the lost throughout the entire world”) is an “everlasting” commission for all believers.
(page 4, bottom; see Ephesians 4:13)

d. The Believer’s Commission

- 1) True or False. According to Matthew 13:1-23, a “fourth” of all Gentiles (25%) will be saved in this present age of the preaching of the Gospel. (page 5, middle)
- 2) What is the child of God “commissioned” to be instant in season and out of season about?
(page 5, middle)
- 3) According to 2Corinthians 5:19-20, what has God “committed” to “believers”?

- 4) What are “three” primary ways that every believer can participate in the Gospel being presented to the unsaved as every believer has been commanded by God to do? (page 5, bottom – page 6, middle)

- 5) What is something that a “believer” (i.e. “messenger of God”) must “be” or he will lack impelling “passion” for the lost and be disengaged in soul-winning service? (page 6, middle; see Acts 1:8)

- 6) True or False. The “only” appropriate and effective way to make sure the lost hear and understand the Gospel so that they can believe and be saved is through “preaching” and “teaching” the Word of God. (page 6, bottom)

- 7) What is something that “every” Christian bears a portion of “responsibility” of seeing get done on this earth in this present age while they are still living? (page 6, bottom)