

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXVIII

September 30, 2018

No.39

## How important is the church?

(Jerry Fite)

Alexander Campbell once observed, “*That which is first in contemplation is last in execution.*” We can see this being demonstrated in creation. Bryan Vinson writes, “The order was, first, the mineral kingdom, second the vegetable kingdom, and third, the animal kingdom. The first was made with reference to the second, the second with reference to the third, and all three with reference to man. Hence man was in the mind of creation before he created anything.” (*Paul’s Letter to the Saints in Rome, p. 174.*)

The “first contemplation is last in execution” idea is also demonstrated when considering the church. Paul reveals that the church making known the wisdom of God was “*according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (*Ephesians 3:10*). A saved people belonging to God through Christ was first in God’s contemplation. God establishing a people (Israel) through whom the Saviour would come in the flesh; Jesus living a perfect life to be the perfect sacrifice; Jesus dying as a sacrifice for man’s sins and Jesus being raised to glory for man’s justification all came in the proper order. Finally,

the church, first in contemplation in God’s mind, was brought into being.

Premillennialists and Dispensationalists consider the “*church*” a “*gap*” measure put in place by God after the Jews’ rejected Jesus as King. The truth is, the church is the spiritual kingdom that has been in the eternal purpose of God (*Matthew 16:18-19, John 18:36*). The Jews’ rejecting Jesus and the consequent death of Jesus was not a surprise to God but part of His “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge*” (*Acts 2:23*). Those who look at the church as a “*gap measure*” put in place for the more important kingdom, misinterpret the nature of God’s kingdom and do not share Heaven’s view that the church is “*according to God’s eternal purpose.*”

The church is important to the Lord for he died for it. The church is that which “*he purchased with his own blood*” (*Acts 20:28*). In God’s eternal purpose, He foresaw a people redeemed from sin. This goal was brought into being by Jesus giving Himself up in death “*that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify Himself a people for His*

*own possession, zealous of good works*” (*Titus 2:14*).

In God’s mind, the church is the collectivity of His “*saved people.*” Jesus, “*didst purchase unto God with thy blood, men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto God a kingdom and priest and they reign upon the earth*” (*Revelation 5:10*). The church is important for God “*adds*” those “*being saved*” to it (*Acts 2:47*). The “*church*” should stand with unique importance, for God did not add saved people to any other institution, or any Denomination.

God’s eternal purpose is not just saving people from their sins but saving them unto Heaven. The church, in His eternal purpose, “*He also glorified*” (*Romans 8:30*). The saved will be “*conformed to the body of His glory*” (*Philippians 3:21*).

Is the Lord’s church important enough to you to be a member of it? Understanding Jesus died to purchase “*people*” not a “*thing*,” are you helping people come to salvation in Christ, remain faithful and go to Heaven in glory?