

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

EPHESIANS LESSON 2 (Chapter 2)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. This is the second lesson in our study of the Book of Ephesians. In this lesson we will be dealing with the church that Jesus built. There are numerous views regarding the church. Some people say that it does not matter what church you attend—as long as you attend somewhere. I've been driving down the road at times (and you probably have, too) and have seen bumper stickers or bill boards that say, "This Sunday, attend the church of your choice." There are some people who say that it is not necessary to attend church services at all because we need to get away from "organized religion" altogether. In this view, the church does not matter. We simply need to have our own individual relationship with God. When we look into the world, we see many different views of the church. But when we look in the Bible, we see only one view concerning the church. This is the view that we must believe, teach, and obey if we want to be pleasing to God.

In this lesson, we will be looking at identifying features of the church. For a moment, I would like you to think about your car. If your car was sitting in the parking lot along with many other cars, and you told someone to go find your car, you could give that person the key to the car and explain to him some of its identifying features. You might say, "The car is black. It is a 2005 model. On the right side it has a small dent, and the left tire is a little low on air." By those identifying features, a person could know that it was your car. The key would fit, and the features would identify the car as yours. Today as we study this portion of the Book of Ephesians, I want us to ask ourselves, "Is this the church of which **we** are a part? Is this the church that **we** attend?" You may think that you are attending the right church, but the only way that you can know is to go to the Bible in order to be sure that you are following what the Bible has to say about this subject.

First we need to understand the actual meaning of the word "church." Some people have the idea that the church is the building. We even say on occasion that we are "going to church." What we mean by that, of course, is that we are going to the building where the church meets. The church is not simply a building or something that has four walls. The Greek word for church is *ecclesia*, which means "called out" or "the called-out ones." The church is the people. Faithful Christians make up the church, not a building. Many people have the false idea that the church is the building to which everyone goes. But there is nothing holy or sacred about the building, in and of itself. The church is composed of faithful Christians.

We also need to understand that the church was prophesied. It was in God's mind from the very beginning. It was part of God's plan. There are some people today who teach that God's plan failed, and that "Plan B" became the church. The Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that the church was in God's plan from the beginning, and that the church was prophesied even as far back as Isaiah's time. In Isaiah 2:2-3 we read,

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

I want us to see what Isaiah was saying in this prophecy. Let’s look at each of the characteristics of this prophecy. When we do, we will see that this is talking about the church, and that this prophecy was fulfilled. The first thing that Isaiah said is that these events would occur “in the latter days.” When would the church be established? It would be “in the latter days.” Now we must ask, “When were those ‘last days’?” Some say today that the phrase “latter days” means “the last few days of this Earth.” They believe that this will be when the Lord will establish His church. Some say that “in the latter days” will be 2,000 years down the road, and that we today are not in the latter days, but are, in fact, far from them. Some say that the “latter days” will be the last 1,000 years on Earth. There are many different theories. But here at The Gospel of Christ, we always go to the Bible to see what it says. When are “the latter days”? When we look at Acts 2:17 and Hebrews 1:2, we see the Bible defining “the latter days” as “the last age”—the Christian Age. Throughout the Bible, you see three ages of time. The first age is the Patriarchal Age. The second age is the Mosaical Age. The third age is the Christian Age, which began in Acts 2. We are living “in the latter days,” and have been living in the latter days for some 2,000 years. This prophecy was fulfilled in Acts 2. The church (kingdom) has been here for many years because we are living “in the latter days.” We thus see that this prophecy has been fulfilled.

We also see that the church would be called “the Lord’s house.” The church **is** the Lord’s house. When we look at 1 Timothy 3:15, 1 Peter 2:5, and Ephesians 2:19-20, we see that the church is referred to as the Lord’s house. Thus, that prophecy, too, was fulfilled.

We see, as Isaiah continued, that “all nations” would flow into the church. This was not going to be the church just for the Jews, just for the Gentiles, just for males, or just for females. Rather, this would be a kingdom into which **all** nations would flow. In Acts 10:34 we see that God no longer grants forgiveness just to the Jews, but Gentiles, too. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said in the Great Commission that His disciples were to go out to “all nations.” Ephesians 2:14-18 tells us that it was because of the death of Christ that Jew and Gentile alike could be in Christ, in the kingdom, and in the church. Thus, we can see how all nations would flow into the church. We see that very thing being fulfilled in the church (Acts 2).

Isaiah also prophesied that the law would “go forth from Jerusalem.” When we look at passages such as Luke 24:46-49, Acts 1:4-5, and Acts 2:1,4, **when** do we see the law going out from Jerusalem? It went out when the church was established in Acts 2. Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled. The church (the kingdom) began in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. We see Isaiah’s prophecy fulfilled in Acts 2.

We also must understand that the church and the kingdom are discussed interchangeably. We know that there is an eternal kingdom that will be in Heaven for eternity. But the kingdom, the church, is here on Earth right now. In Matthew 16:18-19 Jesus said to Peter, “I will build My church.” He then went on to talk about the kingdom, and used the word “kingdom” to describe the church. The church and the kingdom thus are discussed in the same sense. If there is any doubt that the kingdom did not come, Mark 9:1 definitely resolves that doubt. Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” From Mark 9:1 we learn that there were people living at that time who would still be alive when the kingdom came.

It is sad to hear people today still pray, “Thy kingdom come.” When Jesus prayed that, He was simply showing some things for which it was good to pray. At that time, the kingdom had yet to arrive. So, it was appropriate to say, “Thy kingdom come.” But the kingdom is now here, and has been here some 2,000 years. We therefore do not need to be praying, “Thy kingdom come,” since the kingdom is already here. The church is already here. The church and the kingdom are one and the same. The church/kingdom is already here. We do not need to be praying for it to come. In Revelation 1:9 John spoke about the fact that he was sharing with other Christians at that time various trials and tribulations “in the kingdom.” In Colossians 1:13 Paul provided another reason to help us be 100% sure that the kingdom is here when he wrote, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” The kingdom is what? It is the church. “The Son of His love” refers to Christ. Thus, we see that it is the kingdom (the church of Christ) being discussed in Colossians 1:13. From 1 Corinthians 15:24 we learn to ask, “Why is it so important to understand that the kingdom is already here?” Some people suggest that it is “no big deal” if they think that the kingdom is **not** here. Some people think that the kingdom is here, while others think that it is not. The Bible teaches that the kingdom is here. But why does it matter? Here is why it matters. In 1 Corinthians 15:24 we are told that we must be in the kingdom. Paul wrote, “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.” Why is important for us to understand why the kingdom is already here? It is because if we are not in the kingdom (the church) that Jesus built, we will not be in Heaven for eternity, but will be lost in Hell for eternity. Only those who are in the kingdom will be delivered up eternally to be in Heaven with God. We must understand the importance of the church, the kingdom, and being “in the kingdom.”

So many people have false views about the kingdom. But it is not because the Bible is confusing, but because of the traditions of men. Almost every false view of the kingdom suggests that the kingdom is not yet here, but that God will set up a kingdom when the Lord returns a second time. He then will reign for 1,000 years. There are so many false views about that. Paul said the exact opposite. He said that the kingdom will not come down—because the kingdom is already here. The kingdom will be “delivered up” to God. If we want to go to Heaven for eternity, and not be lost in Hell forever, we need to make sure that we are a part of that kingdom, and that we in the church.

The church also is said to be “the body of Christ.” In Ephesians 1:22-23 Paul said, “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” According to Ephesians 1:22-23, the church is the body of Christ. Since there is only one body, then there can be only one church. When we go to passages such as Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 1 Corinthians 12:20, and Ephesians 2:16, we see that there is only one body. In Ephesians 4:4 Paul made this clear when he said, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.” There is only one body, which means that there can be only one church. This fits perfectly with what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 when He said, “I will build My church” (the one true church—the church of Christ). The church belongs to Christ.

How do we know that the church belongs to Christ? Christ said that He would be the One Who built it. Also, it is His body. Plus, there is only one church for which Jesus paid. There is only one church that Jesus owns. In Acts 20:28 we read, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” In Acts 20:28 we find a point that we need to understand—a point that a lot of people leave out. People say that

Jesus built two churches—the church of Christ, and the church of God. They say those are two separate churches. But they are not two separate churches. They are both the same church. This passage is not talking about “the church of God” as a new religion. It speaks of “the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Was it God the Father, or God the Son (Christ), Who came to Earth to shed His blood? We know it was not God the Father because He was reigning in Heaven. It was God the Son (Jesus Christ). So, again we see the Scriptures speaking of the church of Christ—the church for which Jesus paid with His own blood. There are a lot of different churches in the world that Jesus did not buy. There are a lot of people who are in churches that were established by men. You may be in a church for which Jesus did not die. If you are in one of those churches, you cannot go to Heaven because you are not in the church for which Jesus paid. He shed His blood so that we could be in the one church, but we must do the things that will ensure that we are part of the one church that Jesus Christ built, and for which He paid with His own blood. What a mockery it is when we do not follow the Bible so that we can be in the one church that Christ established. When men create their own religions and their own traditions to follow, they ignore the fact that Jesus paid for the one church with His blood. Why would anyone want to go out and be a part of another religious group? That group may say that it is doing what the Bible says, but if the people in that group are not following the Bible, then they are not in the one church.

We see also that Christ is Head of the body, and that He alone has all authority. This makes sense. Since He paid for it, it is His. If you were to buy something, you would be the owner. If you’ve ever bought a house, whose house is it? It is your house. You can do with it whatever you want because you are the one who has the authority over the house. A person cannot simply come into your house and says, “I’m going to start living here, and I will be bringing in my own furniture.” That person cannot do that if he does not own the house in the first place. Christ is the Head of the body (Eph. 1:22). It is Christ Who has **all** authority. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Did Jesus say that “some” authority had been given to Him? Did he say that “most” authority had been given to Him? No. Jesus said, “**All** authority....” Thus, when it comes to matters of truth, how much say-so do we have? How much authority do we have? According to Jesus, we have none because He alone has “all authority.” Because of that, we must be governed by His Word and only His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Only the Bible is to be our guide. John 12:48 tells us that it is the words of Jesus (that is, the Word of God) by which we will be judged. The authority is found within the Word of God, and it is that Word by which we are to be governed. We are not to be governed by manmade creed books. Why would we need our own creeds instead of the Bible? We have a creed in the Bible. We are to neither add to nor take from God’s Word (Gal. 1:6-10). Christ is the Head, and it is He alone Who has all authority.

In Ephesians 5:22-27 we are going to see that the church is the bride of Christ. Look at the parallel that Paul is making in this passage. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church.” Who is Head of the church? It is not some pope or other man. It is Christ; He is Head of the church, “and Savior of the body.” Does it say that Christ is Savior of the **bodies** (plural)? No. He is the Savior of the one **body**—His church (the church of Christ). “Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ....” To whom is the church subject? Is it subject to its own creeds and traditions? No. It is subject to Christ. “So let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” The church is to be holy

and without blemish. But how will that happen? It will happen only if we follow the Bible. To say that Jesus built more than one church would be to say that Jesus is a polygamist. We know that the Bible condemns that. In Ephesians 5 the Bible says that Christ is the bridegroom of only one church. If we want to be married to Christ, then we must be part of that church. If we are not, then we cannot have a true relationship with God or Christ because we would not be part of the church.

It is vitally important for us to be in the church. If we are not part of the church of Christ that Jesus built, then according to the Scriptures, we are lost because we are not in the one kingdom and are not doing what the Bible says. There are a lot of sincere people in the world who think they are, yet when compared to the Scriptures, they are not. The same may be true of you. If so, you need to change so that you will be in the one true church—the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16).

How does one get into the church? If we have to be part of the kingdom, how do we get into the kingdom, the church? Some people say that a person can be voted into the church. If enough people raise their hands because they like you, then you will be added to the church. The Bible does not teach that. In Acts 2:47 we see that there is only one way to get into the church: “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The only way that we can be part of the church of Christ—the one church that Jesus built—is by being added by the Lord. He has to add us to His church. So how does the Lord add a person to His church? The Bible says that the Lord adds only those who are saved. Who are those who are saved? We have to go to the Bible to see what we must do to be saved. The Bible says in Acts 2:37 that that was the same question that many people asked on the Day of Pentecost. We understand that there is only one kingdom and one church. So what must a person do to be saved? Peter told those people, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” That is something that we must do. Then, and only then, will we have our sins taken away. It is interesting how people have strange ideas of what it means to “call upon the name of the Lord.” Some say that it means we simply have to say, “Lord, Lord.” But Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Just saying, “Lord, Lord, I want to be saved” is not “calling on the name of the Lord.” In Acts 22:16 we read what it means to call upon the name of the Lord. When Ananias went to Saul to tell him what he had to do, he said, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” In order to call on the name of the Lord, we have to be baptized to have our sins forgiven and washed away. That is the only way we can be saved. It is at that point that the Lord adds us to the one church.

When we are added to the church, we are simply “a Christian.” We are “a saint” (Eph. 1:1). In Acts 11:26 we read, “And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” There were no religious or man-made names or titles. People today want to be called Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, or Methodists. There are many sincere people who believe like that, and who believe that they are right. But we know from Acts 23:1 that just because a person is sincere does not mean that he is right. The person may be sincere, but sincerely wrong. We should not want to be called by any other name than “disciple,” “Christian,” or “saint.” We should not want to be called by manmade names that come from manmade religions. The Bible condemns such. In 1 Corinthians 1:10 we see that this was exactly the problem facing the church in Corinth. Some wanted to start following Paul and saying, “Let’s be called by Paul’s name.” Some wanted to follow Peter and be called by his name. But the Bible says that

we should not do that. Denominationalism is condemned. We are all to be one, and to be united as the one true kingdom. We are all to be united as the one true church—the church that Jesus Christ built. We must get away from denominationalism and the false religious names devised by men. We must begin getting back to being simply Christians who are in the church that Jesus built—the church of Christ. If you have yet to obey the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR EPHESIANS LESSON 2 (CHAPTER 2)

1. According to the material contained in this lesson, what does the Greek word *ecclesia* mean?
2. According to the material contained in this lesson, there is an important prophecy about something contained in Isaiah 2:2-3. What is the topic of that prophecy?
3. In the prophecy in Isaiah 2:2-3, Isaiah said that “the word of the Lord” would “go forth” from a certain place. What was that place?
4. According to 1 Timothy 3:15, what is another name for “the house of God”?
5. According to the last part of 1 Timothy 3:15, what is the church?
6. According to 1 Peter 2:5, Christians are the “living stones” that are used to build something. What is that “something”?
7. According to Ephesians 2:19, Christians are members of something. What is that “something”?
8. What important message is found in Acts 10:34?
9. In Ephesians 2:14, when Paul said that Christ “broke down the middle wall of separation,” whom had that wall separated up to that point in time?
10. How does the message of Acts 10:34 relate (in the church) to the distinction that Jews were well known to make on almost a daily basis regarding Gentile?
11. According to Christ’s statements in Matthew 28:19, to whom were His disciples to preach the Gospel?
12. What important event is recorded in Acts 2 that shows the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 2:2-3?
13. According to Christ’s comment in Mark 9:1, is the kingdom of God currently in existence?
14. According to Colossians 1:13, what has Christ done for people who are Christians?
15. According to Acts 20:28, what did Christ purchase “with His own blood”?
16. According to Ephesians 1:22, of what is Christ “the Head”?
17. According to Ephesians 1:23, what is a synonym for “the church”?
18. According to Ephesians 4:4, how many bodies are there?
19. When it comes to authority in Christ’s church, who, according to the instruction contained in Matthew 28:18, has the authority?