

What it means to be the Church

Introduction:

It is important from time to time to think about the big picture of our beliefs, so that we are able to have a proper view of all the specific things that are included in those beliefs so that we can keep them all in balance with one another. In this study we will look at what the Scriptures reveal to us about the Church of Jesus Christ, how we are to understand it, and how we are to function as a part of it.

1. The Establishment of the Church: (Matt.16:15-18; Acts 1:5; 11:15-17; 2:1ff)

First, it is helpful to understand how the Church fits into God's overall plan of redemption. In one of the Gospels we read what Christ taught to His disciples about the establishment of the Church. During the last year of Jesus' earthly ministry, He led His disciples to a secluded area away from the crowds. Once in that secluded area, Jesus began a discussion with His disciples by asking them what the people of Israel were saying about His identity. The disciples responded by rehearsing the things that they had heard while they had been out among the people spreading the good news about the coming of the kingdom of God. Among the things they had heard was that Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected from the dead, or that He was Elijah, or another of the prophets. After Jesus listened to their responses, He asked another question, *"But who do you say that I am?"* (Matt.16:15). The question was to all twelve disciples. But then we read that Peter alone responded and said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matt.16:16). The implication here is that though it was Peter alone who spoke, his response represented the common belief of the disciples, meaning that Peter was acting as their unofficially designated spokesman. It is informative to recognize that this reference is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew that anyone is recorded as addressing Jesus as the Christ. Therefore, this conversation represented a significant moment in Jesus' revelation of His identity. The title, *"Christ"* (like its Hebrew equivalent *"Messiah"*), literally meant an *"anointed one"*. This is a title that is used 39 times in the OT. It was applied to kings (II Sam.1:14), priests (Ex.28:41), and prophets (Ps.105:15), and thus to individuals set apart by God to serve in important roles. Over time, this title came to be linked in Jewish thought with David as the anointed king of Israel, and to God's promise to David that His throne would be established forever (II Sam.7:11-16). By Jesus' time, this title was understood to refer to the coming priestly king who would be a descendant of David, and who would bring God's kingdom to earth (Dan.9:25-26). Due to the fact that the twelve had previously put everything aside to follow Jesus and in some cases actually confessed a belief in Him as the Messiah (Jn.1:41, 49), it is clear that in their hearts they had come to this conclusion prior to the time of Jesus' question. However, over the time they had walked with Jesus their understanding of His messianic identity had expanded and their confidence in Him had deepened.

As the account continues, we read, *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My*

Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (vs.17-18).

This statement revealed some important truths about what God was about to do on the earth through Jesus. The Greek verb translated as “*I will build*” is in the future tense. This tells us that when Jesus spoke these words, He was not referring to something that He was doing at that time, but something He would do in the future. This means that the “*Church*” was something distinct from what had been going on up to that point in Jesus’ ministry, and of course also that it was something distinct from what had been going on prior to His coming. The Greek word translated as “*Church*” referred to a group of people who were called to assemble together. Prior to this announcement, this Greek word “*ekklesia*” did not have either a religious connotation, nor did it have a specific referent, it was a word that could refer to any sort of grouping of people. But when Jesus spoke of this as “*His*” assembly, He was saying that He was going to establish a particular group of people that would be identified with Him. When Jesus said, “*you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church*”, He was using a word play on Peter’s name (a name that was a form of the common word for “*rock*”). In this statement Christ was saying that Peter would play a pivotal role in the establishment of Jesus’ Church. Next, Jesus said about the Church, “*the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*”. Throughout the centuries, and into the present, various teachers and denominations have distorted what Jesus was expressing here. The Greek word translated as “*Hades*” referred to the abode of the dead. Therefore, it was a way of referring to the place where a person goes after death. In the imagery that Jesus used here (imagery that was popular at that time) Hades is pictured as a prison or fortress where the dead are kept (rooted in the reality that people don’t have the ability to return from the dead). This imagery set the stage for a central idea of the Gospel, that a significant part of Jesus’ redemptive role was to set people free from the grip of death. In the ancient world, gates were intended to either keep people in or out and were an important part of a city’s defenses. The imagery of the gates of Hades not prevailing against Jesus’ assembly, is that death would not be able to stop Jesus from rescuing people from its grip. Peter himself would later confirm this interpretation in his sermon on Pentecost, when he declared that in Jesus’ resurrection, He had conquered death’s grip on Himself and on His people (Acts 2:24-31).

This passage teaches us two key ideas about the establishment of the Church. First, the Church represented a new aspect of God’s redemptive plan, it was not simply a continuation of what had come before. Second, the Church was something that Jesus would build, not something His disciples would build. Therefore, just like the salvation of the saints, the Church would be a work of God accomplished through Jesus Christ.

A combination of other texts in the New Testament clarifies for us when it was that the Church began. First, in one of Paul’s letters to the saints in Corinth, Paul wrote:

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks ; whether slaves or free – and all have been made to drink of one Spirit”

I Corinthians 12:13

In this verse, Paul wrote that believers enter into union with Christ (and in this way spiritually become part of Christ's Church) by means of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. That means there could be no Church prior to its members being baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Second, we read the following at the beginning of the Book of Acts:

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, ‘which’, he said ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Acts 1:4-5

These verses record something that Jesus said to His disciples shortly before His ascension, forty days after His resurrection. He told them that they were to remain in Jerusalem (rather than return to their homes in Galilee) and wait for the coming of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, an event that Jesus said would follow in only a few days. That means that since no one had yet received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, there was no one who was yet actually a part of the Church that Jesus said He would build. Therefore, the establishment of the Church was still future at that time.

Third, later in the Book of Acts we read:

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remember the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit”

Acts 11:15-16

These verses record Peter's explanation to his fellow apostles why he chose to baptize believing Gentiles. He said that those believing Gentiles had been visibly baptized by the Holy Spirit prior to Peter baptizing them with water. And in this explanation Peter said that the same thing had happened to them at “*the beginning*”. This “*beginning*” must refer to the establishment of the Church, and since it was associated with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (an event that happened to them previous to that time) it means that the Church had been established sometime before this. Since this was a momentous occasion in God's redemptive plan, something that was repeatedly forecasted to happen, it is inconceivable that when it did happen that the event would not have been recorded in the Book of Acts. But what event do we read about in Acts (between chapters 1 & 10) that could be interpreted as the time when the Baptism took place?

Fourth and finally, we read about a powerful spiritual phenomenon that took place on the day of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus' ascension. On that day, the Apostles experienced a powerful expression of the Spirit's work in their lives. After

which they were completely changed. They were no longer fearful and timid, but bold and fearless (2:1-4). In Peter's sermon, he said the event was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (2:17-21), a prophecy about last times using language describing the giving of the New Covenant. Therefore, it is clear that the Church began on the Day of Pentecost, and that the establishment of the Church is closely associated with the establishment of the New Covenant.

2. The Mission of the Church: (Matt.28:18-20)

In the Gospel of Matthew, we find the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples regarding the responsibilities He was entrusting to His Church:

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus' instructions to His eleven disciples key on one main idea. That one main idea is expressed in the only finite verb in the passage, and that Greek verb is the word behind the translation "*make disciples*". The word refers to the process of developing an adherence to the teachings or instructions of a leader and a commitment to promoting the cause of that leader. This command was not intended to be limited to the apostles only but was intended for all those who follow Jesus. It is important to understand that a disciple is not someone committed only to a set of teachings, but more importantly he or she was to be committed to the master who gave those teachings. Jesus used three participles to express what would be involved in the process of making disciples: going, baptizing, and teaching. The first of the participles "*go*" expresses an attendant circumstance that defines the context in which discipleship takes place. It takes place as one goes forward in life along the path that God has ordained for the disciple. The other two participles (baptizing and teaching) describe what is involved in making disciples. Water baptism had been used for some time within Judaism as a religious rite in which a person associated themselves with the Jewish faith. This was to be adapted by the Church; disciples were to be baptized with water in the name of the Triune God as a ceremony whereby they outwardly expressed their allegiance to Jesus as God's Messiah. Jesus also spelled out the sort of teaching that was to be a part of the discipleship process. The teaching was to instruct converts "*to observe all things that I have commanded*". When the Greek word translated as "*observe*" is used in terms of instruction it means to obey it, internalize it, and live in harmony with it. Therefore, disciples are to be taught everything that Jesus taught with the intent that they build their lives around that instruction. The reference to teaching "*all things*" that Jesus taught meant that the disciples were not to select out certain things according to their judgment but were to thoroughly teach everything that Jesus had passed on to them understanding that each element of what He taught

was part of a unified body of truth. Therefore, at the heart of the mission of the Church is the objective of producing individuals who are in submission to the teachings of Jesus.

3. The Government of the Church: (Acts 20:17, 28; I Tim.5:17; I Pet.5:2-3)

One aspect of the theology of the Church is the matter of how the community of the Church is to be organized. Experience teaches us that without some sort of organizational structure, any social grouping collapses into chaos. In addition to this, we see that throughout the Scriptures God sets forth instruction regarding how His people are to organize themselves so they can effectively function together as a harmonious group. Everyone agrees that God provided instruction about the structure that should exist in the Church, the debate is over who has authority in that structure and how that authority is to be exercised. There are three basic viewpoints (though there is a wide spectrum of opinions within each viewpoint regarding the practical outworking of the main idea in each one):

- Episcopalian-that God intends authority to be centered in one individual
- Presbyterian-that God intends authority to be centered in a particular group of individuals
- Congregational-that God intends authority to belong to the group as a whole

Interestingly, the New Testament seems to give conflicting evidence. For scholars point to evidence in the New Testament that supports all three of these viewpoints. I believe that the reason for this is because interpreters tend to squeeze the teachings of Scripture into the pre-existing molds that human beings have created for all their other social organizations. But in light of these factors, how are believers supposed to come to any firm conclusion about the organizational structure that God intends for His Church? The answer is found first by not having any pre-existing prejudice about what that structure should be, and second by simply applying the principles that are taught in the New Testament regarding that structure:

- First, there are only two roles described as existing within the churches that the apostles established: elders and deacons (Phil.1:1). Elders are to be the spiritual leaders of the fellowship, while deacons are to serve the physical needs of the fellowship. Contrary to the teaching of some denominations, deacons were not meant to have a role in the leadership of the Church.
- Second, the role of spiritual leader is associated with three descriptive titles that define the nature of the role: **Elder** indicating that leaders should be characterized by spiritual, mental, and emotional maturity; **Overseer** indicating that leaders need to watching out for the spiritual welfare of the saints (both individually and corporately); **Shepherds** indicating that the leaders are to cultivate and guide the saints (both individually and corporately) as they grow in their faith. This latter title comes into English as "*Pastor*". Therefore, it is a misinterpretation of Scripture to see a Pastor as a distinct role from Elder (Acts 20:17-34).

- Third, Christ was appointed by the Father to have authority over the Church (Eph.1:22-23; I Pet.5:1-4). No single human being, nor group of human beings possesses such authority. The Father's and Christ's authority is expressed through the Scriptures, and therefore, only those things rooted in the proper interpretation of Scripture have actual binding authority on the saints.
- Fourth, the reality is that the Scriptures do not stress the idea of human authorities within the Church in the way that is commonly practiced. Jesus warned that leaders were not to act as lords over their fellow believers in a way that mirrors the organizational structures of this world (Mk.10:35-45; I Pet.5:3). Rather, what is stressed is that leaders are to be examples to others, teaching and exhorting others to be obedient to Christ. At the heart of Biblical instruction is the principle that believers are to practice mutual submission (Eph.5:21; I Pet.5:5), leaders are to submit their own agendas to what is in the best interests of the fellowship, while the rest of the fellowship is to submit to the guidance of their leaders until or unless that guidance conflicts with the clear teaching of Scripture.
- Fifth, the Scriptures do speak of elders “*ruling*” (I Tim.5:17; Heb.13:7), however, it is important to understand precisely what is meant when this is asserted. Two different words are translated as “*rule*” in these two passages. The first term refers not so much to having power over others, rather it conveys the idea of going before others, in the sense of leading them. The second term also does not stress power over others but conveys the idea of guiding others toward some sort of destination. There are terms that are used in the NT frequently that stress the idea of having control or power over others, but these are not used for leaders in the Church. In the New Testament the emphasis is not on the power a leader is to have over others, rather the emphasis is on influencing, instruction, and guidance. Not making people do certain things; rather seeking to persuade others to do the right thing.
- Sixth, the examples given to us of leadership in the NT (excluding Christ Himself) make it clear that there should be a plurality of leaders, not just one person. The church council discussion in Acts 15 reveals that the Apostles reasoned together to come to a mutual decision, and that no one person simply dictated what they were to do. Also, Paul's practice was not to appoint one elder in the churches he established, but a group of elders (Acts 20; Phil.1:1; Tit.1:5).
- Seventh, women are eligible to be deacons (I Tim.3:1-7) but not elders (I Tim.3:11-12). Men are responsible to be the spiritual leaders in the Church.
- Eighth, in the NT, receiving a call to a role of service is not a matter of internal impressions within the individual who then volunteers for ministry. Ultimately a call comes from God and is recognized by both the established leadership and the congregation who set them aside for such service (I Tim.4:14-15).

4. The Function of the Church: (Eph.4:11-16; I Cor.12:12-27)

In verse eleven of Ephesians chapter four, Paul wrote, “*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers*”. In this verse Paul clarified that the gifts that Christ gave to the Church were individuals who would serve the fellowship by equipping them to fulfill God’s purpose for both the entire community and for each individual within the community. Having stated this, Paul then went on to explain how the Christian community was meant to function, so that everyone within the fellowship would understand the basic role that each one was intended to play in what God was doing in and through His people. As Paul continued, he explained that leaders were given to the Church to enable everyone to be successful at their mutual responsibility of doing the work of ministry. The “*work of ministry*” (broadly speaking) is the service that God has called His people to render to Him as the means by which He advances His redemptive purposes. One key sphere of that ministry is focused within the fellowship of saints. The goal of this internal sphere of ministry is the edification of the body of Christ (vs.12).

In verses fifteen and sixteen, Paul wrote specifically about how the Church was to function in regard to edifying the body of Christ:

“but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Paul explained that the responsibility of leaders is to seek to enable every member of the fellowship to fulfill their individual role within the Christian community. The idea is that everyone in Christ has a role to play in the process of our mutual progressive sanctification. Christ, by the Spirit of God, accomplishes the transformation of the saints (individually and corporately) through what each one contributes to others. Using the body metaphor, Paul taught that just as the various parts of a human body work together to make the body healthy and to function properly, so everyone in the Christian community is meant to be engaged in the process of edification of the saints (each one having his or her own unique role in that process). Paul added that this process is meant to take place within the context of the mutual love that Christians are to have for one another.

In another letter Paul gave an even more detailed version of this analogy in order to more fully illustrate how the Church is meant to function in service to God:

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye,

where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'. No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

I Corinthians 12:12-27

Through this extended analogy Paul was making three points that need to be understood if we are to function together in the way God designed us to. First, the analogy of the body stresses the idea of unity. Believers are to understand that we are not simply individuals, we are a part of a community. Therefore, we cannot see our lives as being isolated from others. We are meant to function as a harmonious group. Friction and conflict within the Christian community is counterproductive to our spiritual growth and welfare. However, though we are to pursue unity, we are not to expect uniformity within our community. The reality is that God has intentionally woven diversity into our community. Paul emphasized this idea in his analogy, making it clear that the body can only function as it was meant to because God did not make every organ the same, and did not assign every organ to be involved in the same activity. The idea is that just as God made various parts of the human body different in order for them to accomplish distinct functions within the body, so God made various believers different so they could contribute different things for the welfare of the Church. Often in our world, unity and diversity are seen as polar opposites; incompatible principles that cannot co-exist in the same sphere. The reason for this is that people often don't recognize a third principle that must be involved. Paul teaches that the third principle we see displayed in the function of a human body is mutuality. The idea of mutuality is where diverse people join together in a common cause or purpose that benefits everyone involved. In the Church the idea is that each diverse individual can contribute to the welfare of others in unique ways, and that while one does this, other diverse individuals contribute to those around them in their unique ways so that everyone is unified in the common purpose of seeking to help everyone else succeed at achieving Christian maturity. The overall focus is meant to be on how each one can contribute to the welfare of others, rather than being focused on simply securing one's own welfare.

5. The Nature of the Worship of the Church: (Acts 2:42; Rom.12:1-2)

Throughout the ages and around the world, there have been many different ideas about what worship is, and how it is to be practiced by Christians. The word

“worship” basically means to ascribe exalted worth or profound adoration to someone or something. It means to hold that person or thing in highest regard, to venerate or reverence a person or a thing. Obviously, all genuine Christians would agree that worship is to be directed toward God alone, but the debate is over what form(s) our worship of God should take. Under the Old Covenant, the practice of worship was strictly regulated. Instruction was given by God concerning specifically what was to be done, how it was to be done, and when it was to be done. However, that is not what God chose to do after the arrival of His New Covenant. Rather than detailed specific instructions, we were given principles that were to guide us.

In Luke’s account of the practice of the first Christians, we read briefly about what the Apostles understood to be essential aspects of Christian worship:

*“And they continued steadily in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”*

Acts 2:42

From this example we see that the apostolic church included the following when they gathered for corporate worship:

- The teaching of Biblical truth
- Mutual interaction and sharing between members
- The sharing of a meal centered in the observance of communion
- Prayer

From other portions of the NT, we are informed that the singing of hymns and spiritual songs was also the apostolic practice (Col.3:16). No formal order was ever given regarding how we are to structure a worship service. This means that we are free to organize our worship in any way we prefer, as long as we include these elements of worship when we gather together to engage in that worship. However, one idea that is emphasized is that our worship is meant to be an expression not only of our adoration of God, but it is also to be an expression of our submission to Him, and to His will for us:

“I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Romans 12:1-2

Jesus Himself revealed the basic nature of genuine New Covenant worship:

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him, must worship in Spirit and truth.”

John 4:23-24

Some read these words and suggest that Jesus was saying that worship from that time forward was to be something spiritual (of the heart) and authentic. However, this really cannot be what Jesus meant. This is because Jesus specifically said that He was speaking of something that would be true of worship in light of His advent, that was not true previous to His coming. The reality is that the Old Testament already taught that God required worship to be both from the heart and authentic. There are a number of texts in the OT which make it clear that outward acts in conformity to God's commands were worthless before Him unless they reflected genuine devotion in one's heart (Isa.29:13; Hos.6:6; Mic.6:6-8). Therefore, there would be nothing new or different about worship, if Jesus were saying that it was to be from the heart and sincere. But Jesus was announcing that something radically new would shape the worship of the saints that had not done so before. Jesus was saying that with the coming of the New Covenant, worship was to be done by the empowering of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and in harmony with the truth of God's redeeming work in Christ. The practical application of this is that when we worship we are to express adoration and devotion to God, surrender ourselves completely to His will, and that this is to be done in conscious dependence on God's Spirit and through the mediatorial work of Christ.

6. The Priorities of the Church: (Phil.1:27-2:4, 14-16)

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, we read the following:

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,...Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

Philippians 1:27-2:5, 14-16

In this passage Paul was instructing these saints that there were certain virtues that are meant to be characteristic of those who follow Christ. The saints are meant to possess:

- a common perspective

- a fearless devotion to Christ
- a willingness to participate in redemptive suffering
- genuine love for one's fellow believers
- an unselfish spirit
- a concern for the welfare and success of one's fellow believers
- a contented heart
- a desire to be righteous
- a life that is distinct from those in the world
- a commitment to the truth of Scripture

The things above are meant to be part of the barometer by which we measure our lives. These things, rather than material achievements or possessions, represent what is important in life.

7. The Measure of Success for the Church: (Rom.8:29; Eph.4:13-14; I Pet.1:16)

Finally, according to the Scriptures, how do we measure success as a church? The following verses express in different ways the ultimate goal that God has for His people, and thus they teach us how we should evaluate ourselves so that we see whether or not we are successfully accomplishing together the things that are most important to God:

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Romans 8:29

“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”

Ephesians 4:13-14

“Be holy, for I am holy”

I Peter 1:16

These verses make it clear that God's intent is that we become like Him, and the model of what that looks like in human life is Jesus. Therefore, the more we think like, act like, speak like, and choose like Jesus, the more successful we will be in our pursuit of pleasing God.

Conclusion:

There are many ideas about what the Church should be in our day. But our focus should not be on making the Church what the world wants it to be, or even on what we want it to be, but on what God has ordained it to be. The truths examined in this lesson can enable us to be the Church that God created us to be.