

LESSON 7

Dignity And Mission Of The Church

By D.B. Ray

"A Church of Christ is an assembly of baptized believers Joined together in the doctrine and fellowship of the gospel."

"The Kingdom of Christ is the organized government over which Jesus Christ is sole Law-Giver and Ruler, and Whose laws are administered through His Churches, as His executives."

The Scriptural subjects are those who, having been born of God, have been introduced into the Church and Kingdom by baptism. Scriptural baptism must be administered to a Scriptural subject by a Scriptural administrator. This is self-evident. A Scriptural administrator is one authorized by a Scriptural Church which is an integral part of the organic Kingdom of Christ. Though children of God by the new birth, no unbaptized persons have citizenship in the organic Kingdom and Church of Christ.

That the Church of Christ occupies a very important position in the economy of grace is seen as follows:

First: The Church is the light of the world. Of His chosen disciples who had been ordained to be with Him, the Savior said: "Ye are the light of the world." Jesus Himself is the great light, the "Sun of righteousness." But as the moon reflects the light of the sun so the Church reflects the light which shines from the glorious spiritual Luminary of day.

Second: The Church is the salt of the earth. The Master said: "Ye are the salt of the earth." The divine plan is to send out the saving knowledge of Christ through His Churches. No other institution under heaven except His Church is called "the salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." Whatever may be said in favor of human religious societies, they are neither the light of the world nor the salt of the earth.

Third: The Church is called "the house of God which is the Church of the living God." As the Jewish temple was peculiarly the house of God, so the Church of Christ is the "house of God." It is the house in which the Lord of hosts delights to dwell. This can be said of no other organization upon the earth.

Fourth; The Church of Christ is "the pillar and ground of the truth." As the lighthouse on the stormy coast is the pillar and support of that light which flashes out amidst the darkness over the stormy waves, to warn the sailor of his danger and point him to the haven of safety, so the Church supports and upholds the gospel which shines into the midst of the stormy sea of life, pointing the toiling seaman to the haven of eternal rest. In this sense the Church is the lighthouse to our fallen world from which the light of Christ shines forth to the perishing nations.

Fifth: The Church is the organic body of Christ on earth over which Christ is the supreme head. Paul says: "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all

in a11." Eph. 1:22-23. No other institution upon God's foot-stool is called the body of Christ, except His Church.

Sixth: The Church of Christ is the real spiritual temple of the Lord. Solomon's temple, in all its glory, was only a type of the true spiritual temple. Describing citizenship in the Kingdom and membership in the Church, Paul says: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit." Eph. 2:19-22.

The members of the Ephesian Church were "fellow-citizens" in the organic Kingdom of Christ, and "of the household of God." The building had been "fitly framed together" and grew up "unto an holy temple in the Lord." This building was designed for a habitation of God where He dwells by His Spirit.

Seventh: The Church is the affianced "Bride the Lamb's wife." The relation existing between Christ and His Church is illustrated by the relation existing between husband and wife. The apostle says: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that

He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:23-27.

The purified Church, on the marriage day, is to be presented to Christ, the "glorious Church," "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." She will then be a glorious Church, "holy without blemish."

No human organization upon the earth is called the Bride of Christ. These and many other scriptures show clearly that the Church of Christ is the most important institution upon the earth. The organic Kingdom of Christ, represented by the Churches, is the Kingdom which is destined to triumph over all opposition, and fill the earth with the glory of Christ.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

We cannot speak of the mission of the organic Kingdom without including the mission of the Church. We cannot speak of the mission of the Church without including the mission of the Kingdom. The Church has the most important mission to perform of any institution on earth.

First: It is the mission of the Church to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. The apostle says: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 2:5. The true

Church is an holy priesthood over which Jesus Christ is High Priest. It is Not now necessary to offer slain beasts in sacrifices, but spiritual sacrifices. The Church is to offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving. The Palmists says: "And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing." Psa. 107:22. The apostle says: "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." Heb. 13:15. The pure worship of God in spirit and in truth is acceptable to God as spiritual sacrifices.

Second: It is the mission of the Church to give the gospel to all nations, to every creature. The Savior said: "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Matt. 24:14. It is peculiarly the province of the organic Kingdom of Christ, through the Churches, to give the gospel to the nations. It is impossible for any other organization to do this work. To His Church the Savior gave the great commission: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing, them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matt. 28:18-20. It was His Church which was commissioned to make disciples of all nations, to preach the gospel to every creature, and administer the ordinances.

Third: It is the mission of the Church, having the keys of the Kingdom to administer its laws and ordinances. No other institution upon the earth is authorized to execute the laws of the Kingdom of Christ. Christ has left His Church as the sole executive in His Kingdom. Neither popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, elders nor deacons have even the shadow of ecclesiastical authority. The officers of true Churches are only servants of the Church. Of preachers Paul says: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves, your servants for Jesus sake. For God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." 2 Cor. 4:5-7. The ministers are officially servants of the Churches bearing the glorious gospel in earthen vessels.

In the authors remarkable controversy with the highest authorities of the Roman Catholic Church in America, which was a written controversy, published simultaneously in the Church Progress and the American Baptist, the Church Progress said: "The Baptist" constantly appeals to its meaning of the Scripture as the infallible measure and standard of doctrine. Will it not then expedite the entire controversy to determine whether the Bible alone is the sole measure and standard, of doctrine and whether the "Baptist" interpretations of its text are its true and authoritative sense? The "Baptist" declares it is looking for the truth. Why not take the shortest road to the desired goal? IF THE BIBLE BE THE

SOLE RULE OF FAITH. THEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS NOT THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD. Here is the issue squarely and plainly put. Let the "Baptist" demonstrate that the Bible alone is the sole rule of faith, and it will vanquish us ignominiously." Papal Controversy, page 231.

The Papal Controversy was a friendly discussion between the Editor of the American Baptists, D. B. Ray, and the "Church Progress and Catholic World," which was then the leading Roman Catholic paper in America. It was published by the Catholic Publishing Company of St. Louis. Besides an able editorial staff, including editors

Conde B. Pallen and priest C. H. Kuhlmann, who was the leading owner of the paper. "The Church Progress" had the endorsement and sanction of nine Archbishops and Bishops besides Vicar General Brady and a host of priests. The discussion was by mutual agreement and designed for publication, such as no other discussion between Roman Catholics and Baptists has ever been held. The above confession shows the surrender of Rome of Bible authority for her abominable traditions. The book contains 622 pages, and ought to be in the hands of every citizen of America.