

I. THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MOVEMENT IN HUMAN HISTORY

- A. This movement founded many of the world's first universities, pioneered the modern hospital system, rescued abandoned infants, cared for widows and orphans, helped abolish the Roman gladiatorial games, played a major role in ending the slave trade, advanced literacy, and helped shape modern medicine.
- B. During times of plague, when others fled, its people stayed to care for the sick, bury the dead, and adopt orphaned children. Today, it remains the world's largest charitable movement, operating hospitals, disaster relief, food banks, pregnancy centers, homeless shelters, schools, prison ministries, and countless other ministries of compassion.
- C. This movement has upheld the sanctity of human life, the dignity of every person made in God's image, marriage and family, forgiveness, justice, generosity, and hope beyond death.
- D. What is this history-shaping movement? It is the **Church of Jesus Christ**.
- E. Jesus declared, "**I will build My church**" (Matthew 16:18), and for more than 2,000 years He has faithfully fulfilled that promise. Though the Church has had failures and not always represented the Kingdom of God well, its overall influence and mark on the world throughout history has been unparalleled.

II. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

- 1. Today the word "church" has hundreds of definitions and expressions. To some it's simply a building, social club, a business model, an entertainment venue, a political organization, a charity, or just an institution of religious activity.
- 2. For others, the Church has been a place to encounter the presence of God, a hospital of healing, a school for spiritual growth, a family to belong to, and a training ground where they can be equipped for the work of the Kingdom.

III. THE CHURCH STARTED AS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

A. This quotes touched my life deeply in 2006:

1. *What started as a Movement in Jerusalem, became a philosophy in Greece, a culture in England, an institution in Rome, and then an Enterprise in America*

B. The world out there is not waiting for a new definition of Christianity; it's waiting for a new demonstration of Christianity. We need another movement called the "Church".

IV. BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The body of Christ, (1 Cor. 12:17) the household of God, (Eph. 2:19), the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25), the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2), the general assembly of the first born, (Heb. 12:23), a golden candlestick (Rev. 1:20), God's building (1 Cor. 1:20), a habitation of God, (Eph. 2:22), the temple of God, (2Cor. 6) and the family of God (Eph. 3:15)
 - a) "The Church is God's people, filled with God's presence, displaying God's wisdom, proclaiming God's gospel, and shining God's light in a dark world."

V. 10 FOLD PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

1. To be the object of God's pleasure and purpose
 - a) ***"The mystery of His will(speaking of the church in context) according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself" -Eph 1:9***
2. To be a holy priesthood that ministers to God and carries His presence on the earth.
 - a) ***"In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" -Eph. 2:22***
3. TO MAKE GOD KNOWN THROUGH THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

- a) ***"This grace was given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make ALL see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages , has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ"***
-Eph. 3:8-9

B. TO BE THE VOICE OF GOD TO THE WORLD

- 1. ***"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."— 2 Corinthians 5:20***

- a) *"The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority."*— Martin Luther King, Jr.

C. TO BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

- a) The church is the house of the watchful and wise. The church's primary identity is a House of Prayer for all nations *that moves God's will, and eternal purposes through intercession.*

D. FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

- a) The church has a holy and sacred assignment to make disciples that follow Jesus wholeheartedly, not members of an organization. The churches goal in discipleship is transformation of individuals and nations.

E. TO BE THE SALT AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD

- a) Salt is different from the food it flavors. We don't let the world season the Church, the Church seasons the world. We are called to preserve the decaying world, restrain evil, and make the world thirsty for Jesus.

F. TO PROVOKE ISRAEL TO JEALOUSY

- 1. The Church is God's primary instrument to bring the gospel back to the people that first proclaimed it.

G. TO WAR IN THE SPIRIT

- a) To invade and plunder the enemy's camp with the gospel, truth, and light.

(1) ***to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places-Eph. 3:10***

(a) *"We are not simply to bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice; we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

(b) *Bonhoeffer was arguing that the Church's calling goes beyond caring for the victims of evil, though it must do that. The Church must also confront and resist the systems and powers that produce injustice.*

H. TO BE AN ESCHATOLOGICAL PEOPLE OF UNDERSTANDING

- 1. Give clarity, direction, and understanding to chaos, and confusion in the world specifically God's end time plan.

- a) ³³ ***And those of the people who understand shall instruct many;***

b) of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do-1 Chron 12:32

VI. WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL TO BELIEF IN THE CHURCH?

1. SCRIPTURE TEACHES IT

2. JESUS IS BUILDING IT

a) I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.-Mt 16:18

(1) Jesus is not into building buildings, but building His body.

b) As the Bride of Christ, We must be equally yoked with Jesus and in agreement with what He is doing, and not what we want to do.

3. TO DENY THE CHURCH IS TO DENY JESUS

a) Jesus is the head of the church and His people are His body.

(1) ³⁰ ***For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.....***³² ***This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.-Eph 5:30 & 32***

b) We don't go to church simply because we are Christians; we belong to the Church because we belong to Christ.

4. TO DENY THE CHURCH IS TO DENY YOUR OWN SALVATION

a) When we were born again we became part of the church. You can not separate salvation from the church.

(1) ***"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."-Eph 2:19***

(2) ***"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."-1 Cor 12:13***

(a) "No one of the members of the body can exist on its own"

(b) Christians often underestimate the church because modern culture promotes individualism. Scripture, however, presents salvation as bringing believers into God's family, not merely into a private relationship with Christ.

5. TRANSFORMATION CANNOT HAPPEN APART FROM IT

(1) ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.-2 Cor 3:18

b) Belief in the Church is essential because God has created the church as the primary context where our sanctification, transformation, growth, calling, and eternal destiny is complete.