

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

“...upon this **rock** I will build **My church**; and the gates of hell shall **not prevail against it**” Matthew 16:18.

As the LAST church, the Laodicean Church, we must know who we are.

- Wretched
- Miserable
- Poor
- Blind
- Naked

In other words sinful—That’s what we should expect to see.—If we see different we are in the wrong place.

DON’T HAVE FALSE EXPECTATIONS. WEEP FOR THE SINFUL CONDITION AND REJOICE THAT WE ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE!

1. WHAT PRINCIPLE DOES THE BIBLE SHARE REGARDING LAODICEA?

Laodicea did not receive any _____ for its behavior but no _____ for its doctrine!

“...upon this **rock** I will build **My church**; and the gates of hell shall **not prevail against it**” – Matt 16:18

This also tell us that Christ has a church as He said “**I will build My Church**”

We have gotten away from the studying for ourselves

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with **all readiness of mind**, and **searched the scriptures** daily, **whether those things were so.**” — Acts 17:11

2. WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DEPEND ON THE JUDGMENT OF OTHERS?

The mind that _____ upon the _____ of others is _____, sooner or later, to be _____. {Ed 230.4}

Here is the principle:

3. HOW DO WE ARRIVE AT TRUTH?

Never build a teaching or doctrine on the _____ while ignoring the overwhelming weight of the _____ of clear evidence

4. WHAT IS A KEY PRINCIPLE WHEN STUDYING?

One _____ of the Saviour must not be made to
_____ {GC 370.2}

STATEMENT #1

God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the **national establishment**, neither is it the **various denominations**; it is the people who **love God and keep His commandments**. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” Where Christ is, even among the humble few, **this is Christ’s church**, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone **constitute a church**. Where two or three are present who **love and obey the commandments of God**, Jesus there presides, let it be in the **desolate place** of the earth, in the **wilderness**, in **the city**, [or] **enclosed in prison walls**. The glory of God has penetrated the prison walls, flooding with glorious beams of heavenly light the darkest dungeon. His saints may suffer, but their sufferings will, like the apostles’ of old, spread their faith and win souls to Christ and glorify His holy name. The bitterest opposition expressed by those who hate God’s great moral standard of righteousness should not and will not shake the steadfast soul who trusts fully in God. – {17MR 81.4}

Few questions for you to ask yourself when you study?

- **Who** was she speaking to?
- **What** was the context?
- **When** was it written?
- **Where** was she?
- **Why** did she write it?
- **How** did she arrive at her final conclusion?

Which means simply **read the whole context**. That is the basis of arriving at any conclusion.

Context is Everything

STATEMENT #2

From the **beginning**, **faithful souls** have **constituted** the **church on earth**. {AA 11.2}

Is the church **visible** or **invisible**? Is it **organized** or **disorganized**?

I will build **My church**; and the gates of hell shall **not prevail against it**” —
Matthew 16:18.

And the Lord **added to the church** daily **such as should be saved**. — Acts 2:47

Let's ask a few question in light of this text:

Where were they before they were added? **Outside the church**

Where were they after they were added? **Inside the church**

Can people could be added to the church?

Next Question

Did they know they were added? I would hope so

How were they added?

Then they that gladly received his word were **baptized**: and the same day there were **added unto them** about three thousand souls. — Acts 2:41

Three thousand men were added!

How were they added? They were baptized

So before they were baptized where were they? Outside the Church

After they were baptized where were they? Inside the church

For by one Spirit are we all **baptized** into **one body**... 1 Corinthians 12:13

How do we get into the body? **By baptism**

Then where is a person before he's baptized? Outside **the** body. Where is he after he's baptized? *Inside the body*. That agrees with what we read in Acts 2.

5. WHAT IS THIS BODY SPOKEN OF AND WHO IS THE HEAD?

And he is the _____ of the _____, the
_____. {Colossians 1:18}

So the **body** is the **church**, **Christ** is the **head**, and those who are *added* to the **church** by **baptism**, in that **act**, become **members** of the **church**.

Now, is that a **visible** or an **invisible** thing? Can people **see** when a person is **baptized**?

“...All **power** [**All authority**] 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” — Matthew 28:18–19.

I just want us to think logically. We are establishing a general principle then we will be more specific.

- Based on this text by Christ can anyone just **do** the baptizing?
- Based on this text by Christ can anyone just **receive** the baptizing?

The word power = Exousia = Delegated Authority

If there is to be authority there has to be organization. If there is no organization then its just an invisible church.

What comes before baptism? Teaching

1. What is taught?
2. Who decides what's taught?
3. How are the points of teaching established?
4. How do you decide when a person has learned enough to be baptized and what's the basis of baptism?

Does this sound like an invisible church or where two or three are just gathered in a home?

And if that were the case, why are there spirituals gifts in Ephesian and 1 Corinthians 12?

Ephesian 4

- 11 And he gave some, **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors** and **teachers**;
- 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the **edifying of the body of Christ**:
- 13 Till we all come in the **unity of the faith**, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

If there is a basis of teaching and a basis for baptism? If there is, then there naturally has to be a basis of **who teaches and a basis of **who** baptizes.**

When the SDA movement started this was the issues they faced:

The Lord has shown that gospel **order** has been too much **feared** and **neglected**. [The Adventists were of all churches, and at first they had no idea of forming another church. After 1844 there was great confusion, and the majority were strongly opposed to any organization, holding that it was inconsistent with the perfect liberty of the gospel. The testimony and labors of Mrs White have always been opposed to fanaticism, and in the instruction given through her, organization in some form was early insisted upon, as necessary to prevent confusion.]

There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after his departure **order was strictly observed** among his apostles. And now in these **last days**, while God is bringing his children into the unity of the faith, there is **more real need of order than ever before**; for, as God unites his children, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it. {EW 97.1}

Let notice Gospel Order and God's Church in time of the Apostles

I Acts 9:3-6

Many have the idea that they are responsible to Christ **alone** for their light and experience, **independent** of His **acknowledged followers in the world**. But this is **condemned** by **Jesus** in His teachings and in the examples, the facts, which He has given for our instruction. Here was Paul, one whom Christ was to fit for a **most important work**, one who was to be a chosen vessel unto Him, **brought directly into**

the presence of Christ; yet He does not teach him the lessons of truth. He arrests his course and convicts him; and when he asks, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" the Saviour does not tell him directly, but places him in connection with His church. They will tell thee what thou must do.... He directs Saul to the church, thus acknowledging the power that He has invested in it as a channel of light to the world. It is Christ's organized body upon the earth, ... CCh 242.3

6. WHAT IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IS TAUGHT IN PAULS CONVERSION REGARDING THE CHURCH

In the **conversion** of **Paul** are given us **important principles** which we should ever bear in mind. The **Redeemer of the world** does not sanction experience and exercise in religious matters _____ of His _____ and _____, where He has a church. {CCh 242.4}

7. DOES GOD HAVE A CHURCH? WHAT SHOULD NOT BE DONE TO IT?

I know that the Lord loves **His church**. It is **not** to be _____ or _____ up into _____. There is not the **least consistency** in this; **there is not the least evidence that such a thing will be**. Those who shall **heed** this **false message** and try to **leaven others** will be **deceived** and **prepared to receive advanced delusions, and they will come to nought**. {2SM 68.3}

8. WHAT ELSE ARE WE TOLD MEN WILL DO?

There are those who **pick** out from the **Word of God**, and also from the **Testimonies**, **detached paragraphs** or **sentences** that may be **interpreted to suit their ideas**, and they **dwell** upon these, and **build themselves up in their own positions**, when **God is not leading them**. Here is your danger. {1SM 179.3}

You will take passages in the Testimonies that speak of the _____, of the _____ among God's people, and you will talk of a _____ from this people of a purer, holier people that will arise. Now all this pleases the enemy. {1SM 179.4}

Men whose lives are not holy and who are unqualified to teach the present truth enter the field without being acknowledged by the **church** or the **brethren** generally, and **confusion** and **disunion** are the result. {EW 97.2}

Let's note another principle as taught by Christ:

I Matthew 18:15-17

Now, just how would you go about that if there's no church organization? Just how would you get together the **invisible church** and tell *them* about some brother that isn't doing as he should? And suppose you should make an effort to do that, how would that **invisible, unorganized body take any action in the matter?**

But Jesus says:

“...if he **neglect to hear the church**, let him be unto thee as an **heathen man and a publican**” —Matthew 18:17

So Let's look at the points that have been established:

1. There is a church in the world
2. That church has authority to *do* things.
3. It has authority to add to its members and to disfellowship erring members.
4. It has authority to **send** out those who will **teach** and **baptize**.

Ellen White was sent to Europe, a move she initially resisted, yet as a prophet, she submitted to the authority of a church with apostasy in it. Ultimately, her presence brought great blessings to Europe.

Later, she was sent to Australia, again against her personal wishes. Despite the church's resistance to her teachings, she humbly submitted, and her work there became another profound blessing.

Why did she choose to obey those apostate leaders? Like David's submission to Saul, she demonstrated that as long as we do not compromise principle, we are called to prayerfully submit to the earthly authority God has established.

These self-sent messengers are a curse to the cause. **Honest souls** put **confidence** in them, **thinking** that they are moving in the **counsel of God** and that they are in **union** with the **church**, and therefore suffer them to **administer** the **ordinances**, and, as duty is made plain that they must do their first works, allow themselves to be **baptized** by them. But when light comes, as it surely will, and they are aware that these men are not what they understood them to be, God's called and chosen messengers, they are thrown into trial and doubt as to the truth they have received and feel that they must learn it all over again; they are troubled and perplexed by the enemy about all their

experience, whether God has led them or not, and are **not satisfied until they are again baptized and begin anew**. It is much more wearing to the spirits of God's messengers to go into places where those have been who have exerted this wrong influence than to enter new fields. **God's servants have to deal plainly, act openly, and not cover up wrongs**; for they are standing between the living and the dead and must render an account of their faithfulness, their mission, and the influence they exert over the flock of which the Lord has made them overseers. {EW 99.1}

In Testimonies to Ministers we see more reason why an organized, visible, structured church was necessary.

As our **numbers increased**, it was evident that without some form of **organization** there would be great **confusion**, and the work would **not** be carried forward **successfully**. To provide for the **support of the ministry**, for **carrying the work in new fields**, for **protecting** both the **churches** and the **ministry** from **unworthy members**, for **holding church property**, for the **publication** of the **truth** through the **press**, and for **many other objects**, **organization was indispensable**. {TM 26.2}

Lets break this down:

What does indispensable mean? You can't do without

There are six things that were listed lets see if the can be carried out without an organized visible church. How can these be carried out by faithful souls

1. To provide for the support of the ministry,
2. for carrying the work in new fields,
3. for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members,
4. for holding church property, f
5. or the publication of the truth through the press,
6. and for many other objects, organization was indispensable. {TM 26.2}

For instance, take the matter of holding church property. You have to have an organization to hold church property. You couldn't just have it held by all the faithful throughout the world. Who would decide who the *faithful* were? Simple isn't it, friends?

For protecting the church and the ministry from unworthy members. **How would a church protect itself from unworthy members unless it had a membership list?** How would the church protect itself from **unauthorized ministers unless it had arrangements made to authorize some and not others?**

When inspiration deals with the church, it's dealing with a very definite and visible body here in this world.

Now, it's true that not all of Christ's followers are yet *in* that organized body. That's true. Jesus says:

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold"
John 10:16.

Do you notice the distinction between the sheep and the fold there?

Who are the sheep? Individual followers of Christ.

What's the fold? Obviously, the church.

So He has other sheep which are not of this fold. But now notice what He's going to do:

"...them also I **must bring**, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be **one fold**, and **one shepherd**" John 10:16.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, —Eph 4:5

How many shepherds? One. How many folds? One. How many churches? One. Do you think that statement of Jesus will be answered? Will be fulfilled? It's for that He prayed in John 17:

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me,
and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the
world may believe that thou hast sent me" John 17:21.

Christ prayer is to be **one!**

Lets look at Gods love for his church:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" — Ephesians 5:25.

This is the Church collectively and not just the people:

... the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. — Galatians 2:20

These are not contradictory, they are supplementary. There is something about a movement and collective people that God holds near and dear to His heart.

So He love the Church and gave Himself for it for what reason?

"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**” Ephesians 5:26–27.

Why would the church be mentioned if it just a fragmented random disconnected people around the world?

A few statements about this:

“Clad in the armor of Christ’s righteousness **the church** is to enter upon her **final conflict**. ‘Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’ (Song of Solomon 6:10), she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer” {PK, 725}

When does this happen?

“The deeper the night for God’s people, the more brilliant the stars... Then will the church of Christ appear ‘fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’” *Ibid.*, pages 81–82.

“Then will the church of Christ appear ‘fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. {5T 81.2}

But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. — Proverbs 4:18

Note this powerful statement in Testimonies To Ministers:

God has a church on earth who are lifting up the downtrodden law,... **The church** is the depository of the wealth of the riches of the grace of Christ, and **through the church** eventually will be made manifest the final and full display of the love of God to the world that is to be lightened with its glory. {TM 50.1}

The prayer of Christ that **His church** may be **one** as He was one with His Father will finally be answered. {TM 50.1}

There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places; and for any man to call the attention of the world and other churches to this church, denouncing her as Babylon, is to do a work in harmony with him who is the accuser of the brethren. {TM 50.2}

What Church? The SDA Church

I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. **He has appointed that His church on**

earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time.— {2SM 397.3}

So speaking directly to Seventh-day Adventists, the Lord's messenger identified *this* church, *this* movement, *this* organization, as the thing that inspiration is speaking of.

Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. {2SM 380.2}

The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy. {2SM 380.3}

the Lord has not warranted us in coming to the conclusion that the church is perfect; and **all our zeal will not be successful in making the church militant as pure as the church triumphant.** The Lord **forbids** us to proceed in any violent way against those whom we think erring, and we are not to deal out **excommunications** and **denunciations** to those who are **faulty**. {TM 47.1}

Has God no living church? He has a church, but it is the **church militant**, not the **church triumphant**. We are sorry that there are defective members, that there are **tares amid the wheat**. {TM 45.1}

The work is **soon to close**. The **members** of the **church militant** who have **proved faithful** will **become the church triumphant**.— Ev 707.1