

THE EASTSIDE EXAMINER

Published by the Eastside church of Christ.
Meeting at the corner of Meadow Dr. and Hwy 24 E; Red Bay, AL

Volume 3 - Number 3 - October, 2020

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SCHEDULE OF ASSEMBLIES

Sunday morning worship (Bible Study) 9:30 AM
Sunday morning worship (Preaching) 10:30 AM
Sunday evening worship (Preaching) 4:00 PM
Wednesday evening worship (Bible Study) .. 7:00 PM

THE MISUNDERSTOOD CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

By Jerry L. Henderson

Matthew 16:13-20 shows men did not understand who Jesus was. They misunderstood his identity as the Son of God. Surely we can see the tragedy of misunderstanding Christ, because obedience to Him is essential to our salvation Hebrews 5:8,9. From other passages such as Acts 1:6 we see that the Kingdom (Church Matthew 16:18,19) of Christ was also misunderstood. Since the saved are added to the church Acts 2:47; the church and the body are the same Colossians 1:18,24 and Christ is the Saviour of the body Ephesians 5:23; it is then also essential that we understand what the church is and its purpose here on earth. Much of the misunderstanding is due to prejudice and ignorance of God's word. However, there are some parallels between the misunderstanding concerning Christ and the misunderstandings concerning His church today.

People then had the idea that Christ was just a man like any other Jewish man Matthew 13:55,56; Jhn 6:42. As they thought Christ originated with man, so man today thinks the church originated with man. The church is not a human institution. It was in the eternal purpose of God Ephesians 3:10; Psalms 127:1. Jesus said "I will build **MY** church Matthew 16:18. It was purchased with His blood Acts 20:28. No the church is not of man. It is not a human institution. Just as Christ was divine, so the church is a divine institution. The church was not designed by man, promised by man, or built by man.

Matthew 16:13-20 shows that Christ was considered just one of many prophets. As they considered Christ to be one of many prophets, so do men today think of the church of Christ to be one of many. Although it does have **SOME** similarities to churches originating with men, it is not one of them. The church of Christ is distinctively different. It is different in doctrine and practice. It has God as its designer, Christ as its builder and the Holy Spirit as its revealer. None can claim this but the Lord's church. It takes the Word to produce the church not the church producing the word as some men would have it today. Please understand, not every congregation of people calling themselves "church of Christ" are really **OF** Christ. For any group to be **OF** Christ and scripturally wear His name, they must meet all the identifying characteristics revealed in the Word by the Holy Spirit. So, each person must examine, by the Scriptures, any group of people who claim

to be a congregation belonging to Christ to see if they truly are the church **OF** Christ, that is, a congregation of people who belong to Christ and are working and worshipping according to His will.

Christ's mission was also misunderstood. They thought his mission was a social one, such as healing the sick, feeding the hungry or changing the political situation of His time. His mission was not one of a social nature, but rather a spiritual nature. His mission was to save His people from their sins Matthew 1:21; 20:28; Luke 19:10. The signs and miracles He did, had an effect on the social ills of the time. However, that was not their primary purpose. These signs and miracles were done to prove Jesus to be the Christ John 20:30,31. So as they considered Christ's mission to be social, so men today consider the mission of the church to be social. Some think the church is an organization through which we provide entertainment for the young; meals for the middle-age; and homes for the aged. Although the church, through the preaching of the word and the righteous lives of its members, will help to make a better society, this is not the primary mission of the church. The church is the pillar and ground (support) of the truth 1Timothy 3:15. Since the church is the support of the truth and the truth makes men free John 8:32, it follows that the mission of the church is to save souls.

Christ was and is a divine being with a divine mission. The church is a divine institution with a divine mission. The church is the body of Christ Colossians 1:18,24 and Christ is the Saviour of the body Ephesians 5:23. You are not saved unless you are a part of this soul saving institution because the Lord adds the saved to the church Acts 2:47 and the only way you can become a part of the church is through obedience to the word, the gospel of Christ Romans 1:16; 6:16-18. Obedience to the gospel involves first of all hearing the word because Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Hebrews 11:6 says without faith it is impossible to please him, so faith is essential, just as Jesus said in Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Then to those on the day of Pentecost who asked, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37,38) Also, when Philip was preaching to the Ethiopian about Jesus and he said: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip said: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:36,37) Then they both went down into the water and Philip baptized the Ethiopian and when they were come up out of the water the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:38,39) These passages show us what the Lord requires for one to be a member of His church. He requires us to hear His word, believe He is the Christ, repent of our sins, confess Jesus publicly as the Christ, the Son of God and then be baptized for the remission of our sins. When the people to whom Peter preached on Pentecost obeyed these requirements, they were saved and the Lord added them to the church (His church, the one he promised to build Matthew 16:18) Acts 2:41,47.

Have you obeyed these requirements so that you can be added to the Lord's church (the church **OF** Christ)? If so, is that church wearing the name of Christ and engaging in the spiritual mission that Christ gave to the church? Or is the church of which you are a member engaging in all kinds of social programs and activities? Remember the church that Jesus built is not a social organization with a social mission, but it is a spiritual organization with a spiritual mission and that is simply to save souls. This involves teaching those who are lost as well as edifying and building up those who have been saved and added to the church by the Lord. Yes, the church does have some benevolent responsibilities, but only to the saints. However, individual Christians' benevolent responsibilities are only limited by their ability and opportunity.