

to save His people (Matthew 1:21, 2:6). Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises, the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 18:15, Isaiah 53:7,8; Psalm 16:9,10; etc.). God showed His grace in going first to those who rejected Him (Romans 1:16). This being fulfilled the gospel goes to the Gentiles.

V. The Perfecting of the Church (The Epistles)

It is important to note that the Book of Acts is as a bridge across God's river of transition. It bridges the Old Testament and the New Testament, Israel and the Church, the ages of Law and Grace. Things, therefore, occur in the Book of Acts that occur nowhere else in the Church Age because of transition. Acts represents the birth and early developmental stages of the Church. (Things are often done in childhood that are not repeated.) God presses us on to maturity (Hebrews 5:11—6:2). We must move on to cross the bridge. We must move on into the epistles.

A. The Preciousness of the Church—

1. The Church is precious because it is God's inheritance.
 - a. It is true that we stand to inherit much in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 8:15-17, Ephesians 1:11, Revelation 21:7, etc.
 - b. Yet we are told in Ephesians 1:18 that our eyes of understanding need to be enlightened that we may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of H_____ I _____ in the saints! In 1 Corinthians 3:9 we are told that we are God's husbandry (cultivated field). God stands to gain something in the Church! The Church is God's pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46). The Church is bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20, 1 Pet. 1:18-19).
 - c. To hurt the church is to hurt the Lord Himself (Paul persecuted the church, 1 Cor. 15:9, but it was really the Lord Whom he hurt, Acts 9:4-5. Compare God's feelings toward Israel, Deut. 32:9, Zech 2:8).
2. The Church is precious because it displays the Life of God.
 - a. There is life as the world defines it. But, Luke 12:15, ...a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.
 - b. There is Life as the Lord defines it. Life is a relationship to the Living Lord. John 17:3 ...this is _____, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (Compare John 1:4, 10:10b, 14:6).
 - c. The Church is His Body, possessing His Life; We who were dead are made alive! 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, 3:5, 4:5-11; Ephesians 2:1,5).
 - d. Colossians 3:3-4 Christ is our L_____.

- e. 1 Timothy 3:15-16 ...the Church of the _____ God... God was manifested in the flesh (compare John 1:14). As the Father has sent Me, so send I you (John 20:21).
- f. The world says that God is dead! The Church declares God is alive and active and able to save whosoever will.

He Lives!

I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living whatever men may say;
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find,
None other is so loving, so good and kind.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart.

—Alfred H. Ackley

- 3. The Church is precious to God because it is the showcase for His mighty wisdom.
 - a. Israel had forsaken God. The princes of this age had crucified the Lord of glory. God turned the table! God used the very Stone that the world rejected and made Him the Head of the new creation, the Church which is His body. Surely the foolishness of God is wiser than men! God turned the crucifixion of His Son into the salvation of the world.
1 Corinthians 1:18-25, 2:1-8; Colossians 2:15; John 1:10-12.
 - b. God took Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female and created a brand new thing. When it looked as if God had lost, that the devil and sin had won a mighty victory, God played His mystery card!
 - c. Ephesians 3:9-11 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that _____, unto the _____ and _____ (angels) in heavenly places might be known by the _____ the manifold _____ of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- i. The church is a university to angels, good and bad, teaching them what God is able to do in His mighty wisdom, changing even cursing to blessing.
 - ii. Even the world sees—in the harmonious church, functioning according to God's blueprint in a healthy way—the varied wisdom of God in creating an organism made up of diseased cells that have been saved and quickened. Who but God could make it work?! 1 Corinthians 14:23-25.
 - d. Colossians 2:3,10 In whom are hid _____ the treasures of _____ and _____... And ye are C_____ in Him, which (Who) is the head of all principality and power.
 - e. Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Cp. 2 Corinthians 11:3-6).
 - f. *Watching me in the assembly of the saints, do angels and men get a glimpse of the wisdom of Almighty God? Do I walk in wisdom toward those who are without the assembly (Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:15-21)? How is my witness? How do I contribute toward the witness of the whole? Is my portion of the picture clear or out of focus?*
4. The church is precious to God because it is the pillar and ground of the Truth (1 Tim. 3:15).
- a. If a person amongst the nations of the world wanted to know the Truth in the days of the Old Testament, where would he go? (See Deuteronomy 4:1-8) _____. Alas, though, they became blind leaders of the blind (Matthew 23:13ff), those claiming to teach others but standing in need of being taught (Rom. 2:17-24).
 - b. If a person wanted to know the Truth in the days of the Son of Man, to Whom would he go? (See John 1:14, 14:6) _____ (Note that Pontius Pilate asked the question, but didn't wait for the true answer, see John 18:38.)
 - c. Where shall the seeking soul go today to find the Truth in action?
 - i. 1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the _____ of God, which is the _____ of the _____, the pillar and ground of the _____.
 - ii. Note that the church is not to create the truth, nor does the truth depend on the church, but it is to uphold the Truth. This implies an accurate Testimony (IN FOCUS). The church that is operating according to its Biblical pattern will lift up the Truth for all to see—truth in doctrine and truth in practice.

iii. “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” John 20:21b.

5. The church is precious to God because in it God displays His mighty power.

- a. The Lord Jesus has all power and the authority to use His power.
- b. He was declared to be the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead, Romans 1:4.
- c. He promised power to the disciples and fulfilled His promise, Acts 1:8ff.
 - i. The apostle Paul prays, moved by the Spirit of God, in Ephesians 1:19-22 that ye may know “...what is the exceeding greatness of his _____ to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty _____, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”
 - ii. Paul goes on to pray that we might be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man... Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:16,20).
 - iii. The power of God is outworked in the giving of gifts to the saints—Paul is given the gift of apostleship the same way every believer receives his or her gift from God, by “the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power” Eph 3:7
 - iv. The power of God is outworked in His enablement of the believer to stand, withstand, and understand—Eph. 6:10-18.
 - v. From start to finish the believer’s life, and thus the life of the church which is made of individual believers coming together, is to display the power of God. See Philippians 1:6, 2:12, 3:10, 4:13; Colossians 1:11,29; Jude 24-25.
 - vi. *How much do I teach the world about the mighty working of God's power? Does the world think of God as a weakling because of me? See 2 Corinthians 4:6-10, 12:8-10, 13:4.*

6. The Church is precious to God because it is a showcase for His grace.

a. When God wants to show the extent of His great love He points to Calvary's cross and the wounded hands of our beloved Lord (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16, 4:9-10,19).

b. When God wants to show the riches of His grace where does He point?

READ Ephesians 2:1-13.

i. 2:2 ...ye walked according to the course of this _____,

according to the _____ of the power of the air (Satan)...

ii. 2:3 ...we all had our conversation (life style) in times past in the _____ of our flesh, fulfilling the _____ of the flesh and of the _____; and were by nature the children of _____, even as others.

iii. 2:5 ...we were _____ in sins...

iv. 2:4 ...BUT GOD who is _____ in _____ for His great _____ with which He _____ us

v. 2:5 ...hath _____ (made alive) us together with Christ

vi. 2:6 ...and hath _____ us up together...

vii. 2:6 ...and made us sit together in _____ in Christ Jesus.

viii. 2:7 ...that in the ages to come He might _____ the exceeding _____ of His _____ in his _____ toward us through _____

ix. Write out 2:8-9...

x. 2:11-12 *Read and remember whence you came!*

c. Psalm 40:2-3 He brought me up also out of an horrible _____, out of the miry clay, and set my feet _____ a _____, and established my _____. And he hath put a _____ in my mouth, even _____ unto our God: many shall _____ it, and _____, and shall _____ in the Lord.

d. The church is a showcase for the grace of God. When Israel rejected him, God chose not to scrap the whole world, but to stoop a little lower to save a people who were not a people (see 1 Pet 2:8-12)

"Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...!"

7. Thus we see that the Church is precious to God because in the Church there is GLORY (that expression of the worth, weight, and wealth of God).
- a. Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be G _____ in the _____ by Christ Jesus throughout all _____, world without end. Amen.
 - b. God is rich. How rich is He? (See Psalm 50:10).
 - c. Christ Jesus, the Son of God was rich (2 Corinthians 8:9), laid aside His riches, (Philippians 2:6-11), is and shall be rich again (John 17:4-5; Revelation 5:12-13).
 - d. The believer is rich in Christ, John 17:9-10,20-24. Christ has made us rich that we might display His riches, the wealth of His Person, His glory. There is GLORY in the Church!
- i. Colossians 1:27 ...God would make known what is the _____ of the _____ of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ _____, the hope of _____.
 - ii. Ephesians 2:7 ...in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding _____ of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
 - iii. Romans 2:4 ...the _____ of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering...
 - iv. Romans 11:33 O the depth of the _____ both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! (See also Ephesians 3:10.)
 - v. Philippians 4:19-20 ...But my God shall supply all your need according to his _____ in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be _____ for ever and ever. Amen.
 - vi. Ephesians 3:8 ...the unsearchable _____ of Christ.
- e. The believer is to keep his eyes on true riches, to behold the glory of the Lord. The more consistently he gazes at the glory of God, the more he is changed into the image he beholds, from one degree of glory to another by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God (See 2 Cor 3:18).
 - f. 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 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 _____ of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the _____ may be of God, and not _____. [God get all the credit!]
 - g. And God makes sure we have the pressures and problems, the trials and tests and troubles that will press His glorious life out of us, 2 Cor 4:8-10. God refines us with His fire to strip away earthly dross and bring forth those true riches, those things consistent with His glorious nature, 1 Peter 1:7-9; James 1:2-4.