

Lesson 13

The Purpose of the Church

Opening Verse: **Ephesians 1:22–23**

²²And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him (Christ) to be the head over all things to the church, ²³Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Introduction:

These verses reveal to us that God has chosen the Church to fulfil a very significant role. As His body, we are not only His hands and his feet, but we are also His mouthpiece to activate His supernatural kingdom here on earth. In this lesson, we are going to learn about the true purpose of the Church and how God enables and directs us to fulfil it.

Sheep and the Harvest

Matthew 9:35–38

*³⁵And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. ³⁶But when he saw the **multitudes**, he was moved with compassion on them, because they **fainted**, and were scattered abroad, as **sheep having no shepherd**. ³⁷Then saith he unto his disciples, The **harvest** truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; ³⁸Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

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³⁵And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news (the Gospel) of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and every weakness and infirmity. ³⁶When He saw the throngs, He was moved with pity and sympathy for them, because they were bewildered (harassed and distressed and dejected and helpless), like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then He said to His disciples, The harvest is indeed plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸So pray to the Lord of the harvest to force out and thrust laborers into His harvest.

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(WUEST)

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and making a public proclamation of the good news concerning the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. And having seen the crowds He was moved with compassion concerning them because they were exhausted by their troubles and their long, aimless wanderings, and had thrown themselves to the ground in an utterly prostrate condition as sheep not having a shepherd. Then He says to His disciples, The harvest indeed is great, but the workers, few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to thrust out workers into His harvest.

MULTITUDE = a **THRONG** or a crowd or group that does not know where they are heading; they are just going with the tide of circumstances; **troops of people gathered together without order.**

In these verses, the Lord goes and teaches the gospel of the kingdom, and he heals to confirm the Word. But even with the teaching and with the miracles, he saw that the multitudes were fainting and were scattered abroad.

FAINT = they have lost their ability to go forward

CAST SHEEP = sheep that have fainted and that have been thrown or cast to the ground.

A cast sheep is in a very dangerous position. When a sheep is laid down on its side, it will roll over on its back because the weight of the body or the mass of the body is so great compared to its very slim legs. Then there's not enough mass in the legs, or not enough weight in the legs to be able to rotate itself back up in its position. So when they really get cast, they CAN'T save themselves.

And when the Lord Jesus saw the multitudes, He saw **THAT THEY WERE IN A CONDITION THAT THEY COULD NOT SAVE THEMSELVES** because they had no shepherd. He had great compassion for them because **He knew that they were going to die without someone who would come to them and reach them with the gospel.**

God is trying to show the **relationship between Himself as the Shepherd and us as the sheep** wherein we always need to be **DEPENDENT** on Him because relying on our own strength will not save us.

Luke 9:23–24 ²³ *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* ²⁴ ***For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.***

As sheep, we've got to be dependent upon the Shepherd not only for our own benefit but also because **we are supposed to be the Lord's UNDER-SHEPHERDS**, or under-shepherds to the sheep.

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As Under-Shepherds:

The Lord needs us to exercise that caring and nurturing ministry that a pastor or shepherd does, that protecting ministry, that overseeing ministry for sheep to make sure that they're **not sick**, that they're **not attacked**, that they **have green pastures to feed in** and **still waters to lie beside and drink from**. Because sheep are timid and afraid of rushing water; for if they slip and fall into it – they will drown because their wool is very heavy when it gets wet.

AND SO SHEEP CANNOT SAVE THEMSELVES. And the Lord Jesus Christ was looking at the lost sheep of the **CHURCH**, and the lost sheep of the **BACKSLIDERS**, and then the lost sheep of this **WORLD**. And He knows they cannot save themselves.

GROWTH must be a continual process when we are born-again and those who are not growing in His grace and in the knowledge of His Word are **REGRESSING!** Thus, we've got to come to the end of ourselves and finally surrender our will to Him in EVERYTHING! So that as we DIE to ourselves, He can LIVE and REIGN in us and do His work through us! Because it is **His will and plan**, as our Good Shepherd, to use His CHURCH as **CONDUITS** for His ministry - to reach them, to save them, and to take care of them.

After the Lord makes a comparison with the SHEEP, He transitions to the **HARVEST** because he was showing their need to be saved with somebody loving them enough to reach them. And **we can't ever love them truly enough unless we are ultimately letting Him love them through us.** There are some that can be saved when reaching them with human emotion (PHILIA) because the Word of God and the Spirit of God are also at work. **There is some fruit BUT the great majority cannot be reached by that. So I need to be crucified with Christ so that it IS Christ that is living in me and through me and it is Christ's faith that is being exercised in ministry through me,** both in Word and Spirit so that people can be saved.

2 Cor. 4:10-12 ¹⁰Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.** ¹¹For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.** ¹²So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

The CHURCH is called to DIE

Therefore, the Church is not called to LIVE but the body of Christ is called to DIE! He died so that we can live and now **we've got to die to ourselves so that He can live through us for a lost and dying world.**

So what is the purpose of the Church, what is the work of the Church on the earth?

The **FIRST CENTURY CHURCH** demonstrated much of God's power as they experienced mighty outpourings of the Holy Ghost beginning in Jerusalem. It was indeed glorious but the prophet says that the glory of the latter house is going to be greater than the former:

Haggai 2:3,9 *Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? **The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former**, saith the LORD of hosts: And in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Prophet Haggai was referring to the **LAST DAY HARVEST of the Church** and he said it is going to be ABUNDANT. Because **God is going to do MORE through the last day Church** than He did through the first day Church.

And this is what Peter said when they received the first outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:17

*¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, saith God, I will **pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh**: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*

Here, Peter was saying in the Holy Ghost, that this is the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy but that this is also the foreshadowing of **WHAT'S GOING TO BE Poured out on the last days**. Because in Joel's prophecy, he did not give a specific timeline:

Joel 2:28

*And it shall come to pass **afterward**, That I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh ...*

In Peter's declaration - he was referring to the **END TIME HARVEST!** It started in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria but it's going to end in the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8). It is going to be AMAZING but it will be nothing in comparison to what we have ever experienced!

God's Promise to Abraham = End Time Harvest

This End Time Harvest is directly linked to God's PROMISE to Abraham. And it is **God's promise to Abraham that will result in an end time Apostolic revival and harvest!**

It was Abraham's Promise. God chose Abraham because Abraham chose God. He lived in the midst of a religious climate and culture that believed in many gods and yet Abraham chose to believe in the only One True and Living God. Thus, Abraham became the foundation of all that God would do by faith and he would be the example of faith to all who would choose God over the multiple gods of this world.

- In Rom. 4 and Gal. 3, **Abraham is described as the Father of ALL believers** (Old AND New Testament).
- In demonstration of his call, he left his place of birth. He left his homeland without God giving him any specific direction on where to go.
- He obeyed God and offered up his son, Isaac.
- He was truly a man of faith as He trusted in His God.

This was God's promise to Abraham:

Genesis 12:3

*And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: **and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.***

What is this blessing?

It is a spiritual blessing = **the Promise of the Holy Ghost**

This scripture is saying that for every **FAMILY** (or blood relation) - there will be ONE witness who will be filled with the Holy Ghost! That means every family from every "living" blood line will have someone in their family who will receive the blessing of the promise - which is the infilling of the Holy Ghost!

After Abraham passed his test in Mt. Moriah and offered to sacrifice Isaac, God **REAFFIRMED** His promises and **EXPANDED** it and **GUARANTEED** it with an OATH. And here God made a covenant with man, against His own deity.

Genesis 22:15–18 ¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶ And said, **By myself have I sworn**, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: ¹⁷ That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will **multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;** ¹⁸ And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

These promises did not replace the first but expanded it:

Two Offspring:

- **Spiritual** = Church (as the stars)
- **Natural** = Jews (as the sand)

Promise of Spiritual DOMINION – to possess his enemy’s gate; similar to possessing the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18).

Promise for every NATION to receive the spiritual blessing

When God made his promise to Abraham, He first said all “families” and then all “nations.” Then God confirmed these promises to **Isaac** (Gen 26:1-5) and to **Jacob** (Gen. 28:10-15). With **Isaac** - all nations and with **Jacob** (who was going to be the father of Israel) – all families. **This was God’s Promise to the WHOLE WORLD ... for every family and every nation!** And this has not happened yet - not in comparison to the magnitude of all stars in the universe!

WHY is it so IMPORTANT for every family blood line to have an experience of the outpouring of His Spirit?

Because this will be (1) **PROOF of God’s love** to those who will believe and obey His Truth and (2) will be **EVIDENCE of God against those who will reject His gospel.**

One person in a blood line receiving the Holy Ghost becomes evidence against the whole blood line! This promise demonstrates God’s justice and judgment! He is a God of love but He is also a God of justice. **For God’s love cannot send His creation to hell without enough evidence that they were the ones who rejected Him!**

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PROMISE!

God's promise to Abraham will result in an **END TIME Apostolic harvest**, upon every family of every nation of this world!

This **PROMISE** given to **Abraham is what TIES TOGETHER ALL BELIEVERS** (Old Testament and New Testament) **and that must be fulfilled before Jesus can return for His Church.**

It also proposes that this **PROMISE** is the underlying **FOCUS of the ENTIRE BIBLE**, from Genesis to Revelation!

We read about God's **promise** to Abraham in the book of Genesis, then we read about the **promise** of the Holy Ghost in the book of the prophets (Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and then in the book of Acts, Peter reminds the Jews about that same **promise** on the Day of Pentecost.

Then in **Gal. 3:14**, Apostle Paul declares ***That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.***

And we know that the **Promise** of the Father is the **baptism of the Holy Ghost!**

Luke 24:49 *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

The Day of Pentecost was the **START** of the fulfilment of the Promise of God and **Peter declared that the Promise of the Holy Ghost is for everyone ...**

Acts 2:38–39

³⁸ *Then Peter said unto them, 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.*** ³⁹ *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

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We Are the Children of the Covenant (New Testament)

The oath that God made to mankind involves us, His Church, for we can't separate receiving the Holy Ghost and the Covenant!

Hebrews 9:15

*And for this cause he is the mediator of the **new testament**, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might **receive the promise of eternal inheritance**.*

Ephesians 1:13-14

*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed with that holy Spirit of promise**, ¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

- The **Holy Ghost** was the EARNEST (down payment) of our inheritance.
- **We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of PROMISE!**
- God put His mark or seal on us as "His!"
- **The Holy Ghost brings us "into" the Promise AND into the FULLNESS of the Promise.**
- But it also means that we are NOT saved to be saved.
- **Because we are saved to be LABORERS in the field for the harvest!**
- For we were not only given the down payment of the promise but **we are the CONDUITS wherein the PROMISE is going to be FULFILLED!**

And WE are the RAPTURE GENERATION!

We are saved during this Church age because God is going to use us, His Church, to seek and to save a great multitude of lost souls from every family and from every nation in this world before the rapture or before the end of our dispensation.

They Are Waiting on Us!

These great men of the Old Testament and the First Century Apostles and believers in the New Testament are all WAITING for us to fulfill God's promise that He swore unto Abraham! For we are the generation wherein the promise of Abraham is going to be fulfilled!

For they only received it BY FAITH.

In **Hebrews 11**, it says:

⁷ By faith Noah ... ⁸ By faith Abraham ... ²⁰ By faith Isaac ...
²¹ By faith Jacob ... ²² By faith Joseph ... ²³ By faith Moses ...

And **Hebrews 11:13**

¹³ ***These all died in faith, not having received the promises***

They all died "believing" or clinging to their faith! Their faith in God demonstrated their trust in God's Word that this is going to happen through the Church of the Gentiles!

And so the fulfilment of their promises DEPENDS upon US! For we are Abraham's spiritual seed ...

Galatians 3:29

²² *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

²⁹ ***And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.***

Ephesians 3:6

⁶ *That the **Gentiles** should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and **partakers of his promise** in Christ by the gospel:*

SO WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Luke 12:48b

⁴⁸ ***For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required ...***

This scripture pertains to us, as we are the "living" body of Christ at this present time and dispensation. And He has been bringing us, His Church body, to the end of ourselves, to the place of our crucifixion so that we can be used of Him as His instruments in the last day harvest.

God's Love Compels us into the Harvest

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: ¹⁵And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

That compelling love of God is working in our heart to bring the Church, the body of Christ, collectively and individually, to a crucified place in God. So that we can now be used of Him as LABORERS WITH HIM in His Harvest.

- **We must die to ourselves in order to bear much fruit**

John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

- **And when we die to ourselves - we will not frustrate the grace of God**

Galatians 2:20-21

²⁰I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

The **GRACE of God** is trying to bring is all at the end of ourselves, to bring us into this supernatural **DIMENSION** that He can use us, as powerful and effective laborers. The love of Christ is constraining us, is bringing us down to this place where we're going to have to either walk away OR give up on ourselves and completely submit our will to His.

And it is His will to begin to use us in dimensions that He has never used us before. But we need to fully die to our self and submit our will to His. We need to pay the price if we want to fully walk in His grace.

We Need to be Qualified Laborers

Matthew 11:28-29 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

The laborers are NOT qualified to be laborers FULLY until they reach the end of themselves and let Him do the laboring through them. And these things have to become a REALITY in our lives. Because if they don't – we won't be ready or qualified.

Being in His yoke is a life of no pressure. It's a place of rest in Him where **THERE IS NO PRESSURE**. When I give up on me, and I let Him live in me by His Spirit and His Word abiding in me, and I let Him minister His faith through me – then there's no pressure on me. All I have to do each day, or each moment of the day is His will, or whatever He's telling me to do.

We Are COMMANDED To PRAY THIS

Matthew 9:38 ³⁸ *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send (THRUST OUT; COMPEL) forth labourers into his harvest.*

The word pray here is in the imperative tense of command. It's a command of God for us to pray! For God to send, to give birth to and to equip the harvesters. And obeying this command requires our own involvement – to be READY (being crucified with Christ) to be thrust out into the harvest, where we go out by His authority and power.

The Harvest is truly plenteous and God can't lie. So He has chosen us, the "living" body of Christ, to fulfil His promise to Abraham, in going out and being a witness of His gospel to every family (living blood line) of every nation of this world. And that is the ultimate purpose of the New Testament Church.