

THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION GOD'S PLAN IN PERPETUATION

Program #1039

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EDDIE: What role does the church play in God's plan for the redemption of mankind? Get your Bibles, and let's study together.

EDDIE: Thank you for joining us today on *The Truth In Love*. Mark Teske is here, as he has been the last few weeks, as we continue our series of lessons on God's plan for the redemption of mankind. It's often called God's scheme of redemption. We are nearing the end of our study and want to take just a moment to remind you of the points we have covered so far.

We talked about God's plan in purpose and how God created a plan for the salvation of man even before He created the world. Then we turned to God's plan in promise, and discussed how God began, soon after the creation of the world, to reveal portions of that plan to different individuals by way of promises made to them, like the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We talked, not only about purpose and promise, but prophecy and how God used prophecy in revealing portions of this plan about the coming of Christ and the establishing of His kingdom. We talked about preparation and how some of the events in inter-testament history were providentially used by God to bring about the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). And we looked last time at God's plan in perfection, as we surveyed Acts 2 and saw how God's kingdom finally did come into existence on the earth in the form of the church in Acts 2. That brings us to today's topic of discussion.

MARK: And that is the perpetuation of God's plan. As we talk about the church to others, a lot of people today like to say things like, "Just give me Jesus. I don't need the church, just Jesus." But if you consider

the implications of all this Bible teaching that we've been going over the last several weeks, you can see that the church is an essential part of God's eternal purpose. That's where we'd like to focus our attention today.

EDDIE: Sometimes you hear people say things like, "I'll take the man but not the plan." And many people believe that they can have a strong and vibrant relationship with Jesus, without having anything to do with His church. Part of what we are going to do today is to measure that by God's word and see if that is a valid principle. But the first thing that we want to do is to lay a little groundwork or foundation, and discuss some things that we didn't get to cover in our last session. And that has to do with the church, and to determine what the church is.

We have talked about the church being the kingdom, and indeed it is, and we've looked at prophecies that indicated that, as well as New Testament passages that proved that. But on a different level and in some matters relating to the church, one of the things that we need to remember is that the church is not a denomination. It is not by nature a division of something else.

MARK: It's not a mere building, either.

EDDIE: That's right. It reminds me of the story about a person who at one time was filling out a form at the hospital. When it asked for church preference, he wrote "red brick." That's not the church. The church is not the building. The church is the people that make up and that are a part of, the body of Christ. The church, according to the New Testament, does not have earthly headquarters, and is not overseen by a board of directors, a council, a synod or anything like that. You don't find that in the New Testament.

MARK: The headquarters, which is where the head is, would be in heaven with Jesus, because He is head over His body, the church.

EDDIE: That's right. Paul said, "Our citizenship is in heaven," (Philippians 3:20). That is where the church's headquarters are, if you will. You mentioned the headship of Christ. When you talk about the ruler of the church, you are referring to Jesus. He is the head of it. There are a number of passages that illustrate and show that when you talk about the church, you're talking about Jesus as the head of it. There's not anybody on this earth that is the head of the church. Sometimes people may indicate that there is somebody on earth that's the head of the church, but you don't find that in the Bible. Jesus is the

only head of the church.

MARK: Eddie, if we think about it, there are only two possibilities. If somebody else is putting their headship over an organization and calling it the church, they are saying that their authority is higher than Jesus' authority. The other possibility is that people say that they are below Jesus, but His authority and His rule is insufficient for them, and they have to insert something. It seems that they are saying that because Jesus can't do it all Himself, they have to be in that role. And clearly, that's an indictment of our Lord as well.

EDDIE: Yes. I don't like either one of those possibilities. The scriptures don't support any of that. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," (Matthew 16:18). The church belongs to Him. It doesn't belong to me. It doesn't belong to Mark. It doesn't belong to anybody else. The New Testament church belongs to Jesus Christ. He promised to build it. He did build it and it is His. It wears His name, because He purchased it. In another passage, Acts 20:28, Paul is talking to elders of a particular congregation, (the church in Ephesus), and he said concerning the church, that Jesus "purchased it with His own blood."

MARK: That's a high price for Him to pay.

EDDIE: That's right. The purchase of the church cost Him His own blood and that is a mighty important thing.

MARK: It would be foolish of us to say, "I'll take Jesus, but not His church." The whole point of what He did was to bring about His church. That's what's so important. It would be kind of like saying, "I have a title to a car, and I'll take the title, but don't worry about the car." You're missing the point.

EDDIE: Right. And because Jesus purchased the church, the church wears His name. The New Testament church does. Why would I want to wear, as part of describing who I am, the name of somebody else, if I'm a part of Christ's church? The church wears His name. Let's say for the sake of example that you're buying a piece of property. And as we taped this, Mark's in the process of he and his family buying a house. Let's say Mark goes through that whole process of purchasing a house and property and all of that and he gets the deed to the property.

MARK: And the mortgage.

EDDIE: All of that. And when the deed to the property is given to

Mark and he's paid for it and it's all his, he looks on the deed, and lo and behold, it's not his name on it, but it's mine. I didn't shell out a penny for it, but it has my name on it. I don't think Mark would take too kindly to that. If he purchased it, then it's going to be in his name. Now, if Jesus purchased the church, how must He feel when He sees people creating, if you will, churches and then throwing somebody else's name on it?

MARK: I think we can stretch that analogy a little bit further as well. Whose actual name is on that piece of paper doesn't affect my daily life. That's just a piece of paper that sits in a drawer. And it will until the day that I decide that I want to sell that piece of property. But symbolically, there's something very important that's going on. I would be troubled every day, not that I'd go and look at that piece of paper every day, but just that knowledge would be troubling to me. And I think the analogy holds through there as well.

EDDIE: Yes. Ephesians 1:22-23 says that God gave Jesus to be the "head over all things to the church, which is His body." "He is the head of the body, the church," (Colossians 1:18). So when we're talking about the church, or the body, or the one body of Christ, the church has but one head, and that is Jesus. The church is not a man-made, or man-created religious institution. It is the Christ-built and Christ-established body of Christians that He purchased that wears His name. And that body is made up of all the individuals who have obeyed the gospel and been saved by the blood of Christ through their obedience to the gospel. We looked last time at Acts 2 and how the church became a reality in the world and that those that were saved were added to that body, (Acts 2:41-47).

MARK: When reading through the book of Ephesians, we find that the whole theme and thrust of that book, is talking about the Lord's church. If you're listening today and you have some questions about this, spend some time reading through the book of Ephesians. As you do, look at the church, and you'll see some very eye-opening things. I would suggest that you even write down different characteristics and qualities of the church as you read, and I think you'll have a better appreciation of the subject we're talking about today.

EDDIE: Yes. The church in the first century that we read of in the New Testament, met in different places. There was a congregation in Corinth and one in Ephesus and in the regions of Galatia and things of

that sort, yet the church as a whole was united in their teaching, in their doctrine. Paul said I want you to all “speak the same thing”, (I Corinthians 1:10). He even said to the church at Corinth what I'm telling you is what “I teach everywhere in every church,” (I Corinthians 4:17). And so you had the church united, the one body of Christ, made up of individual Christians united together in purpose and in doctrine, in teaching and in practice. That's how the New Testament presents the church. That's not how most folks view the church today. Our task and desire should be to go back to the New Testament, and to do things the way they did it then.

MARK: If we look at the way man set up churches throughout the world today, they're all different. They don't do the same thing, and they don't act the same way. The only way that we can all get back to the same thing would be to go back to the Bible and the Bible only. That would get us united under Christ's plan.

EDDIE: Yes. You're never going to unite people based on man's doctrine. You're just not. If I asked these good people that are watching the program, “Let's all unite in doctrine, and everybody just believe what I say. Just whatever I say, you just believe it and take it, and every opinion of mine is law, and everybody just follow that.”

MARK: Okay.

EDDIE: But people are not going to do that. They're not going to unite, nor should they unite together on the doctrines of men. But surely everybody would agree that we could let the Bible be the sole authority.

MARK: And if we go just to the Bible, we'll all be reading the same thing and we'll be trying to get to the exact same place in our method, including the way we go about worshipping and bringing things about for our Lord's glory.

EDDIE: That's right. It's foolish for us to think that the God of all creation could not communicate His will to man in an understandable way. Surely God, who created us, and who created communication, knows how to communicate His will in a way that people can understand. And people can if they just will. That's our desire and our plea.

MARK: If somebody claims that the Bible cannot be understood by everybody the same way, think about the indictment against God that such a statement makes. If He can't give us a book that we can all

understand in the same way, He is indeed the author of confusion, and He's creating problems, which clearly He didn't. The problem rests with us, not with God.

EDDIE: That's right. As we continue to talk about the church and the importance of the church in God's plan for the redemption of man, I want to give some reasons why the church is necessary. We began with the statement that some people make, "I'll take Jesus, but I don't want any part of the church. Don't give me that. Give me the man, but don't give me the plan." There are a number of reasons, and we've touched on some of them already, but we want to expand a little bit on those. There are reasons given in scripture as to why the church is not something that we can just take or leave, but that the church is necessary. One of those is simply the fact that the church has always been a part of God's plan. The church has to be and is a necessary component in the life of the Christian, because that's been God's plan all along.

MARK: Let's turn back to Ephesians 3. This passage, which we talked about earlier in the series, really highlights the importance of the church in God's eternal plan.

EDDIE: Paul, when writing about the church, refers to the mystery of God's will, which is actually God's plan for the redemption of man that was once hidden, but has now been revealed. He says, beginning in Ephesians 3:8, "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, 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; 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, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul is talking here about the church as a part of God's eternal purpose.

MARK: The church is the manifestation. You might say that "Exhibit A" for God's wisdom is the church that exudes His glory and shows His great wisdom, not only here but in the heavenly places as well. And for us to say, "I'll take Christ, but not the church" is an indictment again of God's wisdom, because that was His plan.

EDDIE: Right. Some people today have the mistaken idea that the church was not God's original intent, but that the church was plan B. As you've said before, some believe that the church was God's audible at the

line of scrimmage. When things didn't go the way He had planned them to go in the first place, He had to come up with a secondary plan, and that plan was the church. The only problem with that is that it contradicts Paul. Paul was writing by inspiration of the Spirit, and Paul said the church is an expression of God's wisdom and has been a part of God's eternal purpose.

MARK: As we studied last week, Peter said in Acts 2 that the crucifixion of Jesus, that part of the plan of redemption, was the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. That was His plan before it happened. That's what He wanted to do: to bring Christ to suffer, to die and to shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. That was His plan all along.

EDDIE: Yes. So how could I look God in the face, as it were and say, "I know that it's always been a part of Your plan from eternity, but I don't have time for it, or I don't want any part of it." I don't think I want to put myself in that position. Who wants to say the church is not necessary or important, when it's been a part of God's plan all along? Not me.

MARK: Another indictment, as we've listed several so far, is that if we spend time thinking about what we're really saying and what effect that has on what God has done, planned and worked so hard to bring about, and if we're really reverent of God, we'll follow His plan. For us to inject our own plan really does show a lack of respect for what He's done.

EDDIE: Yes, the church is important and necessary because it's always been a part of God's plan. Now, there's another reason, too, that we need to accept and embrace the importance of the church, and that's because it is to the church that God adds saved people. And we'll get to that in a minute. I'm jumping ahead of myself. Actually, I wanted to cover this one next, and that's the church being purchased by the blood of Christ, a point we mentioned in passing a minute ago. But let's expand on that a little bit.

MARK: Yes. We are in the process of buying a house, and that's a lot of money we expend. Because of that, we care deeply about something we've invested a lot of money in. And Jesus invested even more than money. He could have created as much money as He wanted, but that wasn't good enough. He purchased it with His own blood, the blood of God on earth. That's quite a purchase price.

EDDIE: It is. He purchased the church “with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Peter said in I Peter 1:18-19, that you were redeemed. The idea of redeemed is being bought back, being purchased out of slavery or bondage. “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold”...but you were redeemed or purchased “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”...”foreordained before the foundation of the world.” So that gets back to God's plan that involved the blood of Christ which was used as the purchase price for the redemption of men's souls.

MARK: Revelation 5, starting in verse 1, we read of an image that the apostle John has of what's going on in heaven. Jesus is introduced as the Lamb, the only one who's worthy to take the scroll. Starting in verse 9, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.'"

EDDIE: Here in this scene of heaven the Lord is being praised. That is what's highlighted in that statement of praise, “you redeemed us by your blood.” Jesus purchased Christians; He purchased the church with that blood.

MARK: In this throne scene here in heaven that we have in Revelation 5, the only one that's worthy to the task is Jesus, the Lamb of God.

EDDIE: That's right. Paul would use language that refers to purchasing or buying in I Corinthians 6:19-20 when he says to the Corinthians, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body." Earlier in the context of these verses, Paul encourages these Corinthians to keep themselves from fornication because your “body is the temple of the Holy Spirit,” and you've been purchased, you've been bought. In other words, you don't belong to yourself anymore, to go out and live any way you want to. You've been purchased with a price, and that price is the blood of Christ.

Now, understanding all of that, let's kind of draw ourselves into the seriousness of what Jesus did and why He did it. Think about all the things He went through. The ridicule, the hatred by people, being made

fun of, being spit upon, being beaten and then finally having nails driven through His body and being hung on the cross. Why did He do all of that? There are a number of answers for that. Because He loved people and that is certainly true. But also involved in that is He did all of that and willingly suffered so much to purchase the church. Now, how could I, in the face of knowing all of those things say, "The church is not that important. Give me Jesus but not the church." No. What Jesus did, He did to purchase the church. If you want Jesus, you have to take His church.

MARK: And if we have the proper reverence for who He is and everything that He's done for us, it will have an effect, like Paul told the Corinthians, on how we live our lives, how we view the church, and on everything in our life. If we allow it to sink in and if we really have that true respect and love for Jesus and what He did for us on the cross at Calvary and all those things leading up to it, (the shame and the humiliation that He went through), it really should affect our lives.

EDDIE: Yes, it should. And it will if we're honest and true to Him. Why would Jesus give up everything He gave up to purchase something that we're just at liberty to take or leave? It doesn't make any sense at all.

MARK: Eddie, as we're talking about Jesus, with this purchase price of His blood for the church, can you relate that to His purchase price to remove our sins? That's His blood as well. How do those two things, the purchase price for the church and the purchase price for our sins, come together?

EDDIE: It works together because when a person is saved by the blood of Christ, and has his sins washed away by His blood, the Lord adds him to the church. And that's a third reason as to why the church is important, because the church is composed of the saved. When we remind ourselves of Acts 2, (which we studied last time), and how Peter preached the sermon and convicted those people of their sins of having crucified the Messiah, and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins." And those that gladly received his word did that. They, the 3,000 souls, were added to the church that day. Acts 2:47 says those that continued to be saved were continually added to the church.

MARK: They were added to that same number.

EDDIE: That's right.

MARK: So the process of conversion is one that includes being a part

of the church. There's no such thing as a Christian who's been bought by the blood of Christ who is not in the church. That is not a decision the person makes. That's something that God does. He adds you to the church. He adds you to the number of the saved. It's not a choice that you have. It's something that inherently happens.

EDDIE: Yes. In the New Testament, there is no such thing as a person being saved and then at some point later in their lives, deciding to join a church. Human hands never touched this process. Once you are saved, God Himself adds you to the church. You don't have a choice in the matter. God adds the saved to the church.

MARK: So when He purchased the forgiveness of your sins through the blood of the cross and purchased the church with His blood, that's really two different ways of saying the exact same thing. Because they are the same. God makes sure that those come together as a package. If I want salvation, I have to take His church.

EDDIE: That's right.

MARK: It's not optional.

EDDIE: That's right. And that's why Jesus died, to purchase the church, and to purchase your salvation. If you're obedient to Him, His blood will wash your sins away, as Revelation 1:5 teaches, and the Lord will at that time add you to His church. You cannot be a Christian and not be a part of the church that Jesus bought. That is God's plan.

We thank you for being with us today on the program. We'd like for you to have a copy of today's lesson. You can have it in the form of an audiocassette tape, a CD or a DVD. All you have to do is contact us and let us know which format you'd like to have that in, and we'll send it to you free of charge. Our address is P. O. Box 865, Hurst, Texas 76053. Our e-mail address is requests@thetruthinlove.com and our website is www.thetruthinlove.com. Please visit the website. You'll find a lot of good information there about the program. We thank you for being with us. Mark, thank you again for being a part of our program. We hope to see you next time, as we continue to study from God's word and try to learn His truth.

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