

The Church of the Bible – No. 4

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The Bible clearly reveals both the **nature** and **work** of the church, implying the significance of both. Unarguably, as to its nature, the church/kingdom of Christ is a spiritual entity, as Jesus stressed in His kingdom parables. He also stated this explicitly:

My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight...: but now is my kingdom not from hence (John 18:36).

After Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000, the crowd sought to force him to be their king, but he refused their crown (6:5-15). Paul wrote that the kingdom pertains to spiritual, rather than to physical elements (Rom. 14: 17). Thus Jesus' contemporaries erred in expecting an earthly political kingdom and king of their Messiah (as do all future-kingdom, Zionist, premillennial theorists of today err). Jesus' kingdom is not political, commercial, recreational, social, or philosophical, but entirely spiritual in nature.

The nature of every institution determines its work. Just as the church is spiritual in nature, so it is in its work. We learn this from the work Jesus came to do and did. He said of Himself: "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10; cf. 1 Tim. 1:15). The work Jesus did in his physical body prefigured the work of the church, His spiritual body (Col. 1:18). The spiritual work of saving the lost from sin is the work of the church/kingdom of Christ. Jesus' commission to His followers in every age makes the same point:

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

"But what of His many acts of physical compassion?" His miracles indeed benefited thousands. However, relief of physical suffering was not their principal aim. Their ultimate purpose was to convince those who saw the miracles that He was Who He said He was/is, that they might have eternal life (John 3:16; 20:30-31). God's Son could have performed all of His miracles of mercy through His human servants without leaving Heaven. Christ alone could provide the greater need of spiritual healing (14:6). This spiritual healing – forgiveness of sins – is only through the Gospel (6:68; Rom. 1:16). While the church should help the helpless as it has ability and opportunity (Gal. 6:10), it is not primarily a benevolent institution. It is a spiritual institution charged with the spiritual work of preaching the Gospel so the lost can be saved. [Note: I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, February 1, 2008]

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