

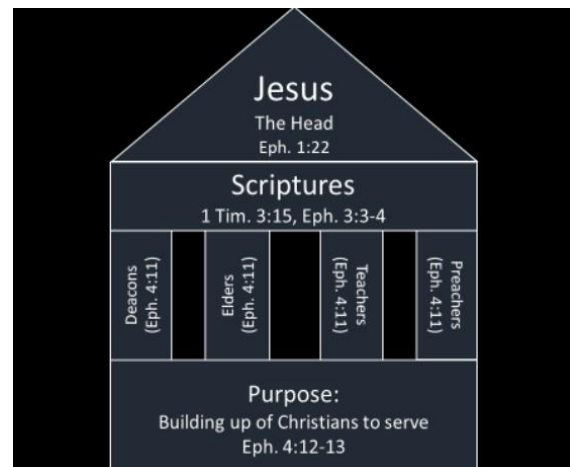
The Structure of the Church 09-17-17 PM

In Matthew 16:16-18 Jesus made the declaration that He would build a church that would never be overcome. This concept is of great importance to understanding the New Testament, which is about the kingdom of Christ (His church). Perhaps no book gives us more insight into the church of Christ than the book of Ephesians. In that book we learn the following:

The church is the eternal purpose of God – Ephesians 3:11
Jesus is head of the church – Ephesians 1:21-23
The church is the temple of God – Ephesians 2:21-22
Apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church – Ephesians 2:20
There is only one church – Ephesians 4:4
The church has gifts given by Christ – Ephesians 4:11
There is a purpose of the church – Ephesians 4:12-13

When we consider this design, we see something like this picture. Christ the head authorized the Apostles and Prophets through the Holy Spirit. They in turn wrote this authority as the New Testament (Ephesians 3:3-4, 1 Timothy 3:15). This portion of the church is the universal church, the Kingdom. It will never pass away.

The New Testament then authorized the works of the church (elders, deacons, preachers and teachers), who equip the members of the church to the purpose of the work of Christ. This is the local church.



We need to understand that God has accomplished His part of the church, the universal part. Christ as head is perfect, and the Word of God abides forever (1 Pet 1:25). We are expected to take the word (which equips us for every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and remove from it the gifts of Christ, i.e. elders, deacons, preachers and teachers, and then to pursue the purpose of the church.

Too often the error we make is to attempt to accomplish the purpose of the church without considering the structure and the gifts. Churches that want to work on evangelism before they have begun seeking teachers, preachers, elders or deacons may be putting the cart ahead of the horse. This pattern seen in particular in Ephesians 4:11-14 gives us an order of pursuit: first we need to organize (as best we can; sometimes there are no qualified members to the works of the church), and then we can pursue the purpose of maturity.

Finally, consider this: When Paul declared Christ the head of the church in Ephesians 1:21-23, he said that in the church, Jesus is all in all. Consider every part of the church, and how Christ is in that role. Of course He is head, but He is also an Apostle (Hebrews 3:1) and a Prophet (John 6:14), an elder (1 Peter 2:25), a Deacon (Zechariah 3:8), a Preacher (Mark 1:14) and a Teacher (Mark 14:14). He is All in All, the Foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), the Purpose and the Head (Ephesians 4:15).