The Church As God Would Have It

Intro: The church was in the eternal purpose of God; Eph. 3:10-11 “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It is not something that was an accident or afterthought with God as the Premillennialists teach. God planned every aspect of the church. God continues to have a plan for the church, and we need to know what that plan is. We often lose sight of God’s plan for the church, so we want to look at the church as God would have it. We need to remember that the church is Divine in its establishment and every aspect about it. It needs to be today what it was as revealed by the Word of God. Thus, the church is:

I. UNDENOMINATIONAL IN ITS NATURE

A. What is a denomination?
   1. From a religious aspect:
      a. Wikipedia has: “A religious denomination is a subgroup within a religion that operates under a common name, tradition, and identity.”
      b. Webster has: “a religious organization whose congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices”
   2. Notice two Biblical words relating to denomination:
      a. αἵρεσις (hairesis) has the basic meaning of choosing or a choice.
      b. σχίσμα (schisma) has the basic meaning of a split, rent, division.
      c. Denomination actually means a naming or the act of naming.
      d. Thus, a heresy or sect is a group that has chosen some belief or tenet (generally false) thus, separating themselves from others. As a result, there is the naming of that group designating them according to that particular tenet.

B. The church of Christ is not a denomination.
   1. The church of Christ has not chosen some belief and separated themselves from others.
   2. The church of Christ is not a part, section but the whole of God’s people.
   3. In the first Century:
      a. All taught and practiced the same thing.
      b. All wore the same name.
      c. The church of Christ teaches and practices the same thing as they did.
      d. The church of Christ wears the same name as did they:
         (1) Individually
            (a) Christian
            (b) Acts 11:26 “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”
         (2) Congregationally
            (a) Church of Christ
            (b) Rom. 16:16 “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.”
            (c) Yet we recognize there are other terms just as applicable.
C. No denomination is the church of Christ.
   1. *Church* is used in 2 senses in the New Testament.
      a. Universal sense; Mat. 16:18 “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
      b. Local sense:
         (1) Regional area; Gal. 1:2 “And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:”
         (2) Local town; Rev. 2:1 “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;”
   2. Considering the definition of a denomination; no denomination is the church in either sense of the way it is used in the Bible.

D. The Gospel does not create a denomination.
   1. God’s power to save is the Gospel.
      a. Rom. 1:16-17 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”
      b. That Gospel was obeyed by many making them Christians.
         (1) Rom. 6:17-18 “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”
         (2) 1 Cor. 15:1-4 “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”
   2. The seed principle:
      a. In the parable of the sower the seed is the Word of God; Luke 8:11 “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.”
      b. Things produce after their kind; Gen. 1
      c. When the Word of God is planted in an honest heart, it will produce the exact same thing it produced in the first century—Christians and only Christians.
   3. The pure Gospel never produced Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptist, Pentecostals, Methodists, etc.

E. The Gospel requirements are undenominational.
   1. The same requirements are for all.
      a. Upon hearing the Gospel, we must believe:
         (1) Rom. 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
         (2) Heb. 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
      b. Repent of our sins:
         (1) Luke 24:46-47 “And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
         (2) Acts 17:30 “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”
c. Confess our faith that Jesus is God’s Son:
   (1) Mat. 10:32-33 “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also
       before my Father which is in heaven. 33But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also
       deny before my Father which is in heaven.”
   (2) Rom. 10:9-10 “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in
       thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10For with the heart
       man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

d. Be baptized in water for the remission of sins:
   (1) Mark 16:15-16 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to
       every creature. 16He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall
       be damned.”
   (2) Acts 2:38 “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.”

2. To make one a denominational member one must:
   a. Add to God’s requirements.
   b. Take away from God’s requirements.
   c. Change God’s requirements.

F. The results are undenominational.
1. Obedience to the Gospel places one:
   a. In the church;
      (1) Acts 2:41, 47 “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there
          were added unto them about three thousand souls....” “Praising God, and having favour with all
          the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
      (2) 1 Cor. 12:13 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or
          Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”
   b. In Christ:
      (1) Rom. 6:3 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized
          into his death?”
      (2) Gal. 3:27 “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
   c. Saved
      (1) Mark 16:15-16 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to
          every creature. 16He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall
          be damned.”
      (2) 1 Pet. 3:21 “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting
          away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the
          resurrection of Jesus Christ:”

2. Obedience to the Gospel will never place one in a denomination.

II. Places Emphasis On The Spiritual Not Material
A. Denominationalism places an emphasis on the physical:
   1. Costly cathedrals
      a. The Apostate Church (Catholicism) has placed great emphasis on this through the years.
      b. The Catholic emphasis has influenced denominationalism in general.
      c. Building gyms, some have now built malls (eating places, shopping centers, etc.) in
         their buildings.
2. Ritual and splendor of ornamentation rather than the spiritual
   a. Sometimes spending great amounts for baptismal font or founts, yet expressing little to no significance to baptism itself.
   b. Great concern for the vessels for the Lord's Supper, yet little concern for the Supper itself.
   c. Regarding preachers:
      (1) Great concern for a preacher’s social qualities, but little regard for his Bible knowledge and spirituality.
      (2) Great concern for a preacher’s education (having a degree after his name), than for the substance of what he preaches.
      (3) More concern with the preacher’s eloquence than the substance of the material.
      (4) Consider Paul:
         (a) 1 Cor. 2:1-5 “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”
         (b) 1 Cor. 1:23-24 “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”
   B. The New Testament church places the emphasis on the spiritual.
   1. John 18:36 “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”
   2. Jesus was interested in souls:
      a. Luke 19:10 “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
      b. Mat. 20:28 “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”
      c. He gave us the great commission; Mark 16:15 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”
   3. We must be interested in souls and place the emphasis on the spiritual not the material.
      a. The early church went about preaching; Acts 8:4 “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”
      b. Our mindset must be on spiritual matters, not material.
         (1) Mat. 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”
         (2) Col. 3:1-2 “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”
      c. Our money must go toward spiritual matters.
         (1) Mat. 6:19-21 “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
         (2) 2 Cor. 8:3-5 “For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us
the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

(3) 2 Cor. 9:6-7 “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

III. INTOLERANT TOWARD EVERY KIND OF EVIL.

A. Consider the Spirit’s rebukes at the church at Corinth:

1. Division:
   a. 1 Cor. 1-4
   b. 1 Cor. 1:10-13 “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 12Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”
   c. 1 Cor. 3:1-4 “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”

2. Fornication; 1 Cor. 5
3. Going to law with brethren; 1 Cor. 6
4. Marriage problems; 1 Cor. 7
5. Idolatry; 1 Cor. 10
6. Problems regarding worship; 1 Cor. 11-16
   a. Abuses of the Lord’s Supper; 1 Cor. 11
   b. Abuses of miraculous gifts; 1 Cor. 12-14
   c. False doctrine regarding the resurrection; 1 Cor. 15

B. All evil everywhere

1. Gal. 5:19-21 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”
2. Col. 3:5-9 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7In the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them. 8But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”
3. 2 Pet. 2:1-3 “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”
C. **Withdrew fellowship when needed:**
1. 1 Cor. 5
2. 2 Thes. 3:6, 14 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
3. Rom. 16:17-18 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
4. Tit. 3:10-11 “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 17 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”
5. 1 Tim. 6:3-5 “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”

D. **Contrast what we see today:**
1. Sin abounds.
   a. It is glorified by television, movies, magazines, et al.
   b. The Gentile world as recorded by Paul has nothing on us; Rom. 1.
   c. 2 Tim. 3:13 “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”
2. Sin now abounds in congregations of the Lord’s church.
   a. Congregations openly accepting adulterers into their membership.
   b. Social drinking accepted.
   c. Immodesty winked at.
   d. Sins of all types are now being engaged in and accepted by congregations.
3. Preachers and/or elders rarely rebuke sins.
   a. If a preacher unequivocally rebukes sin, you hear “fire the preacher” from ungodly members.
   b. What so many in the church today seek is simply love, joy, peace, etc.
      (1) Jer. 6:14-15 “They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. 15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall; at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.”
      (2) 2 Tim. 4:3-4 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”
   c. It should be no surprise that the world has little respect for the church.

IV. **Characterized By Loyalty And Devotion**
A. **Loyalty and devotion**
1. Loyalty is feeling of sentiment (often enthusiastic) accompanying a sense of allegiance (an obligation owed, obedience and duty).
2. Devotion is love or enthusiasm.

B. **We must be loyal and devoted to God.**
1. Mat. 22:37-38 “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment.”
2. Mat. 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

3. Far too often we have divided loyalties:
   a. 1 Kin. 18:21 “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”
   b. Mat. 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

C. **We must be loyal and devoted to the truth.**
   1. Pro. 23:23 “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”
   2. We will not change it:
      a. Gal. 1:8-9 “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
      b. 2 John 9 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”
      c. Rev. 22:18-19 “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”
   3. We will live it:
      a. Mat. 7:21, 24 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.... 24Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:”
      b. Jam. 1:22-25 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 25For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”
   4. We will defend it:
      a. Jude 3 “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”
      b. Phi. 1:27 “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”
      c. 1 Tim. 1:18 “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;”

D. **We must be loyal and devoted to the church.**
   1. That Christ established only one.
      a. Mat. 16:18 “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
      b. Eph. 4:4 “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”
         (1) The body is the church:
         (2) Eph. 1:22-23 “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
c. Opposed to division and denominationalism.
   (1) Christ desires unity:
   (2) John 17:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
   (3) But not unity at the cost of truth; Jam. 3:17 “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

2. Cannot be loyal and devoted to the church while absenting yourself from its worship and its work.

E. Examples of loyalty and devotion:
1. Paul
   a. Acts 21:13 “Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”
   b. 2 Cor. 11:24-28 “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”
2. Stephen; Acts 7
3. Peter and John; Acts 5:28-29 “Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. 29Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”
4. When there is true loyalty and devotion:
   a. The church will grow.
   b. But there must be sacrifice on the part of Christians; Mat. 16:24 “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

V. Exclusive
A. There is but one church.
1. Eph. 4:4 “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”
   a. The body is the church:
   b. Eph. 1:22-23 “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
2. That one church comprises the saved:
   a. Acts 2:41, 47 “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.... 47Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
   b. Eph. 5:23 “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”
3. All other churches are false.
B. There is but one way.
   1. Jesus is the only way.
      a. John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
      b. Acts 4:12 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
   2. Mat. 7:13-14 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”
   3. All other ways are false:

C. Truth is exclusive.

D. Entrance into the church is exclusive.

Conclusion: We must make sure to keep the church as God would have it.