

# RETHINKING CHURCH

SESSION 1 | JUNE 4, 2017

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

### THERE IS AN INVISIBLE “CHURCH”

- This is the body of believers from Paul’s day onward.
- Was completely unknown in the Old Testament.
- Belongs to Christ and is for Christ—Ephesians 1:27
- Is under the Lordship of Christ—Ephesians 5:23-24, Col. 1:18
- Is the body of Christ on earth—Col 1:24
- As the body of Christ, is to be holy—Ephesians 5:27
- Is loved by Christ—Ephesians 5:29
- *Note: the invisible (sometimes called universal) church is NOT an organization or an entity that has any kind of visible function. The presence of a “universal” church should not be taken into consideration at all in the operations of the local church, which is the only church that has any authority or structure.*
  - *There is no “bylaws” of the invisible church.*
  - *There is no verifiable membership role of the invisible church.*
  - *There is no earthly leadership of the invisible church.*

### THERE IS A VISIBLE CHURCH.

- It has a meeting place
- It includes tares and wheat
- It needs to be...
  - strengthened—Acts 15:41
  - Edified—1 Cor. 14:12
- It is seen carrying out organized activity:
  - Teaching—Acts 11:26
  - Prayer—Acts 12:5
  - Deliberation of theology—Acts 15:4
  - Selection of delegates—Acts 15:22
  - Problem solving between members—1 Cor. 5-6
  - Collections of offerings—1 Cor. 9

## WHY IS THE CHURCH?

**THE CHURCH IS THE WORK OF GOD AMONG THE NATIONS IN THE CURRENT DISPENSATION.**

Acts 14:27, 15:3

## THE CHURCH IS THE MYSTERY OF GOD. EPH. 3

- Paul was taken as a prisoner to begin the new economy of grace. Vv. 1-2
- Paul was given a revelation of and insight into a mystery. Vv. 3-4.
- This mystery was completely unknown in the Old Testament. V. 5.
- The mystery is the inclusion of the gentiles. V. 6

## IMPLICATIONS

- The purpose of the church is not...
  - Worship
  - Evangelism and Missions
  - Prayer
  - Fellowship
  - Ministry
- These are often *activities* of the church, but are not the *purpose* of the church.
- Why does this matter?
  - Activity based reasoning for the existence of the church will lead to activity as the primary function of the church.

## FAULTY DEFINITIONS OF CHURCH

- *"The Church is a union of men who are united by the profession of the same Christian faith, and **by participation in the same sacraments** under the direction of their lawful pastors, especially the one representative of Christ on earth, the Pope of Rome."* -Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church
- *"The holiest moment of the church service is the moment when God's people—strengthened by **preaching** and **sacrament—go out of the church door** into the world to be the church. We don't go to church; we are the church." The founder of the "home church" movement in England, Canon Ernest Southcott*
- *The church is the "world's most powerful **weapon** against AIDS." Rick Warren*
- *"The local church is a community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. In obedience to Scripture they **organize** under qualified **leadership**, **gather** regularly for **preaching** and **worship**, observe the biblical sacraments of baptism and Communion, are unified by the Spirit, are **disciplined** for holiness, and **scatter** to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission as missionaries to the world for God's glory and their joy." Mars Hills Church*
- *"The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is **preached**, and the sacraments be duly **administered**." John Wesley*

*The problem with each of these is that they focus on doing instead of being!*