

Category:

Dowlan Road Church—Benjamin Lee

Introduction:

1. Recently I purchased a new camera. One of the great features of it is the panoramic option. This option allows you to take a wide view of an extensive area.
2. I used this example of a camera and panoramic view because when it comes to certain teachings from God's word, most people only get a snapshot or portion of that particular truth. This is true with what the Bible teaches regarding the church. Many don't talk about the church. Those who do talk about it, don't have a good understanding and have questions like "Why was it established so late in time?" "Does it really matter what church I go to?" "Why was it established at all?" These questions need answers. While many know Matthew 16:18 there's more we must know.
3. This morning, I want us to look at the church from a panoramic view. I want us to span through the Bible, and see what was said about it. God is our maker and He has revealed His mind to us through His word. In order to know some things about the church in 2013 we will have to span across the history of time and get a panoramic view of it.

The Lesson:

I. In prophecy (Far Away)

- A. The prophets spoke of a far-away time when the church would be established.
 1. Isaiah spoke of it, Isaiah 2:1-4. Isaiah answers the questions of who, what, when, where, and how in regards to the church.
 - a. What would God establish? He would establish a spiritual house, Isaiah 2:2.
 - b. Who could be a part of it? All could be a part of it, Isaiah 2:3. It is singular in nature.
 - c. Where would it be established? It would be in Jerusalem, Isaiah 2:3.
 - d. When would it be established? It would come in the last days, Isaiah 2:1. This idea of the last days is to be understood as the period in which God would make known His law, Hebrews 1:2.
 - e. How would people be able to enter? Through hearing and obeying God's word, Isaiah 2:3-4; Zechariah 8:3.
 2. The Lord's house would be established. But it would be far away.
- B. So why should these things be a big deal for us?
 1. People may wonder, "Why was the church established so late in time?" It was established at the right time in God's plan, Galatians 4:3-4.
 2. This prophecy of Isaiah is for you and for me. We can be a part of this spiritual house.

II. In promise (It is Near)

- A. In the ministry of Jesus, He promised to build the church.
 1. Jesus promised to build the church in the future, Matthew 16:18. We learn that...
 - a. "On this rock..." Jesus would be the foundation of it.

- b. "I will build..." Jesus would be its builder. No one else could bear this responsibility.
 - c. "My church..." Jesus is the owner of it. It would be singular in nature.
 - d. "Church"...This word is a collective noun. It is referring to people who have been called out of "darkness" into God's marvelous light. It's all about people.
 - e. "And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Death would not stop Jesus.
2. This promise of Jesus would soon come to pass.
- B. So why should these things be a big deal to us?
- 1. People ask, "Does it matter what church you belong to?" Jesus says yes. We must be a part of the body that was promised by Christ, built by Christ, and to which He is head.
 - 2. People ask, "Wasn't Peter the head of the church?" The answer is no! It was built on Christ, and not man, Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:18-20. This church of Christ would have certain characteristics, Ephesians 4:4-6.

III. In presence (It is here)

- A. The church is spoken as being present beginning in Acts 2:47.
- 1. What the prophets foretold, what Jesus promised, was established in Acts 2:47
 - a. It was established in Jerusalem, Acts 2:1-4.
 - b. It began in the last days, Acts 2:17.
 - c. People were taught the ways of God, Acts 2:22-24, 38.
 - d. Nations began to flow into it, Acts 2:40-41, 10:47.
 - 2. From Acts 2 the church, a body of believers, is spoken of in the present tense. This body of believers worked together in a given place, Philippians 1:1, 27.
- B. So why should this be a big deal to us?
- 1. We can't separate Christ and His church. Through Christ and His church is the historical realization of God's purpose from eternity, to gather all men in one body, Ephesians 3:3-6. God has invited us to be a part of His great plan, Ephesians 3:10-11. Through the church we see God's design, His manifold wisdom of how He would redeem man. Because He is the architect we shouldn't mess with His designs.
 - 2. People ask, "Do I need to be a member of the church?" Yes! You need to be added to the one body, and work with Christians in a given place. To say otherwise is to reject His design. God wants us to be a part of His great plan so we can be blessed, Ephesians 1:7, 3:20.

Conclusion:

- 1. But why did God establish the church? What's the ultimate purpose?
- 2. It's to give God the glory, Ephesians 1:11-13, 3:21. It's not about us but God, Acts 12:23. It's about shining the spotlight on His glory, His radiance, His moral beauty and perfection, Luke 9:32. This is what we are to do through the church. But sin often gets in the way, Romans 3:23. It's not enough to just do church. It's about giving God glory through our conduct. If we miss this, then we have missed the purpose of it.