

## **WHAT IS THE CHURCH?**

### **Ephesians 3:1-11**

**Introduction:** There are many ideas today of "what" the Church is, such as it is a building where people meet, it is an entertainment, activity center, etc. Most people associate a "Church" as a location, as a place. The "Church" is unique in that it has not always existed. What exactly is the Church?

### **I. THE CHURCH IS A SECRET OF GOD MADE KNOWN TO MANKIND**

1. It is not just Gentiles being accepted by God as prophesied about in Isaiah 19:23-25.
2. It is not the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Old Testament prophecies foretold.
3. Imagine two mountain peaks (such as the suffering of Jesus and the coming of God's kingdom) and between the two mountain peaks lies a valley - a secret valley, a place of mystery.
  - This valley is a period of GRACE. A period of Jews and Gentiles fellowshiping equally with God.
  - The angels didn't know about it neither did the Old Testament prophets.
  - Prophecies were made about Jesus coming, dying, ascending and coming back in glory one day, BUT between all this was a mystery.
4. The Church is the PRESENT purpose of God.

### **II. A NEW AGE HAS COME**

1. It is not a continuation of the Old Testament which came to the Jews first and they don't understand it.
2. It is a temporary suspension of the Old Testament theme.
3. It is something NEW. A complete break with the Old Testament.
4. It is a period of COMMON ground in God's eyes where Jew and Gentile have equal privileges with God.

### **III. THE CHURCH IS A LIVING, LOCAL ORGANISM**

1. The word "Church" started out as a Greek Word:
  - ekklesia - called out ones
  - kuriakos - Lord's house
  - kirkus - anglo/saxon word
  - kirk-
  - church- english word
2. The New Testament names the Church:
  - The body of Christ
  - The bride of Christ
  - Christians
  - Church of God
  - Church of Christ
  - Assembly of God, etc.

3. The Old Testament reveals that God started with Abraham and created a special nation and then dealt only with them for the purpose of His special nation to minister to the rest of the world.
  - The special nation (Jews) failed to carry out God's plan to minister to the rest of the world.
4. God has suspended temporarily His exclusive relationship with His special nation (Jews) and has placed all races of people on the same level, same ground.
  - Thus His Church, His called out ones was formed from all people.
  - YOU, ME, JEWS and Whosoever.
5. Membership in the Church is ONLY by one believing in God's Son, Jesus Christ.
  - Once a member of the Church, one cannot become a non-member (Lost again)
6. The purpose of the Church is to expand the truth about Jesus Christ, to teach the Gospel, and to fellowship together as a family.
7. The destination of the Church is that in God's time, when God's purpose for the Church ends, when the Church has received its last believer (member), Jesus Christ will come back for it, He will snatch it away from this world and take its members to a place He has been making ready (Heaven).

#### **IV. WHEN THE CHURCH IS GONE, GOD WILL RETURN TO THE JEWS**

1. God promised the Jews 490 years in their land and there is still years owed to them.
  - The Jews will then understand what the Church has been all about.
2. God will once again deal with the Jews as in the Old Testament times.
  - The Jews will have to go through the "time of tribulation" described in the Bible.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. In today's time, God deals with all races, the total human race as one and offers the same GRACE to all who would believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.
2. The Church is the focus of God today, not the Jews.
3. There will come a time when Jesus will come back for the Church and take it back where He came from, Heaven.
4. After the Church is gone, God will return His favor back to His chosen people, the Jews.