



The Good News

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The Nature of the church that belongs to Christ

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Last week we studied the beliefs of the Mormon church and determined that it does not conform to what God has given us through His Word. Today we are going to consider a concept that, while an integral piece of the Mormon belief structure, is a concept that is part of many religions' belief structures. It is called Millennialism, and it has many branches of thought. However, a proper understanding of the Lord's church will help in any discussion of this belief.

We are taught that the plan of salvation, and the design of the church, was created "before the foundation of the world" in **Eph. 1:4**, and **Eph. 3:10-11**. We are also taught that the nature of the church and kingdom is spiritual, as we find in **John 18:36**, **Luke 17:20-21**, and **Heb. 11:16**.

The Bible teaches us that the church is also the body of Christ in **Eph. 1:22-23**. We learn that only those who are part of the church, or the body, can be saved in **Eph. 5:23**. We find that entrance to the body, the means of obtaining salvation, is very exclusive, depending on characteristics such as faith (**Mark 16:16**), confession (**Rom. 10:10**), repentance (**Acts 2:38**), baptism (**I Pet. 3:21**), as well as continued obedience to the law of Christ (**Rom. 6:4, 17**).

The Bible also teaches us that the church that belongs to Christ (**Rom. 16:16**) is a singular entity composed of local congregations of people, autonomously connected by faith in Jesus Christ and the observance of His law. Despite the numerous references to the "churches" (plural), Paul taught the same things in every church (congregation, **I Cor. 4:17**) which implies that these churches never taught or practiced anything different from any other, or at least they weren't supposed to do so. We find occasions on which Paul rebuked different churches for things they did not do correctly. This denotes an objective and static doctrine, one that did not change and one that could be followed uniformly by all the churches.

Again, the Bible teaches us that those who are "the called" (**Rom. 1:6, 7**) are Christians and members of this body, or church. The term *ekklesia* is

used in the Bible and is translated as "the church" which literally means "the called out". These "called out" have been predestined (according to the character of a submissive heart) to go to heaven, according to **Eph. 1:5**.

The Bible clearly specifies only one body and one faith (**Eph. 4:4**). Upon a close and objective study of the Scriptures, one can come to definite conclusions regarding how this church is to be organized, what kind of worship it is to offer, how its funds are to be used, etc. If someone were to throw all churches (denominations, non-denominations, etc) into a pot and begin a process of elimination, there would only be one church left...the church that belongs to Christ (the church of Christ).

The Bible clearly designates those who are "called out" (e.g. those who have believed, repented, confessed, been baptized, and are faithfully obedient) as the ones who will be going to heaven. Jesus says in **Matt. 7:21** that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do His Father's will. This is extremely exclusive and conditional. This being the case, Jesus certainly would have made sure that the means to determine the Father's will (the Bible) could be uniformly understood and practiced.

Our efforts should be to point out everything the Bible says and then inform our friends and neighbors that our church strives to be everything God wants. Those who are a part of the church of Christ have "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you...*" (**I Pet. 1:4**). We should always remember that saying "the Bible says..." is always good enough, and if anyone doesn't like it, they can take it up with the author.