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## Seeing The Church

***Ephesians 1:22-23*** "And He put all under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

I have some things I want to share in response to what we talked about last week. The Body of Christ is a subject we've all heard many opinions about throughout our lives, and probably have many opinions of our own.

It's great to come to a place where we can say, "I don't know what the church is," which is what I heard some of you saying last week. It's good to acknowledge what we haven't seen. But after that, we can't speculate. We can't guess. We can't measure all of our old ideas and try to decide which ones are true and which ones aren't. We have to let it all go. We have to be willing to be wrong about everything.

How much are we willing to let God show us? Are we willing to be wrong? What if everything we have previously believed about the Church is wrong?

For many of us, being a Christian, being the Body of Christ, is so much a part of our image here on earth that we're very reluctant to let the Lord deal with that. What if it doesn't look like what we expected? What if it effects the way people think of us? What if it changes our idea of what a Christian should look like and act like?

Maybe some of you have beliefs about the church that you feel like are from the Lord. A belief is obviously something we believe is very true, so it can be hard to let that go and be willing to let the Lord be the Judge. I would encourage you to hold everything with an open hand, willing to let the Lord take away any of it. He's not going to steal the truth from us. We have nothing real to lose. We fear that everything will be taken away and we'll be left with nothing, but don't worry about that. The Lord is kind and patient and just wants to show Himself to us.

Of course the problem isn't just that we previously believed wrong facts about the church. The church isn't made up of correct facts. You're not going to be able to see the church by getting all your facts lined up correctly, or by sorting through what beliefs we have right and what beliefs we have wrong. It's something that can only be seen with spiritual eyes, from a heavenly perspective. The church is a living being, a heavenly Body – Christ Himself.

It is also something we have to see for ourselves and not just be taught by someone else. I think everyone here is in agreement with everything Jason teaches on Sundays. We are full of knowledge and understanding and truth. But we have to see Christ and see the Church for ourselves. We can't see and live through the teaching of another. Teaching is helpful because it can point the way to truth, but you can't stop there. We can't be content with gaining knowledge through someone's teaching.

This might sound a little radical, but I think it's very difficult to see the church, to really comprehend the Body of Christ, when we are dependent on a pastor to teach us and show us the way. Being taught and being fed and being pointed in the right direction is absolutely appropriate and necessary for a time, but to really become the church, we have to grow beyond that. (Jason had no idea what I was going to share today, so I hope he's okay with it!) When we have a pastor to depend on, it's very easy to come on Sundays, listen to a teaching, go back home, and never really have to grow up in Christ ourselves. We count on the pastor to see Christ, to lead the way for us, and we gain the knowledge of what he is seeing without ever being held accountable to see for ourselves. In the true Body of Christ, Christ is the head. We are the body. Christ is the teacher, and we are the expression of Him.

I don't want to suggest to you a new model for how we do church, because changing the model isn't a formula for being an expression of the Body of Christ. There's not a right way and a wrong way to organize church meetings and services. There's no magical formula to make us become the Body of Christ, because the Body of Christ isn't contained in meetings and groups and Sunday services. The Body of Christ is not natural.

I'm not even going to really talk today about what the true Church is. It's too easy for all of us to gain knowledge and think we have it figured out. We take notes, agree with the facts, and move on. But this is a huge issue, and it's something the Lord has to show us Himself. I want us all to come to a place where we are willing to see the Truth, no matter what that may mean.

As we grow in the Lord, He brings us to a point where we have to come to see the Body if we want to continue growing up in Him. It's not one of the first things He shows us. But it's something that really changes the way we see everything. It changes how we see our relationship with Him, and it changes how we see our purpose here on earth.

The question is, do we want to continue on with the Lord? Do we want Him to show us everything, or will we stop here? What Jason said last week was that this issue can be an exit for people. You can be seeing the Lord and go this far, but when He starts to deal with you about the church, some people get offended and stop. I would suggest that we all humble our hearts and ask the Lord to show us the Body of Christ.

I know that many questions arise when we talk about the church, and we saw that last week. There are lots of things we immediately want to figure out, like:

- Can't we know God even if we don't go to a lot of meetings?
- Are all believers a part of the true church even if they don't act like the church?
- Isn't it good just to show God's love in natural ways?
- What does it mean to express Christ?

But sometimes our questions don't help. Sometimes we just need to ask that the Lord be revealed in our hearts, because trying to get our naturally-minded questions answered often doesn't do any good at all.

This week I want all of us to think and pray and ask the Lord to show us the Body of Christ the way He sees it. I also want you to write down a few things, as the Lord brings them to your mind, about what the church IS NOT. Have an open heart, willing to see anything He may want to show you. And remember that we are very, very deceitful. We often think we have an open heart, a heart willing to see anything, when really we are holding onto our own ideas very tightly. But this week let's say to the Lord, "Lord, take all my ideas and opinions about the Church. Show me every little thing I am holding on to. I want to see the Truth. Show me Your Son." Let the Lord judge between what is true and what is a lie, what is dark and what is light. Remember, you have nothing to lose!