

realization of Christ's messianic rule on the plane of human history" (Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 87).

To reign with Christ (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26-27).

"The thought of sharing Christ's role as king and judge with a share in the accompanying glory is widespread in the NT. Its basis is Mt 19:28" (Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 740).

To judge the world and angels (1 Cor 6:2-3).

"Drawing on Daniel 7:22, Paul reminds the Corinthians that they will help Jesus exercise judgment over the non-Christian world (both people and angels)" (Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 117).

QUESTIONS

What is the church's relationship to the government? Is the church to be ruling the world? (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17)

What is the church's relationship to Israel in the kingdom?

GOING FURTHER

How do your prayers reflect God's purposes for the church? How do your actions? Should you do anything differently? Should our church?

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Think about the subject of salvation. What is salvation? Who is saved? What leads to salvation? How has our study of the Old Testament affected your view of salvation?

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH IN HISTORY

PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Come up with your own answer to the question, What is the church? Think about God's purpose for the church in the world today. Passages you might read include Eph 2-4, 1 Tim 3-4, 1 Peter.

THE FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

The focus of this study is on the church corporately, not believers individually. We're interested in these questions:

- Why did God establish the church?
- How does the church fit into God's overall plan of restoring creation?
- How does the church relate to Israel in God's plan in history?

Our interest is in the church's *external* relations. This study is not about how believers should love one another, how believers will receive a crown of glory, or how believers will be raised from the dead. Rather we're pursuing an understanding of how the church relates to God, history, the covenants, the future, Israel, the government, and the world.

PURPOSES OF THE CHURCH

To proclaim the excellencies of God (1 Pet 2:9).

"Seeking our own eternal well being—right though that is—could never provide a truly satisfying goal for life. The answer to our search for ultimate meaning lies in 'declaring the excellencies' of God, for he alone is infinitely worthy of glory. Redemption is ultimately not man-centred but God-centred" (Grudem, *1 Peter*, 119).

To demonstrate the unity of Jew and Gentile in one body (Eph 2:14-22).

“Christ’s bringing together Jew and Gentile in himself as the ‘one new person’ is a highly significant step towards the fulfilment of God’s eternal plan, that is, the consummation of the mystery (1:9–10). God’s ultimate purpose is to bring together everything in Christ as the focal point” (O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 200-201).

To serve as God’s witness to the world (in light of Israel’s failure) (Acts 1:8; Eph 6:19; Col 4:3-5).

“Today, believers continue to have the responsibility for being Christ’s witnesses throughout this world. The sphere for witnessing is as extensive as the kingdom—all the world. That was and is the mission for the church until Jesus comes” (MacArthur, *Acts*, 21).

To make Israel jealous (Rom 11:11, 14).

“Paul apparently thinks that the Jews, as they see the Gentiles enjoying the messianic blessings promised first of all to them, will want those blessings for themselves” (Moo *The Epistle to the Romans*, 688).

To hasten the coming of the day of the Lord (2 Pet 3:12).

“We may think that the idea of Christians hastening the coming of Christ takes away from the sovereignty of God, for doesn’t the Bible make clear that God determines the time of the end? We have here another instance of the biblical interplay between human actions and God’s sovereignty: Human acts are significant and meaningful, but God is nevertheless fully sovereign. As Bauckham argues, what Peter is suggesting is that God graciously factors his peoples’ actions into his determination of the time of the end” (Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 198).

To be the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15).

“Here then is the double responsibility of the church *vis-à-vis* the truth. First, as its foundation it is to hold it firm, so that it does not collapse under the weight of false teaching. Secondly, as its pillar it is to hold it high, so that it is not hidden from the world. To hold the truth firm is the defence and confirmation of the gospel; to hold it high is the proclamation of the gospel” (Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 105).

To be the beginning of God’s plan to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, Christ (Eph 1:9-10).

“The church thus appears to be God’s pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future, the mystery of God’s will ‘to be administered in the fullness of the times,’ when ‘the things in heaven and the things on earth’ are to be brought together in Christ” (Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 321-22).

To reveal God’s manifold wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Eph 3:10).

“The very existence of this new multiracial community in which Jews and Gentiles have been brought together in unity in the one body is the manifestation of God’s richly diverse wisdom” (O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 246).

To wait for Jesus to return (1 Thess 1:10).

The master is honored by the servant who waits patiently for him.

“Had the early followers of Jesus not believed that he would soon return from heaven as the messianic Lord, Christianity would almost certainly not have come into existence. Belief in the parousia of Christ is what gave the resurrection its real significance by promising the