

Understanding the Lord's Will for the Church
(Ephesians 5:17)

Introduction:

1. This verse reveals an important admonition that we have been emphasizing lately -- we are to understand "*what the will of the Lord is.*"
2. In addition to understanding the Lord's will, we are to obey it (Matthew 7:21).
3. In His infinite wisdom God established 3 great institutions for man's benefit: the family, government, and the church.
4. Today we are concentrating on passages that help us in "understanding the Lord's will for the church."
5. Specifically, we are examining the church's builder, its name, its head, its unity, and its purity.

Discussion:

- I. LET US UNDERSTAND WHO THE CHURCH'S BUILDER IS
 - A. In a discussion that Jesus had with His disciples He identified Himself as the builder of His church (Matthew 16:13-19).
 - B. Additional verses identify Jesus as:
 1. "the foundation" (1 Corinthians 3:11)
 2. "the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:19-21).
 - C. Any church that was not built by Christ cannot be the church of the New Testament.
- II. LET US UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S WILL FOR THE CHURCH'S NAME
 - A. In the New Testament we read about various "churches" [congregations] in different locations (Revelation 1:11).
 - B. Scriptural expressions for the church include:
 1. "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:1-2)
 2. "the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15)
 3. "the church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23).
 - C. One particular expression used in Romans 16:16, "the churches of Christ," draws special attention to the church's builder, Christ.
- III. LET US UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S WILL FOR THE CHURCH'S HEAD
 - A. The New Testament clearly identifies Christ as the head of the church.
 1. Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23
 2. Colossians 1:18
 - B. Because Christ is the church's head we must follow the admonition given in Colossians 3:17.
- IV. LET US UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S WILL FOR THE CHURCH'S UNITY
 - A. Just before He was arrested Jesus prayed that His followers would be one (John 17:20-21).
 - B. The platform for achieving the Lord's request is revealed in Ephesians 4:3-6.
- V. LET US UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S WILL FOR THE CHURCH'S PURITY
 - A. When a person is saved and added to the Lord's church he is washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Corinthians 6:11; Acts 18:8; 2:47).
 - B. The Lord wants His church to remain pure (Ephesians 5:25-27).
 - C. The Lord's blood continues to cleanse His followers who walk in the light and confess their sins (1 John 1:7, 9).

Conclusion:

1. God has blessed man by providing the family, government, and the church.
2. All 3 of these great institutions are under attack today.
3. Let us "understand what the will of the Lord is" and follow it without any additions or subtractions.