

Sermon Study Guide – September 14, 2025

Greetings!

Last week we spoke about the church as a “mystery” and that there are three kinds of mysteries:

1. Things hidden that might be revealed
2. Things that are beyond human comprehension
3. Rituals that embody 1 and 2.

The church is all three of these because the body of Christ is all three. It must be a mystery to the world that begs for enlightenment. It must be something beyond human comprehension, because it’s about Jesus’ connection with us. And thus we do things in church to help us reveal Christ to the world and to stay humble about our inability to know everything.

This week, we’re going to build on this by starting to demystify the church... Sound like a contradiction? While the church remains a mystery in the body of Christ, there are a lot of mysterious things that are rooted in tradition and practice that should come to light. The first thing to address then is the institution of the church.

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Church is the People (Not the Institution)

1 Peter 2:4-7

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever is faithful to him will not be put to shame.” 7 So the honor is for you the faithful, but for the unfaithful, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.”

Outline

Introduction: Institutions are Social Technologies

Foundation 1: A Spiritual House in Human Bodies

Foundation 2: Rejection of the Temple, Jesus the Foundation

Foundation 3: Belief is Loyalty/Faithfulness

Implication (So what?): God works through people not through institutions, but institutions can support the work of people... But we are the house for the Spirit.

Application (Now What?): How do we make Grace of Christ full of the Spirit? By being the people of God! How do we make Grace of Christ an institution that supports the work of building living stones?

Study Questions

Foundations: What?

1. What habits or institutions do you have that exist mostly out of inertia (we do it because that’s the way we’ve always done it)? What is a “social technology”? Have you ever thought of things that aren’t gadgets as technologies?
2. Have you seen dead objects or institutions as more important than the people they serve? How?
3. What is a “spiritual house”? Who lives in such a house?

Implications: So What?

4. What institutions have you thought of as God-given that may in fact be human inventions? Have you ever considered that church institutions are human and therefore our responsibility to use for the kingdom?

Applications: Now What?

5. Are you a living stone that is building up the body of Christ and housing the Holy Spirit? It’s not about a feeling, or about being perfect, it’s about working together, being faithful/loyal to Jesus.

Prayer

Prayer is simply talking to God. As you ponder the future, feel free to talk to God and others in the body of Christ about your hopes and fears, about the people you have conflict with, those who might feel excluded, those you might help, and those that might help you. Are you reconciled to God? What questions do you have? God is always ready to forgive and never afraid of human questions.