

# The Mystery of the Church

by Stephen Kaung

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*The church is Christ himself, and our role is to bring everything under the feet of Jesus and to manifest the fullness of Christ in the world.*

**Duration:** 1:02:59

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:18

**Topics:** "Church Growth", "Spiritual Maturity"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the mystery of God and the church, emphasizing the revelation of God's eternal purpose to bring all things to Christ. It explores the concept of the church being built upon Christ, the importance of overcoming personal struggles and the world, and the ultimate goal of being conformed to the image of Christ. The speaker highlights the need for believers to allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, stitching Christ's righteousness into their being, and the call to be overcomers in fulfilling God's purpose.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to Ephesians. We will read from chapter three, from verse one through verse twelve. Ephesians chapter three, verse one.

For this reason I, Paul, prisoner of the Christ Jesus, for you nations, if indeed ye have heard of the administration of the grace of God which has been given to me towards you, that by revelation the mystery has been made known to me, according as I have written before briefly, by which in reading it you can understand my intelligence in the mystery of the Christ, which in other generations has not been made known to the sons of man, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, that they who are of the nations shall be joint heirs and a joint body and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings, by which I am become minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the working of his power. To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ and to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the church, the assembly, the all various wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in which, in whom ye have behold, we have boldness and ashes in confidence by the faith of him. And will

you please turn to gospel according to Matthew, Matthew chapter 16, just one verse.

Matthew chapter 16, verse 18, this is what the Lord said to Peter, and I also I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, my assembly, and Hades gates shall not prevail against it. Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank thee for thy faithfulness.

Thou has brought us to this last day of ministry. Thou has been faithful and gracious and merciful to us. Dear Lord, we do pray that thou will reveal all that is within thy heart in Christ Jesus to us, and by thy grace and by thy spirit we may be brought into that ministry, mystery.

Oh dear Lord, do not allow us to be outside of what thou hast in thy heart through the centuries. We pray Lord that by thy grace revelation will be given to each and every one of us, that we may know what is the mystery of God and what is the mystery of thee Christ. We commit this time into your hand.

We look to thy spirit to reveal thy mind to us. We ask in thy precious name. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, we want to thank God for bringing us to this last day of ministry. My assignment is the mystery of God and the church. So far I have not mentioned the church, but by the grace of God we are going to do that this morning.

Anyway, we have shared together that even before the foundation of the world, God by his own will had a mystery. It has been hidden in his heart throughout the centuries. And yet that is what he is working towards.

But now to the apostles and the prophets, God has revealed the secret to us. So you can see how important is that mystery. And the mystery is that in the fullness of time, all things will be summed up in Christ.

There's the meaning of all things. There's the meaning why God created all things. It is not just for these things.

It is for his eternal purpose that concerns his son. In other words, we find that God's eternal purpose is to bring all things to Christ Jesus. All things will manifest in Christ.

Something of Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, nothing in the mind of God is to exist for its own sake. Everything, including man.

We are all created for Christ. And thank God, in spite of all the rebellions of the angels and man, God had not changed his purpose. And we mentioned how because of the failures, God sent his only begotten son into this world to be a man.

He's the man of God's own heart. He is to demonstrate to us what man is in the mind of God. How he emptied himself of all his glory and came to take upon himself a bond slave's image.

Outwardly, he was a perfect man. Inwardly, he had the mind of God. So we find how our Lord Jesus came, not only to demonstrate to the world what kind of man God created, what a kind of man God desired, how he denied himself in all things.

He said, I cannot do anything by myself, even though he could do many things. He said, I cannot say anything by myself. My time is not my own.

It is the Father's. Not my will, but the Father's will be done. And this is the life of our Lord Jesus.

This is the life that God, when he created man, meant man to be. And not only that, if he should come to this world just to demonstrate what kind of man God has been looking for, then you'll find on the mount of transfiguration, he could go right from the mount to heaven. That will be his exit, his rightful exit, because he has pleased God in all things.

But thank God, our Lord Jesus refused to ascend to heaven from mount transfiguration. If he did, there will be only one man in heaven, and we will all be hopeless and helpless. But our dear Lord Jesus will rather go down from the mountain with his face towards Jerusalem, and there he was crucified, not for himself, but for us.

Brothers and sisters, we thank God for saving us. But remember, this is not the end of your salvation. The end is that we may be used of God to bring all things to the feet of our Lord Jesus.

And to do that, it has to begin with us, ourselves. How much of us is not of God? And how in our life we have to buy the Spirit of God who dwells within us to show us where we are, that we may be able to take up the cross and follow the Lord Jesus. And that is to bring all things in our life to the feet of Christ Jesus.

So you know, first of all, it has to be done in each and every one of us in order God's purpose for man may be fulfilled. And that's what we have been sharing during the past two times. And this morning we would like to share on this matter of the church.

Now brothers and sisters, no person, however spiritual he may be, not even Paul can bring all things to the feet of Jesus. So you know, no individual is big enough to contain all the fullness of Christ and also to manifest his fullness. And that's the reason why the church, you know, when our Lord Jesus came into this world the first time, what is the purpose of his coming? When you read the Gospels, you will be surprised that it seems as if throughout his life he met people who were either crippled or blind or even dead.

Why? It is because our Lord Jesus, as we find in the Gospel of John, he came to find his bride, to find his counterpart. But when he was in the world, all he found were the sick, even the dead. And that's the reason why he had to save us first in order to have his counterpart.

Towards the end of his ministry, he was rejected by the Jews and he retreated to the border of Caesarea Philippi. That was a Gentile city and it was during that time that he asked this question, whom do men say that I am? And his disciples, of course, will only give him the good news. As a matter of fact, many bad news about him.

And yet the Gospels, his disciples will not bring these bad news to him. They will only bring the good news, saying that you are John the Baptist coming back to life. You are Jeremiah because you wept.

You are Elijah, the sent one of God. And some say you are the prophet, which refers to Deuteronomy 16. It says God will raise up among you a prophet.

And whatever he said, you have to obey. If you don't, you will be required of it. And you know that Jews were expecting God will send that prophet to them.

And they said probably Jesus was the prophet. Now all these recommendations were good. Now to the Chinese here.

If one day people say, you are Confucius coming back to life, now what will be your reaction? Probably you will say, oh no, I'm not worthy. But with our Lord Jesus, after his disciples gave him the best comment that they could possibly think of, the Lord was not satisfied. So he asked his disciples, people do not know me, but you who have followed me these years, who have been with me these years, you ought to know better.

You ought to know better. So the Lord said, whom do you say that I am? And Simon Peter, he was always the one who start the speaking. So he came and said, you are Christ, the Son of God.

So far as your person is concerned, you are the Son of God. So far as your ministry, your work is concerned, you are Christ. That is the one said by God to accomplish a definite task.

And when Peter acknowledged, confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus commented, Peter, Simon of Judah. This was not something man could say. This was revealed to you by my heavenly Father.

In other words, the Father revealed the Son. And now the Lord Jesus continue to say, Peter, thou art Peter, I will build my church upon this rock, and the gate of Hades shall not prevail against it. For the first time, our Lord Jesus mentioned the word church or assembly.

Actually, this is what he came for. But at last, he told us what he was after. You are Peter, a stone, a little rock, a little stone, not a massive one, but I will build my church upon the rock, which is a massive rock, and Hades' gaze shall not prevail against it.

Now, our Lord Jesus was playing with words, because Peter means a little stone, a piece of stone. But he said, I will build my church upon this rock. The rock is the massive rock.

But you know, the Roman church misunderstand it. They think that the church is built upon Peter. They consider Peter as the foundation of the church.

Now, if that's the case, immediately afterwards, when our Lord Jesus share with his disciples that he will go to Jerusalem, he will be rejected. He will be killed. But on the third day, he will be risen from the dead.

And when our Lord revealed that, you know how Peter did. He took hold of the Lord, and maybe shook him a little bit, and said, no, Lord, this shall never happen to you. On the one hand, it seemed that he loved the Lord so much.

He didn't want the Lord to suffer, but inwardly, it shows that Peter, he was afraid of suffering, for God's sake. He was thinking of himself. What if his master should be crucified? What will be the result of the disciples? But our Lord Jesus looked through the whole thing.

So he turned around and said, Satan, leave me behind. Leave me behind. Because you're not thinking of the mind of God, but thinking of the mind of man.

Brothers and sisters, the church is built upon Christ himself. It is built upon the confession of Christ. And that's the reason why he came into this world.

He was looking for his bride. And of course, in Matthew chapter 18, the word church is mentioned once again. When your brother sin against you, what will you do? You just say, well, I will suffer for it.

Now, that seems to be good enough. Because according to the Old Testament, it's an eye for an eye. But here you are able to let him go.

But no, the Lord said, you have a responsibility to love your brother. When you see your brother was in error, what will you do? You have to restore him. You have to find, you have to speak to him and try to convince him.

And if he didn't listen, your responsibility is not ended. You have to get two or three people, persons that are respected by him to go with you and tell him, persuade him. If he did not listen, you tell to the church.

And if he did not listen to the church, then to you, he will be like a Gentile. But you have to treat him as a Gentile. That is to say, you still have to try to restore him.

That's love. So brothers and sisters, these are the only two occasions when our Lord Jesus mentioned the word church. And yet, this is the very purpose of his coming.

Why? Because our Lord Jesus is the fullness of God. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily. He is so full that no one person is able to experience all his fullness and to express his fullness.

He's way beyond anybody. It takes the church, many people, even numberless people, in order to be his bride, to be his counterpart, to express him and to be joined to him. So brothers and sisters, this is what our Lord Jesus comes for, the church.

The church is not a building at one of the corners of the main street. You know, sometimes when we are talking, we are pretty careless or we really don't understand. Sometimes, you know, when it was raining, you bring your umbrella to the meeting.

But after the meeting was over, the rain was over. So it is very easy to forget your umbrella. And when you realize it, what will you say? I forget my umbrella in the church.

Now, if you really know what the meaning of the church is, you cannot leave your umbrella in the church. You can leave your umbrella in the place where the church meets, but you cannot leave your umbrella in the church. Why? Because the church is not a place.

The church is the assembling of the saints to give a little history of my own. I was brought up in a Christian family. My father was a Methodist pastor, and I always consider the Methodist church as my church.

But thank God, after I was saved, gradually the Lord began to show me what the church is. The church is a gathering of the saints meeting together under the name of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus said, where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Dear brothers and sisters, how do we gather? In what way are we different than the fraternities and the gatherings in the world? Because we gather together unto the name of our Lord Jesus. Unto the name is not just a word. It's a reality.

To be under the name and to the name of the Lord Jesus, you have to take him as the head. You have to allow him to have full authority over your life. So when God's people come together, they're met together in the name of the Lord Jesus.

They have to put themselves under the authority of the Lord Jesus, allow the Lord to be the head of the church, and the church is his body. You know, there is a verse in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 12, and if you would turn to it to read it, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 12. For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, a one body, so also is the Christ.

Now, if you are very careful in reading the Bible, now oftentimes when we read the Bible, we are careless. But if you are very careful when you read this verse, you will have a problem. Why? Because the description and the definition do not seem to agree.

The description is even as the body is one. Now, we know about it, and has many members, just like our own body. You have only one body, but you have a number of members.

You have hands, you have feet, you have all these members, and every member is important. So, we say the body is one and has many members, but in spite of the many members, there is only one body. No one member is big enough to be the body.

We are members one of another in the one body. Now, when this description is said, what will be your definition? You will say, so also is the church, because this is what a church is. The church is one body, but has many members.

But here in the scripture, it says, so also is the Christ. Now, what does it mean? What is the Christ? The Christ simply means it is Christ. But how are you going to explain it? Many years ago, in the 60s, we had a conference called Wabana.

It was held between the three cities, Washington, Baltimore, and Annapolis. So, it's called Wabana. And in the 60s, we had a conference.

Brother Sparks, Brother Frumkin, and myself were the speakers. And one year, I was speaking on this, and I tried to make the people understand. So, I'm going to use a formula.

But you know Brother Sparks, if you know him. He is so spiritual. Nothing can be in a formula.

He is so heavenly that nothing can touch the earth. Because he said, if it touches the earth, it changes. But before him, I'm going to use a formula.

So, I ask his permission and his forgiveness first. I say, I'm going to use a formula. I say, suppose in the world, there are only three Christians and they are the best.

Now, whom do you think these three persons will be? Maybe you will say, well, it is Peter. It is John. It is Paul.

Probably, we will consider these persons, three persons, were the best Christians. And they were. And the church is just composed of three men.

Now, what is the church? We all know the church is not just Peter and John and Paul. When these three persons come together, they do not form the church. Even though they were very spiritual, but they were so different.

So, we will say, well, what is the church? The church is Christ in Peter, plus Christ in John, plus Christ in Paul, equal to the church. So, I said, well, is that the church? Many people lift up their hands and yes, this

is what the church is. But you know, as long as there are Peter there, he wants to be the head.

John there, he was quiet, but inside is deep. And Paul, of course, even though Christ is there, but these three persons are also there. Christ will never be divided, but these three persons will be divided.

So, that is not the church. I think probably our concept is, that's what the church is. The church is Christ and I. Church is Christ and you.

And when we are together, that is the church. But brothers and sisters, myself and yourself are the problems. As long as we are there, there will be problems.

So, what is the church? The church is Christ in Peter minus Peter, plus the Christ in John minus John, plus the Christ in Paul minus Paul, equal to the church. And every fighter says, that's right. Even though, outwardly, it seems that we are gathering together as the church.

And that's the reason why you have so many problems in the church, so-called churches today. Not because of Christ is there, but because you are there. Somebody is looking for a perfect church and we usually tell him, well, if you want to find a perfect church, when you get there, it is no longer perfect.

So, brothers and sisters, what is the church? The church is Christ himself. It is he in you and in me, without you and without me. That is to say, how much we need to be dealt with, how much we need a cross to work in our lives.

Everything that comes out of ourselves will destroy the church, the testimony of the church. Everything within us has to be dealt with, with the cross. And that's the reason why the Lord said, you have to deny yourself and follow me.

Brothers and sisters, God's eternal purpose concerning Christ is to be fulfilled through the church. First, the church itself has to bring everything under the feet of Jesus. And then, the church is to manifest the fullness of the church, be the testimony of Jesus in the world.

That is what the church is. But unfortunately, we know what we are and church history tells us what has happened. Even during the first century, if you read the book of Acts, it's a glorious record.

How within a short period, the gospel has been preached from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the end of the world, which is Rome. And yet, when you come towards the end of the first century, you find John for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. He was exiled to Patmos Island.

And there on one Lord's day, he heard a voice. He turned around to look at the voice, and he saw seven golden lampstands, with one like the Son of Man in the midst. And then you find our Lord Jesus sent through John several letters to the seven churches.

And to all these churches, even to the church in Philadelphia, when you read the description, it seems almost perfect. And yet, there is the call to overcome. So, dear brothers and sisters, the last call to the church is the call to overcome.

That is to say, because the church has failed God, so he is calling for overcomers. For those who are standing with the Lord Jesus, for those who are willing to deny themselves, take up the cross and follow the Lord. The call to overcome, brothers and sisters, is the last call to the church.

So, it is the calling that has come to each and every one of us. What does the Lord require of you and of me? He is calling you and me to overcome. Not only to overcome the world, because it is our faith that overcomes the world, but even to overcome ourselves.

And furthermore, to overcome Satan, the enemy of God. Brothers and sisters, this is the last call. He is calling you and me today to be overcomers.

To overcome the world. Love not the world, nor the things of the world, because so far as the world is concerned, we were crucified. So far as I'm concerned, the world is crucified.

That's the testimony of the Apostle Paul. It has to start with our own selves first, and then we have to overcome ourselves. How can we overcome ourselves? For instance, no matter how strong you are, are you able to lift up yourself? You cannot.

We have to learn to be delivered from ourselves and allow the Lord to be all and in all to us. And we need to overcome our enemy. And as you find in Revelation chapter 12, it says, they overcome him, that is, Satan, by denying themselves.

They love not their life, even unto death. That is to say, they are willing to lay down their self-life. So, dear brothers and sisters, this is the last call.

The Lord is calling for overcomers. And you know, when you read the book of Revelation, when you come to the end, you will be surprised that in chapter 19, it describes a marriage, the marriage of the Lamb. But then in chapter 21 and chapter 22, another description of a marriage.

Now, are they one marriage with two descriptions? No, because these two marriages are a thousand years apart. That which is described in chapter 19 is the beginning of millennia. That which is described in chapter 21, 22 is the beginning of eternity.

So, there will be a difference of a thousand years. Now, who is the bride in chapter 19? And who is the bride in chapters 21 and 22? In chapter 19, you find the bride is represented by the overcomers of the church, because they have been given a clothes, bright, white, linen clothes. That is the wedding clothes.

Because if you turn to Psalm 45, in the description of the bride, you find she will be clothed with two garments. One, you will be clothed with a golden garment, and the other, he will be clothed, she will be clothed with an embroidered garment. Now, the gold garment represents Christ, our righteousness.

You know, we cannot stand before God, because we have sinned. But when we are clothed with Christ as our righteousness, we can boldly stand before God. Christ, our righteousness.

That's the golden garment. That's the garment when the prodigal son came back and be clothed. But when you read on the next verse, you say that she is clothed with an embroidered garment.

Now, what is that? That is the righteousness of the saints. As we find in Revelation 19 saying, the righteousness of the saints. Not only Christ, our righteousness, but also the righteousness of the saints.

In other words, it is an embroidered work. Who is the one who does the embroidery? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

He is so patient. In our life, he uses stitches after stitches to stitch Christ into us. It is a little bit painful, that's true.

But when it is done, it is beautiful. And this is called the righteousness of the saints. And this is our wedding garments.

So, brothers and sisters, this is what the Holy Spirit is doing today in our lives. Sometimes we feel a little bit painful. But if we can bear and forbear and allow the Holy Spirit to stitch Christ into our life, these are the righteousnesses of the saints.

So, this is the first wedding. But where are the rest of the Christians? When you read Matthew 25, the ten virgins, the five foolish virgins, when they arrived, the door was closed. They were left outside.

Now, what does it mean? It means that during the millennium, God's purpose cannot be defeated. We may fail, but God cannot fail. So, people who do not overcome today, do not think because you are saved, forever saved.

True, you are saved, forever saved. But you have to be saved to a glorious state, to be like our Lord Jesus. That is the purpose of God.

And God's purpose cannot be defeated. So, if you try to defeat God's purpose today, He will still try to make it up and allow you to be conformed to the image of Christ, because that is His purpose. And when will it be done? During the millennium.

You will have no part in the millennium, reigning with Christ, but you will be outside weeping, that is, regretting. You will be disciplined until you are made to be like Christ. So, when you come to chapter 21, 22, you find the foundation of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, bears the name of the twelve apostles.

In other words, all we who have accepted the ministry of the apostles about Christ, all we will be in that city. So, we are saved, forever saved, but there is a process. So, dear brothers and sisters, not because of the suffering, the cross, you have to pay in this life.

Therefore, you give up. It is the best opportunity for us that God has offered. Do not wait until the millennium time you are outside weeping, regretting.

Even though eventually we all shall be like Christ and shall reign with Him for eternity. So, brothers and sisters, this is what we find in the Word of God, and may it encourage us. Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we thank Thee because Thou lovest so much.

Thou lovest to the uttermost. Thou will not allow us, even if we ourselves do, and yet Thou will not. We thank Thee that Thou will save us to the uttermost.

Until Christ becomes all and in all to us. O Lord, we thank Thee for Thy mercy, everlasting mercy and grace. We worship Thee in Thy precious name.

Amen.

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