

# Three-Self Church of America

by E.A. Johnston

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*The Three-Self Church of America is a compromised and self-deceived institution that will become the state-run church of the future, while vital Christianity is growing in secret, bypassing the institutional church.*

**Duration:** 7:28

**Scripture:** Revelation 3:17

**Topics:** "House Churches"

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## Description

The sermon transcript discusses the state of the Three-Self church in America, highlighting its self-reliance, self-indulgence, and self-deception. The church is described as operating more like a business, relying on money and manpower rather than prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is criticized for prioritizing creature comforts and entertainment, with expensive amenities and gimmicks to attract crowds. The sermon calls for repentance and a return to true Christianity, emphasizing the need for spiritual growth and a rejection of worldly influences.

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## Transcript

I have a sermon on the Underground Church of China, in which I speak of the Three-Self Church Movement of China. That Three-Self Church is the above-ground church that was originally patriotic to the People's Republic of China. The Three-Self stands for self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation.

This is the registered church in China, and it is monitored by the Communist government. It's a very popular church, with large congregations that meet mainly for fellowship and friendship. In the above-ground church, the state-run church, you cannot hand out gospel tracts, or preach on the Holy Spirit, or preach on the cross of Christ, or tell someone how to come safely to Christ with the real gospel message, because members of the Communist Party sit in on the meetings in the church itself, and monitor it, and take notes.

The true church in China is underground, and it is the house church movement that thrives and has spiritual life in that country. They meet in barns, late at night, or in basements and tenement houses secretly, so not to be detected by the Communist government that would throw them in prison if they were discovered. In America today, there too is the institutional Three-Self Church.

It is also a very popular church that meets mainly for fellowship and friendship. The Three-Self Church movement in America is explained in these terms. It is self-reliant, self-indulgent, and self-deceived.

I will address each of these aspects of the institutional church in America, friends, for I believe, as the above-ground church in China has become the state-run church run by the Communist Party, I believe too that the above-ground institutional church in America will become the state-run church, compromised and loyal to the state to keep their tax-free status. I believe that in the days to come, there will be an underground church in America comprised of vital Christianity, like its counterpart in the East. These churches will be house churches.

They will meet secretly, so not to be detected by the state, because to be a real Christian in this country will mean you are an enemy of the state. I believe that hot persecution is coming to the American church, and she is quite unprepared for it. Allow me to explain, friends.

The Three-Self Church of America is comprised of the following aspects. Number one, she is self-reliant. The church in America today operates like a business.

She has a CEO and officers under her, under that person that sit on committees and run the church just like a business. The Three-Self Church of America is self-reliant because it operates more on money and manpower, more than prayer and holy ghost power. I was sitting in a Cracker Barrel restaurant eating lunch a couple of years ago, and seated next to me were two staff ministers of the biggest Baptist church in that city, and they were discussing their mission budget, and I overheard their entire conversation.

Their mission budget was over a half a million dollars, and they were trying to figure out just how to spend it during that calendar year by conducting short-term mission trips for their church. They had so much money to work with, they acted more like businessmen, rather than ministers of the gospel. Sadly, the church has become very self-reliant to the point it no longer needs the living God of the Bible to operate.

Why take the time to pray and wait on God to move when you can get the job done with money and manpower? The next aspect of this Three-Self Church is that it is self-indulgent. It spends much of its resources for the creature comforts of its members. The most expensive movie theater chairs must be in their sanctuary.

They must have the most up-to-date and most expensive sound system to blast forth their so-called Christian rock music. They must have strobe lights and smoke and all the gimmicks of the theater to attract the crowds that come there to be entertained and amused by the story-telling pastor who dialogues for 20 minutes before they take up the collection with the purpose of growing their already large campus to attract more members. The more members they have, the more buildings they can build.

It's a self-indulgent church that must have coffee bars and all the amenities of a country club to attract more crowds. Usually the pastors of these churches command six-figure salaries and deny themselves very little. They're members of country clubs and drive luxury cars.

Most of their members just look like the world, dress like the world, talk like the world, drink what the world drinks, watch the same entertainment the world watches. Nothing but the best for the Three-Self Church of America. The third aspect of the Three-Self Church in America is that it is self-deceived.

This is the saddest part, friends. We see a description of this church in the book of Revelation. Let me read it to us at this time.

Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. This is the picture of the American church

today, friends, in this sad and tragic hour.

A large, sluggish, institutional church that has need of nothing. It's self-deceived. It needs to repent and turn from her wicked ways and worldliness.

But she sees no need of that, for she is fine and on the grow with new members every Sunday. I believe, friends, that vital Christianity is on the grow in this country. But it's bypassing the institutional church.

People are just sick and tired of what passes for church as usual on Sunday morning. The joke telling, the loud rock music, the dead formalism. They just don't want it anymore.

I know. I speak to these individuals on a regular basis all over this country all the time. They're beginning to meet in houses, like the early church did in the Book of Acts.

It's a growing movement across this land. Like the old 60s song says, the times, they are a-changing. The Three-Self Church of America will become the state-run church of the future.

You just wait and see. Let us pray.

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