

# God, the Planner of the Church

by Stephen Kaung

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*The church is a living organism, built on the foundation of Christ, and patterned after the living Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:02:57

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:11

**Topics:** "Church"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding God's plan and purpose for our lives. He reminds the audience that there is still time for us to yield our lives to God and be a part of His work. The speaker highlights the responsibility and urgency we have in this critical time. He explains that the pattern for the church is not found in the Old Testament or the New Testament letter, but in the living person of Jesus Christ. The speaker encourages the audience to live in the reality of God's plan and not get caught up in shadows or outdated patterns.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to the letter to the Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12. Ephesians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12.

In whom we have also obtained an inheritance being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ. The letter to the Romans chapter 11. Romans 11.

We begin with verse 33. 33 through 36. Oh depths of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor, or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him. For of him and through him and for him are all things to him be glory forever. Amen.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we know that we are in thy presence. Lead us within the veil that we may behold thy glory.

Lord, we trust thy Holy Spirit to quicken thy word to our hearts. Deliver us from anything that is traditional, but bring us into Christ. Deliver us for all things that are man and bring us into thy truth.

Lord, we want to know thy truth for thy truth sets us free. We want thee to have a highway in our hearts that thou may be able to build the church according to thy good pleasure. So we commit this time into thy hands, Lord.

This is a work that none can do but thy Spirit alone, and we trust thee to do it this morning. We ask in thy precious name. Amen.

On this rock I will build my church, and Hades' gates shall not prevail against it. This is the word of our Lord himself. He tells us very clearly that he is the one who will build the church.

The church is something that is so precious to him that he will not trust anybody else to do this work, but he himself will build his church. And for this we are most thankful, because if he should leave it to us, what a mess we will make of it. Yesterday morning we mentioned that God, our Lord Jesus, as the builder of the church, he is the originator of the church.

In other words, the whole idea of the church comes from him. Even before the foundation of the world, even before the heavens and the earth, even before time, God has already conceived in his mind. He purposed a purpose in his Son.

He wants to give his Son the greatest gift that can satisfy his Son's heart, and that is the mystery of the church. This mystery has been hidden throughout the ages. It was hidden, but God was working all the time towards it.

Dear brothers and sisters, what is time? Time is in God's hand. He uses time to accomplish his good pleasure. So even in the Old Testament time, even when he created the heavens and the earth, God has a purpose behind it all.

What God is really after is the church, his gift to his beloved Son. But it is so precious, so glorious, so magnificent, that he cannot just tell it at once. Nobody will understand it.

Nobody will appreciate it. He needs time to prepare for it, and not until in the fullness of time, after his beloved Son has come down to this earth and accomplished the work of redemption, then this mystery is revealed to the apostles and the prophets. So brothers and sisters, to us today, this mystery of the Christ, the church, is a known secret.

God has allowed us to enter into his secret, and if this is something so precious to him, how much more it should be dear to us. You know, brothers and sisters, when we mention about this matter of the church, probably to many of us, it means very little. What is uppermost in our heart is about ourselves.

How can my sins be forgiven? How can I go to heaven? How can I proceed in my spiritual life? How can I be spiritual? Probably these will be the things that are important to us. Now they are important, very important, but they are not the most essential and important thing. In other words, we are so self-centered, even in our spiritual pursuit, it is self.

May God deliver us from ourselves. And in a very real sense, brothers and sisters, unless ourselves are being delivered, we will not be able to appreciate and enter into all that God has intended for us, for his Son. So, our prayer is that God will reveal his Son to us, and his Son will reveal the church to us.

We need revelation. Do not think that you are able to know God's Son without the revelation from above. Before we believed in the Lord Jesus, we all thought that way.

We thought that we know Jesus Christ. We read the Bible, we thought we understood, we thought we knew him. Until one day, when the revelation from above came to us, we realized we hadn't really known God's Son.

But thank God, it pleased him to reveal his Son in us. And the same way is true with the church. Dear brothers and sisters, you have been in the church, as our brother said, in that building.

You visited it every Sunday. You are a member of the church. You know the church.

But unfortunately, that's not the church that God is after. It takes divine revelation. May we humble ourselves before the Lord and pray that God will reveal, our Lord Jesus will reveal the church to us.

Brothers and sisters, if once he reveals the church to you, you cannot escape. There is no other way but the way of the church. So may the Lord help us.

Now this morning, we will continue on God, the builder of the church. But we will consider this matter of God being the planner of the church. He is not only the one who conceives the idea of the church, but he is also the one who plans for it.

You know, God is not like man. When we do things, oftentimes, it just comes. We really have not put some thought into it.

It is just on the moment, maybe influenced by the circumstances, and so we act and react. And we always do things by chance. And also, also, how do we accomplish a thing? By mistake, by error, try and error.

And then we come, maybe, to do the right thing. Now that's human. But that is not divine.

Our God, He never does anything by chance. He is the perfect planner. Before He does everything, not only He has an idea in His heart, but then with that idea, He plans for its working.

And that's why you find in the Bible this will according to the counsel of His will. First of all is the purpose of His will. He purposed a purpose according to the good pleasure of His will.

That is what He wants. And then after He purposed that purpose, then He set a counsel. He lays a plan as how this purpose is to be accomplished.

And that is God. And once He set His purpose, once He lays down His plan, He will never deviate from it. Nobody can discourage Him from changing His purpose.

Nobody can change His plan. He will work according to the counsel of His will until everything is finished exactly as He has planned. Now that is our God.

You know the question is asked, does the church have a pattern? Some people said the church does not have a pattern. Why? Because it is the product of history. In the beginning, a number of people came to the Lord.

There was no plan. And these people who were saved just came together and met. Very simple.

But as more people were added, then some organization came in. And when the world took charge of the church, that more organization came into view. And as the ages change, you find the church change its shape.

So the church has no pattern. It is just according to history. It is just up to the ingenuity of man to suit the situation.

Now that's how synagogues came into view. You know in the beginning, God told the children of Israel that there was one place where they had to go year after year to worship and to sacrifice. They couldn't do it anywhere else but in Jerusalem where God chose as His place to put His name there.

But then Jerusalem was destroyed. The temple was destroyed. The children of Israel were taken into Babylonian captivity.

And then God used this captivity to cure the children of Israel from idolatry. So when they were in captivity, they wanted to worship God, the one and only God. They want to do that.

But unfortunately, Jerusalem was destroyed. There was no more temple, no more sacrifice. And yet there was a desire to worship.

So out of their cleverness, I think it is the most ingenious thing that man has ever invented. Because it's so convenient, it is so free, it caters to everybody's freedom, whatever you want. And yet you can worship God.

So if there are ten men, Jewish men of leisure, that is men who are able to give some time for religious activities, you can have a synagogue. You don't need to travel. You have it next door.

And you just gather ten, nine, that are of the same mind as you are, like the same thing as you do, and you have a synagogue of your own. In the synagogue, you can pray, you can read the Torah, read the prophets, you can sing the songs, and there is much freedom in the synagogue. You can stand up, read, and preach.

You can do everything you like in your worship of God. And that's why synagogue prospered. If you're not happy with some people, go and get nine more, and organize one that will suit your taste.

Isn't that ingenious? The only thing they cannot do is to sacrifice. But the law said, without the shedding of the blood, there is no remission of sins. And brothers and sisters, the same idea has taken hold of Christians through the ages.

We want to worship God, and we want to worship according to our idea. This is 21st century, not the first century. Why go back to the first century and be so primitive? We are so progressive now.

The church is progressing according to the idea of man. Brothers and sisters, so too many, they think that there is no pattern for the church. Man creates the pattern, and it changes from time to time to suit the society that you live in, and to suit the time you are in.

You know what happened in China today? There is a move saying that the Bible has to suit the social system. Everything has to be according to the current time. Be very modern.

Don't be so backward. It is no longer salvation by faith. It is justification by love.

What a doctrine. That's what's going on in China today. The church has no pattern.

It is man's creation to suit man's taste, to satisfy man's desire, even their religious feelings. But brothers and sisters, we already said our God is the greatest planner in the universe. Before he created the heavens and the earth, he planned for it.

And how much more he will plan for the church, his greatest gift to his son, his masterpiece in the world. So we believe that the church does have a pattern. But the problem is where is the pattern? Some people try to find a pattern of the church by going back to the Old Testament.

We want to build the church according to the pattern we see in the Old Testament. Now, brothers and sisters, don't be surprised. You'll find as we are approaching the end, more and more Christianity is turning to the Old Testament for its pattern.

When the church was first organized, they followed the pattern of the Old Testament. Because with Judaism, you have the priesthood. So Christianity has the sacred class called clergy.

You have the clergy and the common people. That is the Old Testament pattern. In the Old Testament, you'll find in Judaism, there is a place of worship.

If it's not the temple, then the synagogues. So we in the New Testament time, we need a sacred place called the church. A building, standing at the square of the city, where we will go and worship on the Lord's Day.

Maybe an hour. You cannot worship anywhere else but in that place. That's the Old Testament pattern.

You know, I remember during the Second World War, I was in Singapore, and the Japanese came and bombed Singapore. And one day, a dear brother, a young brother, he came to me, agitated. He said, Brother Kong, did you know that a bomb fell into the church? And if the church is not safe, where can we be? Thank God.

A bomb cannot destroy his church. Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. But that's the concept.

And you know, more and more, Christianity is going back to the Old Testament pattern. When I was a boy, I was brought up in the Methodist church. And in the Methodist church, it's different from the high church, the Anglican church, because the pastors, they do not wear special robes.

But now, you go back to the Methodist church, and what do you see there? If you want to have a church, you need a choir. Because in the Old Testament time, you'll find they have a choir there, singing for them unto the Lord. So now, we need a choir.

Instead of congregational singing, we need a choir to lead us in worship. Brothers and sisters, people are taking the Old Testament as their pattern now. But the Old Testament is the type.

It is a shadow. And when the reality comes, the shadow flees away. Why should we hold on to these shadows? Brothers and sisters, do we live in shadows? Spend our days in shadows? When shadows disappear, we disappear? Are we living in reality? In all that God has planned in Christ Jesus for us? I think it's about in the late 60s.

There was a movement going on among God's people. We want New Testament church. Isn't that a good slogan? We want New Testament church.

And people began to try to find a pattern of the New Testament church. And of course, if you want to find a pattern for the New Testament church, go to the book of Acts. That's where the church begins.

So people read the book of Acts, and they came out with an idea. If you want a New Testament church, you need the elders. Not just one elder.

Elderhood is always plural. So you need elders. Now, if you have elders, of course, you need deacons who do the work.

And of course, you need congregation. So suppose you have 10 people meeting together. What are you going to do to have a New Testament church? Well, you need at least two elders, and maybe three deacons.

Then you have five as the congregation. So we have a New Testament church. Now, today you laugh at it.

But in those days, it was very, very earnest. And the result was a mess. It didn't work.

Now, if the New Testament is not our pattern, then we are lost. Where can we find the pattern for the church? Thank God. He is the Our God Himself has drawn that blueprint.

Even before there is church, even before the foundation of the world, even before He created the heavens and earth, God has already laid His blueprint. That is what the church is to be built after. But it's a mystery, hidden.

You know, when God created the heavens and the earth, His beloved Son is the architect. In Proverbs chapter 8, verse 30, it is said, when God, before God, laid the foundation of the earth, the morning stars, they sing for joy. The sons of God, they shout for joy.

These refer to the angels. And when God laid the foundation of the earth, now, who is the one that God used as His architect? He said, now, in Proverbs 8, He used wisdom, the personification of the Son of God. Wisdom.

He is before His Father, His nursery. And the word nursery, on the one hand, it can be the nursery of His love, His beloved. On the other hand, that word, in the root, has the idea of an artist, of an architecture, architect.

So, in other words, when God created the heavens and the earth, His Son is the architect. He is the one who draws the blueprint for the heavens and the earth. So, you'll find in Colossians chapter 1, verse 16, all things are created by Him.

But the word by, in the original, is in Him. But because it doesn't make sense to the translator, how can all things be created in Him? So, they translate it by Him. And then, later on, another word, by Him and for Him.

But actually, it is in Him. So, all creation, all creation, were created in Him, in our Lord Jesus. Now, what does it mean? It simply means He is the architect.

The architect is the one who put all the ideas into a pattern, into a design, on a blueprint. And then, everything will be built according to that blueprint. So, when God created the heavens and the earth, everything was created in Him, in our Lord Jesus.

He is the architect. He puts God's idea into a blueprint. And that's the reason why, when the heavens and the earth were created, the heavens declared the glory of God, and the firmament showed us His handiworks.

That's why, when we look at the created things, we see the divinity and the power of our God. There is no excuse for us to say there is no God, because in all the creation, you can see God's hand there. You can see God's divine divinity.

He is different. Glory, holy, you can see in His creation. Now, if this is the case with the old creation, how much more with the new creation? Because the church is a new creation, how can God build a church, a new creation, without a pattern, without a blueprint, without being planned out in details? It just cannot be.

So, dear brothers and sisters, we do believe that the church has a pattern, and that pattern comes from God, not from man. God has already given us this pattern. For instance, we mentioned yesterday, after God created Adam, only half of the man, God knew what that man needed.

I will build him a helpmate, his like. That's the first time we have the word build. Build means something with idea, with plan.

It's not just a random something by chance. God said, I will build him a helpmate, his like. But he couldn't find his helpmate in all the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the living beings on the earth.

In other words, no pattern there. I sometimes think it would be terrible if man is so anxious to get a companion, and instead of waiting for the pattern, divine pattern for the woman, he should choose any of the animals to be his companions. That would be disastrous.

But thank God he didn't allow him to do it. Now, where is the pattern for the woman? The pattern is not in the living things that Adam named. All these living creatures, the pattern is not there.

Where is the pattern? The pattern is in none other but Adam himself. Adam is the pattern. So that's why you find God did the first surgery upon man.

Open his sight, take something out of him, and build a woman. So when that woman was led to Adam, you don't need any explanation, introduction. Adam look at her and this is me, and they are joined in one.

So brothers and sisters, the pattern of the woman is man. And how about the church? Christ is the husband. The church is his wife.

Where is the pattern of the church? It is not in anything else. It is not in the Old Testament. It is not even in the letter of the New Testament.

It is in the spirit of the New Testament. Brothers and sisters, the pattern of the church as God has designed it is not a technical, mechanical, awkward, legalistic thing. The pattern that God has designed for the church is a living person, even our Lord Jesus.

That is why, without the Lord Jesus, you can have no church. No Christ, no church. The four Gospels are given to us to show us that living person.

And the church from the book of Acts is to be patterned according to him. Therefore, brothers and sisters, it is living. It is organic.

It is of life. It is never static. It is not governed by circumstances, by time, by what man thinks.

It is the living Christ who is the pattern of the church. And the church grows into him until he is all and in all. That's the pattern of the church.

So, brothers and sisters, do not try to find the pattern of church in anything that is technical, mechanical, outward, method. They are not. It is the living Christ.

The more you know about Christ, as the life of Christ grows among God's people, organically, it will change, transform, until it is conformed to the image of Christ. Only that which comes out of him can be joined into one with him. So, that is the pattern you find for the church.

The church is not an organization that changes by surroundings, by environments, by meeting a need. The church is an organism. It is living.

Its pattern is life. As life in Christ grows, the church changes, transforms, and matures. And, brothers and sisters, because of that, it is spiritual.

It cannot be carnal. It cannot be according to man. It cannot be according to the elements of this world.

It has to be according to Christ, where the life of Christ is among his people. When Christ is the head of the body, you have an expression of the church. And God is very jealous about his Son.

God is very jealous about his pattern. He will not allow us to change and alter it. You remember when God gave the pattern of the tabernacle to Moses? He warned Moses again and again, do everything according to the pattern which I have shown you on the mountain.

Did he need to do that to Moses? Moses was trained as an architect, because Egypt at that time was the most civilized country in the world. Its architecture was well known even today. The pyramids were there.

Moses learned all the learnings of Egypt. He was a great architect. And all God needs to do is to say to Moses, build me a tabernacle.

Moses says, that's easy. I can build you a palace, but God will not trust Moses for that tabernacle. Why? Because that tabernacle is different from all the tabernacles in the world.

It is to be the habitation of God himself. I will dwell in it among you. Brothers and sisters, that's what a church is.

The church is the house of the living God. It is the habitation of God in the spirit. And because of this, he's very jealous over it.

Everything has to be done according to the pattern shown on the mountain. Thank God Moses was faithful in all God's house. In what way he was faithful? He denied himself.

He would not let his own skill, his own cleverness, his own training, his own learning to change or alter or improve what he thought the tabernacle. But he laid on himself and did everything exactly according to the pattern shown here. Brothers and sisters, are we doing that? Are we faithful in God's house? How we inject our own thought.

We think we are cleverer than God himself, and God is jealous about it. Thank God the church has a pattern. It is a divine pattern, and that pattern always stands.

It never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And God is working according to the counsel of his will.

Then, brothers and sisters, we find that in the planning of the church. You know when you plan something, not only you plan for the design, but also you plan for the time. How much time you will spend in building that building.

If it is a big building, magnificent, important building, you may spend years in building that place. So God, in his plan, he also planned for the timing of the building of the church. As a matter of fact, time is set apart by God for the building of the church.

Is the church that important? Yes, it is, because it is God's precious gift to his beloved son, eternal gift to his beloved son. He takes all the time for the building of the church. You know, when God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle, how long did it take him? Within a year.

When Solomon built the temple, how long did it take? Seven years. But how long did it take, will it take, for God to build the church? All the time. He is still building, and you can see the magnificence, the glory of that building, the church.

Oh, brothers and sisters, it is your warmer heart. Thank you for that. He is still building.

We are still in it. There is still time left. Not much time, but still some time left for us to understand what God is doing, for us to yield our lives to him, that he may complete it.

Brothers and sisters, there is great responsibility upon us. And then, of course, when you plan, you have to gather materials. Not only materials, but even prepare manpower.

And that's what God is doing, even with us. Think of that. If it's already finished, then we are out.

We may be able to behold his glory, but we are outside the city. But thank God we are involved. The time is very short, brothers and sisters.

Even this morning I was thinking, how much time there is left for him to complete the work. We may think that it has taken too long, but that's because his long-suffering, his love, his patience with us. Do you realize there is not much time left? Do you realize that we are living in that most critical time? Maybe God is finishing up that great work in our generation.

Now, if that's the case, what shall we do? Shall we just lay back, enjoy the world, and not be diligent, and mean business, and give ourselves completely to the Lord? Allow him to finish up in our days. And that should be our desire, our prayer. May the Lord help us.

Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we thank Thee because Thou art doing a great work. We thank Thee because Thou even involves us. We repent because we do not cooperate with You.

How often we stand in Your way. O Lord, convict us. Show us Thy pattern.

Show us the glorious church that we are building. Deliver us from ourselves. Allow us to have a part, a living part in it.

O Lord, have mercy upon us. We are Thy people. We want Thy will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

O Lord, take us into Thy counsel. O Lord, take us into Thy work. Do not allow us to stand by, idling, wasting days away.

But Lord, build in us, build us together that we may be that which answers to Thy Son's heart. We worship Thee. Thou great, greatly to be praised.

In the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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