

BIBLE STUDY ON THE CHURCH

Theme verse:

"Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Importance of the church:

- 1) Christ loved it and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25).
- 2) Paul's ministry was two fold
 - a) Preached the unsearchable riches of Christ—the gospel (Ephesians 3:8)
 - b) To make *all* men see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery—the truths of the church (Ephesians 3:9).
- 3) Almost all the epistles are addressed to local churches.

What *is* the church according to Scripture?

- 1) The Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23).
 - a) We are members of His Body—we belong to Him (Ephesians 5:30).
 - b) We are members one of another—we belong to one another (Romans 12:5).
 - c) We are members *in* particular—we each have a place to fill in the body (1 Corinthians 12:27).
- 2) The House of God. Eph. 2:21, 22
 - a) Order (1 Timothy 3:15).
 - b) Discipline (1 Peter 4:17).
- 3) The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-33).
 - a) Affection (Song of Solomon 5:10).
 - b) Intimacy (Song of Solomon 5:16).

How do we become part of the body of Christ?

- 1) By baptism of the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13).
Note: This *is* not water baptism.

When are we baptized by the Spirit *into* the Body of Christ?

- 1) When one believes the gospel and is saved (Acts 11:12-16; Ephesians 1:13; Acts 2:41-47).

When did the Church begin?

- I. On the day of Pentecost (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 1:5; Acts 2:4; Acts 5:11)
 - a) It was a mystery before this (Colossians 1:24-26).
 - b) It was future in the gospels "I will build" (Matthew 16:18).
 - c) It could not exist until there was a Head. There was not a Head until Christ ascended to heaven (Ephesians 1:22).

The Greek word for Church is EKKLESIA

This denotes:

- A called out company
- A gathering
- An assembly

It is used to describe:

- 1) The Universal Church (Matthew 16:18).
- 2) The local Church (1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 4:15).
- 3) Local Churches (Galatians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 1:2).

Definitions:

The Universal Church: Composed of all true believers everywhere from the day of Pentecost to the present.

The Local Church: Composed of all true *believers* in one locality such as a city, town, or village.

Local Churches: A circle of local churches that function on the same principles, and honor each other's discipline. As the apostle said: "so I ordain in all the assemblies" (1 Corinthians 7:17). This is called a circle of fellowship.

Question: How is a local church formed?

Answer: The New Testament approach is this:

A local church is formed not by meeting certain human requirements, but by a group of believers recognizing that they are a part of the church in that place, and seeking to meet in such a manner as will give an accurate expression of the truths of the church to the world. "The local church should be a miniature of the church universal. It should be nothing and do nothing that would contradict the great truths of the church which is the Body of Christ."

What are some of the great truths of the Church?

- I. There is one body.
- II. Christ is the Head of the Body.
- III. The Holy Spirit in the Church.
- IV. Worship in spirit and in truth.
- V. The gifts given by the ascended Head.
- VI. The responsibility for godly discipline.

I. There is One Body (Ephesians 4:4).

How can believers testify to this truth today?

A. By not taking any names that separate us from other believers. Paul said carnal Christians do this (1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:4-6).

Names that do not separate:

1. Believers (Acts 5:14).
2. Disciples (Acts 9:1).
3. Christians (Acts 11:26).
4. Saints (Ephesians 1:1).
5. Brethren (Philippians 4:1).

B. By gathering only unto His Name (Matthew 18:20).

C. Keep the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3).

This will involve:

1. Separation from evil (2 Timothy 2:19-22).
2. Obedience to His Word (Revelation 3:8).

Remember:

- (a) God *is* sovereign.
- (b) *Blessing* does not always indicate divine approval in every detail.
- (c) To obey is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22).

II. Christ is the Head of the Body (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

How can believers testify to this today?

A. No human leader should be accepted as the head of the church Matthew 18:20).

Any human head of a religious system who claims to be the head of the Church is in a false position. Although most believers see the evil of such a position, yet the same error has crept in other ways into many parts of Christendom today.

B. Allow the Head to control (Ephesians 4:15,16).

It is easy today to give lip service to the headship of Christ. But He is only truly acknowledged as Head when He is allowed to control all the activities of the local church. This will not be easy and to some may sound very impractical. However, the Lord will never fail to make His mind known to those who will wait on Him for it.

1. This will require spiritual exercise on the part of every believer *in* the local assembly.

It would be easier to let one or two or an appointed group make the decisions. But then, as another has written, "We will never have the privilege of seeing the Great Head of the Church guiding the local assembly on earth" (Acts 15).

C. Headquarters of the Church?

Sometimes we are asked by others, "Where are the headquarters of your church?" Our scriptural answer is that it is *in* heaven. All control and direction flows from our risen living Head who is in heaven. For us to accept control by an earthly group of persons such as a synod or presbytery would be to deny the precious truth of the Headship of Christ.

III. The Holy Spirit in the Church (Ephesians 2:22).

A. Some truths regarding the Holy Spirit.

1. He is a Person-God (Acts 5:3,4).
 - (a) He is omniscient—all knowing (1 Corinthians 2:10-12).
 - (b) He is omnipresent—everywhere (Psalms 139:6-10).
 - (c) He is omnipotent—all powerful (Job 33:4; 26:13,14).
 - (d) He is eternal (Hebrew 9:14).
2. He leads in worship (Ephesians 2:18; Philippians 3:3, JND, NASV).
3. He leads in prayer (Jude 20).
4. He operates the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11).
5. He guides in the "open meeting" (1 Corinthians 14:23 –40).

B. How can we bear witness to this truth today?

1. Seek His leading and guiding (Acts 13:1-4).
 - (a) Location for testimony.
 - (b) Human instruments to be used (Acts 6:3).
 - (c) Types of meetings to be held (Acts 12:5; Acts 15).
 - (d) Disbursement of funds (Philippians 4:14-18).
 - (e) Godly discipline (1 Thessalonians 5:14,15).
2. Recognize the right of the Holy Spirit to use any brother at any time in an assembly meeting (1 Corinthians 14:26, 29, 31).
 - (a) Will not always do things in the same way (1 Corinthians 14:30).
 - (b) Where the Spirit of the Lord is "there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17).
 - (c) Quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
 - (1) No stereotyped programs (1 Corinthians 14:26).

(2) No rituals (1 Corinthians 14:31).

(3) No time limits in an assembly meeting.

May be short or long depending on the two or three who speak (1 Corinthians 14:29).

IV. Worship in spirit and in truth.

"True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth—for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23).

Worship—the heart's overflow to God in praise and thanksgiving (Revelation 4:10,11).

A. Some basic truths of worship.

1. Basis of worship—redemption (Revelation 5:8-10).

2. Object of worship— God the Father (John 4:23).

God the Son (John 5:23).

Not God the Holy Spirit (John 16:13,14).

3. Place of worship—presence of God (Hebrews 9:24; 10:19).

4. Power for worship—the Holy Spirit

(Ephesians 2:18; Philippians 3:3 JND, NASV).

5. Material for worship—"In spirit" and "in truth" (John 4:24).

"in spirit"—contrast with Judaism (2 Chronicles 5:12-14;

see 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3 :16).

"in truth"—we must worship God according to the truth of who

He is as revealed in the Word (John 14:9).

6. Duration of worship--Eternity (Revelation 5:10: Ephesians 3:21).

B. The worshippers—All believers are priests

1. Holy priests (1 Peter 2:5).

(a) "Offer up spiritual sacrifices."

Body (Romans 12:1).

Praise (Hebrews 13:15; Luke 17:16).

Material Resources (Hebrews 13:16).

Time

2. Royal priests (1 Peter 2:9).

(a) "Show forth His praise."

Testimony (Philippians 2:16; Mark 5:19).

C. How can we bear witness to this truth today?

1. No mixture of saved and unsaved.

(Denies the basis of worship—2 Corinthians 6:14)

2. No sermon for the worship meeting.

(Denies the object of worship)

3. No consecrated buildings or altars.

(Denies the place of worship)

4. No ritual or order of service.

(Denies the power of worship)

5. No choirs or instruments.

(Denies the material of worship)

6. No separate class of men set apart by human appointment to administer the bread and wine.

(Denies the priesthood of all believers)

7. No distinctive garb to set man apart.

(Denies the priesthood of all believers)

8. No religious calendar--Holy days.

(First day of the week. Acts 20:7)

D. The "Breaking of Bread" meeting—Acts 2:42.

This meeting is especially a meeting for united praise and worship as we remember our Lord in His death.

1. Purpose

(a) "This do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11: 26).

(b) "Announce His death" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

2. How often do we keep it?

(a) "As often as ye" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

(b) "First day of the week" (Acts 20:7).

3. Who administers it?

(a) Any brother led by the Spirit to do so (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Corinthians 11:25).

4. How long?

(a) "Until He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

5. The Lord's supper is instituted in Luke 22:19,

expounded in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34,

celebrated in Acts 20:7.

V. The *Gifts* Given by the Ascended Head.

A. Source

1. "Ascended—He gave" (Ephesians 4:8,11).
Christ the risen Lord is the source of all gifts.

B. Major public gifts

Foundation (Ephesians 2:20)

1. Apostles (Authority) (2 Corinthians 10:8).
2. Prophets (Mouth of God) (Acts 21:10,11; 15:32; 13:1).

Continuing

3. Evangelists (Gospel) (Acts 21:8).
4. Pastors or shepherds (Application of truth) (Acts 11:23).
5. Teachers (Knowledge of the truth) (Acts 11:26).

C. Credentials

1. The Lord's calling (Matthew 4:21; Galatians 1:1; Matthew 25:14,15).
2. Their work (2 Corinthians 10:18; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

D. Power

1. The Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4,5).
2. Through Christ (Philippians 4:13).

E. Duration

1. The rapture "Until we all come" (Ephesians 4:13).

F. Purpose

1. "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).
2. "That we be no more children" (Ephesians 4:14).

G. How can we bear witness to this today?

1. No one man ministry
2. No human ordination
3. No human titles e.g. reverend, pastor, D.D.

VI. The Responsibility for Godly Discipline.

A. Need for discipline:

1. False-professors crept into the church unawares (Matthew 13:25).
2. Wolves would enter in not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29).
3. Men would arise speaking perverted things to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:30).
4. The flesh in the believer (Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

B. Object of discipline.

1. Glory of God's name.
 - (a) "Holiness becometh thine house forever" (Psalm 93:5).
 - (b) "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17).
 - (c) Keep the feast in sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8).
2. Clear the assembly (2 Corinthians 7:11; Joshua 7).
3. Restoration of the saint (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11).

C.Preventative Discipline

1. Begins with Reception by the assembly to the Lord's Table of all believers whom Scripture would not exclude.

- (a) What is the Lord's Table? (1 Corinthians 10:16-21)

- (1) Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ (His work)
1 Corinthians 10:16).

- (2) Expresses the Unity of the Body of Christ
1 Corinthians 10:17.

- (3) Recognizes His Lordship, His Table—not man's
1 Corinthians 10:21.

- (b) Scripture does exclude:

- (1) Those not sound in the doctrine of Christ
Galatians 5:9-12; 2 John 9,10).

- (2) Those not holy in life and walk (1 Corinthians 5:11).

- (3) Those in association with moral or doctrinal evil
1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9; 2 John 10).

- (4) Those under discipline by another assembly
1 Corinthians 12:27; Matt. 18:18).

- (c) Person being received should be acting on the principle of
2 Timothy 2:22.

- (1) Follow

- a. righteousness
- b. faith
- c. love
- d. peace

- (2) With them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

(d) Received on the:

(1) Basis of life

- a. Not light (Acts 18:24-26; Romans 14:1,2).
- b. Not ordinances.

(2) Regardless of past life (Acts 9:26-28; Colossians 4:9 with Philemon 12,15).

(3) With gladness (Philippians 2:29).

(e) How can an assembly know who is eligible?

(1) By inquiry and investigation (1 Corinthians 5:11).

(2) Letters of commendation Romans 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 3:1).

(3) Testimony of two or three (Matthew 18:16).

(f) Does the assembly have the right to judge? It is responsible to judge.

(1) Those within (1 Corinthians 5:12).

(2) Who are believers (2 Corinthians 6:14,17; Matthew 7:20).

2. "Those within" (1 Corinthians 5:12).

(a) By love serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

(b) The same care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25).

(c) Consider one another (Hebrews 10:24,25).

(d) Teaching and admonishing one another (Colossians 3:16).

(e) Kind one to another (Ephesians 4:32).

D. Corrective Discipline

1. Warn the unruly (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

2. Withdrawal (2 Thessalonians 3:14,15).

3. Public rebuke (1 Timothy 5:20).

4. "Wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

(a) Administered by the spiritual (Galatians 6:1).

5. Go to thy brother alone (Matthew 18:15).

E. Preservative Discipline—Excommunication

1. Evil manifested and unconfessed must be judged by the assembly and the wicked person put away (1 Corinthians 5:13).
 - (a) Must be established in the mouth of two or three persons (2 Corinthians 13:1).
 - (b) Character of evil could be moral, doctrinal, personal trespass, or association with evil (1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 5:9; 2 John 10,11; Matthew 18:15-20).
2. Manner in which this is to be done.
 - (a) "Put away from amongst yourselves" (1 Corinthians 5:13).
 - (b) "With such a one, no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11).

F. Spirit in which this is to be done.

1. Mourning (1 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 2:4).
2. "Search me" (Psalm 139:23,24).
3. Godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10,11).

G. Authority for Discipline

1. Christ in the midst (Matthew 18:18-20).

H. Restoration

1. Evidence
 - (a) Sin against God (Psalm 51:4).
 - (b) Judgment of the root (Psalm 51:3).
 - (c) Submission to God's governmental dealings (Galatians 6:7,8).
 - (d) Restitution (Leviticus 6:1-5).
2. Sin forsaken (Proverbs 28:13).
3. Joy restored
 - (a) Joy of the one restored (Psalm 51:12).
 - (b) Joy of the saints (2 Corinthians 7:4,13).