

Essentials of Christianity (pt 30)
10/10/2010

Introduction _____

Good morning church! We are the church of the Living God. **The church** is going to be our focus today, as we continue to learn about the subject of **Ecclesiology: the doctrine of the church.**

When we began this portion of the essentials of Christianity, we talked about the church universal and some of the defining elements of the nature of the universal church.

Christ is Lord of the Church.
The Church is formed by the Spirit.
Jew and Gentile Are United
The Church is a Worshiping Community.

Last week we moved our focus to the local church, and how the local church accomplishes the task of carrying out these central tenants of the universal church.

Last week we covered the **first three**; today we'll be looking into the **fourth**.

The Church is a Worshiping Community.

As an introduction let me say a few things about “**the church**” and about what is meant by a “**worshiping community.**”
Turn to Hebrews 10:23-25

Remember, the church is a “called out people.”

The gospel proclamation called lost people out of the world to gather together in a unique fellowship. Joined-together believers formed a new community: a community committed to Jesus and to the radical lifestyle expressed in God's Word. It is the allegiance of the new community to Jesus that makes its members different from those "outside." Jesus thus relates not only to individual believers but also to believers in community.

This theme in the NT is a corrective to Western culture's individualism. Christians must learn to live as a people called out of the world to be together, called to function in and as community. We must learn to discern Christ's will in and as communities. For whenever the word "church" is used in the NT, we are to discern our corporate identity and see how we are to function as community, not how an individual functions apart from community.¹

Even though we discussed earlier what is meant by the universal church and what is meant by the local church. We don't want to be too rigid in our definitions so as to believe there are two separate groups.

It is necessary to stress that the NT never countenances the possibility of a believer living his Christian life apart from the context of the local church. A church in the NT existed as soon as a company of believers associated themselves together for regular worship, for instruction in the Word of God, fellowship, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41, 42).²

It seems silly to me for Christians to say that they don't have to go to church to be a Christian. This demonstrates a lack of maturity at best, or a non-converted individual at worst.

¹ Richards

² Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible* (Zondervan Publishing House).

God has saved individuals to a part of something bigger themselves. And so the local church is the place where the individuals God has saved can get plugged into the place that God has ordained for growth.

A believer in Christ, under normal circumstances (opposite of a thief on the cross scenario) will never grow as they should *spiritually* apart from being plugged into a local church.

Read:

^{NAU} Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Next, our heading says the **church is a worshiping community**. When we say “worshiping,” we don’t just mean singing praise songs.

Worshiping encompasses all the various things that the saints do in expressing their devotion to God; of which singing is but a part.

The word worship comes from a group of different words in the Greek. Collectively they mean *voluntary piety, to put religion into practice, to minister to God, to prostrate oneself, to adore.*³

³ James/ Kohlenberger. Strong, *The New Strongs Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

So, continuing on with the **church as a worshiping community**: two weeks ago, we read:

As a living organism birthed by the Spirit, the church is to maintain it's commitment to being a worshiping community by assembling for the purpose of:

- * Corporate prayer, praise and adoration to the Lord.
- * Biblical instruction from the word of God.
- * Fellowship.
- * Ministry.
- * Ordinances.
- * Organization.⁴

We're going to expound on this list. These are some of the ways that the local church can accomplish what the Lord has called her to.

Each local assembly (Like CCoM) is to maintain its commitment to being a worshipping community by assembling for the purpose of:

Corporate prayer, praise and adoration to the Lord.

Some of the things we'll be covering are things that we can do individually or even at home with our families. But what we're focusing on is what the church does when it assembles.

One thing worth noting here:

⁴ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

The first converts to Christianity were those whose religious and cultural background had been shaped by the synagogue. Christianity, therefore, entered into the inheritance of an already existing pattern of worship provided by the Temple ritual and the synagogue liturgy.

The first disciples were Jews by birth and upbringing, and it is, probable that they would bring into the new community some at least of the religious usages to which they had long been accustomed.

The three main elements forming the pattern of synagogue worship were praise, prayer, and instruction. The service would open on the note of corporate praise. The OT hymnbook, the Psalter, was then read with Christian eyes and used to express Christian worship.⁵

For the most part this pattern is still with us today with a few variations here and there. And there's nothing wrong with that.

Some people have gone out of their way to be informal and non-structured, as sort of a statement against **formality or tradition**. But all this means is that they'll end up forming their own pattern which will become formal too.

It's funny how some of us like to think of ourselves as "non-traditional". But then we end up making a tradition out of our non-tradition.

The central issue is that the local church is to be committed to corporate **prayer and praise**/adoration. It's proper to do this when we assemble weekly in this building.

Praise: certain passages that can be applied personally also provide direction for the assembled church.

⁵ Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible* (Zondervan Publishing House).

^{NAU} Ephesians 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

^{NAU} Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

^{NAU} James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

These verses reflect patterns of in corporate worship.

We find more formal instruction for praise (and other expressions of worship) in **1 Corinthians 14:15**.

^{NAU} 1 Corinthians 14:15 What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

Interesting to me how this chapter provides so much formal instruction on the worship service to correct their preoccupation with a more “free flowing” service.

A lot of the direction we get on praise and adoration comes from the OT.

I did an extended teaching on the subject of praise and worship a couple years back--a systematic theology on praise. I would encourage you all to listen to it.

Music is one of those areas that modern Christians can have very divided opinions over. Some of the division is warranted, some of it is not.

Grab a copy of the teaching we did and you'll get a thorough explanation on the essentials of praise.

The public assembly's exaltation of the Lord is one of the things God used to draw me into the kingdom. The night I became a Christian I was moved by the sense of God's majesty in the room as the people of God were giving themselves to a spirit of praise.

It was not the energy of the music-- the people giving themselves to praise.

Prayer. As far as prayer. the church was built on foundation of prayer. They were assembled together for prayer when the Holy Spirit baptized them for the first time.

Example: Turn to Acts 12:1-17: read

^{NAU} Acts 12:1 *Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.*

² *And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.*

³ *When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.*

⁴ *When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.*

⁵ *So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.*

⁶ *On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.*

⁷ *And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.*

⁸ *And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."*

⁹ *And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.*

¹⁰ *When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.*

¹¹ *When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."*

¹² *And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.*

¹³ *When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.*

¹⁴ *When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate.*

¹⁵ *They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel."*

¹⁶ *But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.*

¹⁷ *But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.*

And look at all the examples of Paul asking the local churches to pray for him.

^{NAU} Romans 15:30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

^{NAU} 2 Corinthians 1:11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

^{NAU} Philippians 1:19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

^{NAU} Colossians 4:3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

^{NAU} 1 Thessalonians 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

^{NAU} 2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;

^{NAU} Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

The local assembly is to maintain its commitment to being a worshipping community by assembling to hear:

Biblical instruction from the word of God. Turn to 2 Timothy 3:16-17

God gave the Scriptures for the purpose of teaching people and bringing them to maturity. Teaching is the antidote to false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3); it produces love among believers (1 Tim. 1:5); it provides spiritual nourishment (1 Tim. 4:6); godliness (1 Tim. 4:6–16); submission (1 Tim. 5:17; 6:2); and a proper focus on life (1 Tim. 6:17).

Read

^{NAU} 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

KJV Act 20:26-28 ²⁶ *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.*

²⁷ *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

²⁸ *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Consider this comment:

The chief element in synagogue worship was the reading and exposition of the Law (Acts 13:14, 15) and this basic pattern was carried over into Christian assemblies. Paul seized the opportunity of proclaiming Christ as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Acts 13:46; 19:8). Timothy was encouraged to give attention to the public reading of the Scriptures (1 Tim 4:13). Paul expected that his own letters would be read out at public worship (Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; Philem 2). Before the close of the NT canon there is evidence that Paul's letters were being accepted on a par with "the other scriptures" (2 Pet 3:15, 16). They were the objects of study and meditation. ⁶

Fellowship. This dynamic was powerfully displayed in the first century immediately after the formal birth of the church. It's difficult to fully express the importance of having fellowship here *in* the local church or *as* the local church.

This is facilitated in numerous ways, and accomplishes a number of goals.

Snack ministry: a reason to hang out. a launching pad for further fellowship.

⁶ Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible* (Zondervan Publishing House).

Glad we don't have two services and hope we never do.

The whole book of Acts is permeated with the strong sense of fellowship.

The word fellowship means "sharing" and emphasizes the unity and oneness of the church.

We could back to Hebrews 10 for this one.

Turn to Proverbs 27:17

^{NAU} Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.

Close

