

Essentials of Christianity (pt 31)
10/17/2010

Introduction_____

Good morning on this glorious Lord's day. We are presently doing a survey on the essentials of Christianity. Today I hope to wrap up the topic of **ecclesiology: the doctrine of the church.** (slide).

What we're going to cover today will segue nicely into our time of communion.

Let's go back to...

The Church Is A Worshiping Community.

The church is a worshiping community. Thus, it is to maintain its commitment to this 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.

To begin, **let's turn in our Bible's to Ephesians 4.** Most of what we'll be covering today has either a direct or indirect link to Ephesians 4.

NAU Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

² *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,*

³ *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;*

⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

⁶ *one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

⁷ *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

⁸ *Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."*

⁹ *(Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?)*

¹⁰ *He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)*

¹¹ *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*

¹² *for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*

¹³ *until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

¹⁴ *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*

¹⁵ *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*

¹⁶ *from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

¹⁷ *So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,*

¹⁸ *being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;*

¹⁹ *and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.*

²⁰ *But you did not learn Christ in this way,*

²¹ *if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,*

²² *that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,*

²³ *and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,*

²⁴ *and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

²⁵ *Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.*

²⁶ *BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,*

²⁷ *and do not give the devil an opportunity.*

²⁸ *He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.*

²⁹ *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

³⁰ *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

³¹ *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*

³² *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

4. Ministry : Let's talk about the necessity of the local churches commitment to **ministry**. Numerous NT passages display a vast array of ministry activities that the church is to be engaged in.

We can divide these ministries into two types: that which is done *in* and *to* the church; and what is done toward those *outside* the church (non-believers).

It's way beyond the scope of this study to go into the many, types of ministry the NT speaks of. But there is a way of summarizing it all, and Jesus told us how in **John 13:34-35**

^{NAU} John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This is a good summary of the some of the specifics in Ephesians 4.

Love is the motivating factor for how the church ministers to its member through the **spiritual gifts** (vs 8), by serving one another with **helps, administration**, showing **mercy** (vs 28).

All to be done with an end in view:

^{NAU} Ephesians 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Outside the church, our ministry endeavors are primarily evangelistic. The great commission is our primary call to unbelievers. We might show them love through benevolent acts; but this is a means to and end.

Turn to Mark 16:15-20

^{NAU} Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

¹⁶ *"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*

¹⁷ *"These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;*

¹⁸ *they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

¹⁹ *So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.*

²⁰ *And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.*

And so, the church needs to maintain its commitment to ministry--both **inside** and **outside** its membership.

Wayne Grudem in his systematic theology book, offers some insightful commentary that I'd like to quote to close this out.

Grudem's comments are based on a three-fold purpose for the churches ministry. The first one being what we covered last week.

Here's what he says:

Keeping These Purposes in Balance.

Once we have listed these three purposes for the church (ministry to God, church, world) someone might ask, Which is most important? Or someone else might ask, Might we neglect one of these three as less important than the others?

To that we must respond that all three purposes of the church are commanded by the Lord in Scripture; therefore all three are important and none can be neglected. In fact, a strong church will have effective ministries in all three of these areas. We should beware of any attempts to reduce the purpose of the church to only one of these three and to say that it should be our primary focus. In fact, such attempts to make one of these purposes primary will always result in some neglect of the other two. A church that emphasizes only worship will end up with inadequate Bible teaching of believers and its members will remain shallow in their understanding of Scripture and immature in their Christian lives. If it also begins to neglect evangelism the church will cease to grow and influence others; it will become ingrown and eventually begin to wither.

A church that places the edification of believers as a purpose that takes precedence over the other two will tend to produce Christians who know much Bible doctrine but have spiritual dryness in their lives because they know little of the joy of worshiping God or telling others about Christ.

But a church that makes evangelism such a priority that it causes the other two purposes to be neglected will also end up with immature Christians who emphasize growth in numbers but have less and less genuine love for God expressed in their worship and less and less doctrinal maturity and personal holiness in their lives. All three purposes must be emphasized continually in a healthy church.¹

5. Ordinances: The church is to be committed to obeying The Lord's commands to keep what is commonly called **ordinances (or sacraments)**.

The church was commanded by Jesus to practice the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which the Church has always regarded as binding upon it.

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan Publishing, 1994).

Sacraments may be defined as ordinances in which spiritual realities are set forth by visible signs, i.e., signs which can be discerned by the senses. The sensible sign in baptism is washing with water in the name of the triune God, while at the Lord's Supper it is the giving and receiving of bread and wine. ²

Baptism

^{NAU} Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

New Testament baptism had its origin in the command of Christ to make disciples and baptize them. In the origination of this ordinance there is a particular order established; the first act was to make disciples, then those disciples were to be baptized. This is the pattern that is carried out in the book of Acts. Peter commanded that his hearers should first repent, then be baptized (Acts 2:38); and so on. Only those who heard the gospel, understood and responded to it through faith and repentance, could be baptized. All NT references indicate that baptism follows belief; repentance and faith precede the ordinance of baptism. ³

I did a thorough teaching on water baptism on 8/14/2005.
Request a copy of the recording.

Communion

This ordinance was instituted by our Lord in **Luke 22:17-19--turn to**. The biblical view is that the elements of communion are emblematic of the Lord's body and blood.

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

³ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

As some of you may be aware, there are some aberrant views of communion. The RC view is that a miracle takes place during their communion (the Mass) in which the elements of the bread and wine are actually changed into the literal body and blood of Christ, although the sensory characteristics (which the Catholics call “accidents”) of the elements—touch, taste, smell—may remain the same.

The Lutheran view is (referred to as consubstantiation), Jesus’ body and blood are actually present in the elements but the bread and wine remain such; they do not change into literal body and blood as taught in Roman Catholic doctrine.

The biblical view is derived the Luke 22 and 1Corinthians 11.

Read Luke 22.

^{NAU} Luke 22:17 *And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves;*

¹⁸ *for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."*

¹⁹ *And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance (**means of remembering--memorialist view**) of Me."*

These ordinances are to be carried out by the local church without fail.

Lastly...

Organization: Though the church is a living organism, it is without question an organism with organization.

The church was given specific instructions for organization. Roles of leadership to help implement many of the things we've discussed already.

There are many skeptics who believe the church is not organized. There are some atheists who claim that a lack of organization in the church is what causes them to doubt there's a God.

In their view, because there isn't perfect consensus (among Christians) on every detail of the bible, church policy, science, church government, even on some moral issues; that this precludes the possibility there's a God.

The truth is, Jesus is the Head of the church, and the church IS structured with the highest standards of quality leadership on planet earth, and is a well oiled machine.

What the unbelieving world doesn't realize is that there is a central core of beliefs (many of which we've discussed) that the church universal DOES agree upon.

There are many matters that are "non essential" that some in the church have debated about since its conception. But this by no means demonstrates a lack of cohesiveness or structure.

There is some diversity in the church. Some of it is because the church is made up of imperfect people; while some of the diversity is by design. Not all diversity is disunity.

The invisible church IS united, and the local church is responsible to ensure the unity is sustained. And the organizational structure (and leadership) is designed to bring the church where Jesus wants it.

Back to Ephesians 4

^{NAU} Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

⁸ Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

⁹ (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?)

¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

Vs 8-- is a quotation from Psalm 68:18, which is a celebratory triumphal victory chant.

Paul provides a NT context for the psalm and connects it to the triumph of Jesus Christ. It's connection teaches us several things.

1. His triumph ransomed prisoners from the power of Satan.
2. His triumph brought spoils of victory in the form of spiritual gifts.

I don't know if you've viewed the gifts as a triumphal token of the spoils of Jesus' victory, but that is exactly what they represent in this context.

Then he goes on to list the gifts of leadership and their purpose.

^{NAU} Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Here's the organizational structure in a nutshell.

In addition there's deacons, elders and bishops.

(Vs 12-14) -- protection from error while the church is growing.

The organizational structure provides the church with authority; ability to deal with Satan, exercise church discipline, declare sinners forgiven...