

## Building Blocks Week 6- “The Church”

It has become popular to take issue with the terminology and function of the CHURCH. While it is true that at various points of time throughout history individuals have used the “church” to do horrible things, or to fulfill selfish desires, the same can be said about the Synagogues of Judaism, the Temples of Buddha, and many other social and spiritual gatherings. The term “church” isn’t the problem, the church isn’t the problem. The problem is the human heart our attempt to co-opt the church for our own selfish desires. The problem is the human heart not the church.

The question is do we want to be a part of HIS CHURCH or ours?

**Ecclesia**- Is the Greek word meaning a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into a public place. An assembly. People convened at the public place. An assembly of Israelites. Those who in a city, village, constitute such a company and are united into one body. The whole body of Jesus followers scattered throughout the earth.

The word Ecclesia is where we get the modern term the Church. We see based upon the definition above the church is more than a system, or religious practice. It is a living and breathing concept. Some say that the church is not an organization, it’s an organism, a living entity. And while that is true, the church IS an organization which pulls and holds together the collective family of God.

If we are going to call ourselves a church, we need to be the church as defined by God’s Word.

### **What is The Church?** -

- It is people.
- Called out of their home.
- Convened together.
- United into one family.
- Then it is all those united across the world.

### **Church isn’t a New Testament Concept?**

In the Septuagint, (Greek translation of the Torah) the word that is used to describe the nation of Israel assembled at the base of Mount Sinai is the same word in the New Testament for church. Ecclesia!

We see throughout the Old Testament the concept of assembling with others and at a place. The Torah outlines the Sabbath a weekly gathering, Feasts and Festivals which were an annual cycle and calendar for days of assembling before the Lord, and there were requirements that came with the commandment to assemble.

We also see from the Tabernacle, and Temple's it was both God and man's desire to dwell with God. Of course, we also see some of the wrestles we see in today's modern church gatherings. God commands one thing and humans interpret or do it their own way. This isn't a new concept. But it is a concept that finds an expanded meaning in the New Testament.

It is worth pointing out though that in the New Testament, no synagogue, temple, tabernacle, or other meeting place is ever referred to as a/the "church." In the New Testament that term is always referred to an assembly of Jesus believers both on a local level and global level.

There is a shift from just assemblies when Jesus comes.

*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

- *Matthew 16:18*

Before Jesus, God used humans to build a house or assembly place for Him to dwell with Him. Both in the conception/birth of Jesus and then in the conception and birth of the church, God progresses to say I will build Messiah (not man and women) and Jesus then says I will build my church.

This was always the plan that all other gatherings, assemblies, and covenants pointed to. One day there will not be Jew or Gentile, black or white, rich or poor, one day Jesus will bring all into one body and one family to communion with God.

The church is rooted in the promises of God to the Hebrew people and cannot be separated from those. The church didn't replace Israel, like many have taught over the years, the church became the extension and progression of the promises made to the Hebrews in the Old Testament. Nowhere in the Bible does God throw away His promises to the Hebrews, the Jews, or the Israelites.

## **Jesus and the First Church**

Many attribute the birth of the church of Jesus to the day of Pentecost, in truth it is more of an anniversary of the church since Israel was the Assembly of the LORD at Mount Sinai. While the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts is a revolutionary thing and certainly a huge momentum changer for the early Jesus Church, I would like to point out the birth of the New Testament church started with Jesus and the teachings to His disciples. So as the assembly of New Covenant believers it is rightly considered a birthday of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lets look as some Scriptures that point to the new church reality.

*Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."<sup>[1]</sup> <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.*

- Mark 1:16-20

Jesus was already setting the stage for something with a higher expectation. He was progressively leading men to grow and learn from Him so that when the Holy Spirit fell, they were already trained.

The church must first turn from whatever system, profession, or tasks they were doing and fully trust in Jesus.

*<sup>21</sup>And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. <sup>22</sup>And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup>And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, <sup>24</sup>"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." <sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup>And they were all amazed, so that they questioned*

*among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”<sup>28</sup> And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*

- *Mark 1: 21-28*

Jesus immediately pushed back against the lack of power in the assemblies of God. The church who acts on their power is like that of the scribes. The church who is filled with the Spirit of Jesus is what we are called to be. The church is one who calls out demons, and seeks to heal, not just teach. A new teaching with authority, this is a dangerous statement I have heard over the years. The context here is Jesus was God and He had the authority to say those things, we are not God. The authority we carry should be that of the Spirit of Jesus (Holy Spirit) living and working through us. Without that authority your new teaching is garbage and meant for self-gratification.

*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.*

- *Matthew 5:1*

The sermon on the mount was Jesus' basic doctrine for His church. You have heard it said in the synagogues (man's thoughts, or traditions), remember the 1<sup>st</sup> century synagogues taught Moses and the Prophets with centuries of pharisaical interpretation (pre Talmud, Misnah), then Jesus lays out what His expectations and thoughts were.

The sermon on the mount is a higher calling. Jesus was saying those who look for loopholes or those who practice physical abstinence but not mental, emotional, or spiritual abstinence are just as guilty.

I get why people want to go back under the law. I can think about lust, divorce, breaking oaths, retribution, and all those other things and I am not transgressing any commandment as long as I don't do it.

Jesus lays out a foundation for a higher calling. Or like I tell my kids “Do better.” Jesus knew what was coming. He knew that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit would fall on temples of flesh and bone and not just dwell in a temple of sticks and stones.

## The Post Resurrection Church

When the day of Pentecost had come, and the Holy Spirit came it brought two things. Power and unity. Things Jesus had, and things Jesus taught, but we needed God the Helper to put what was taught into practice. Church this is still 100% true today. You cannot and were never intended to do it out of your own Spirit.

*And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." <sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

*<sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

*<sup>43</sup> And awe<sup>[4]</sup> came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

- Acts 2: 44-47

To become a part of the church body:

1. Belief that Jesus is salvation.
2. Repent of your sins.
3. Be baptized.

Four Foundational Practices of the Church:

- The Apostles teaching.
- Church gatherings and fellowship.
- Breaking bread together.
- Praying for and with each other.

These things then should flow out of the church's doors into the community. It states they were breaking bread in each other's homes; they were glad, generous, blessing others with money and resources, praising God, and being received by all people.

We come from a corner of Christianity that doesn't have a lot of these things. We traditionally devote ourselves to Moses' teaching above the Apostles teachings, we forsake gatherings and fellowship for online services or teachers, we do break bread occasionally on Sabbath, and pray very little or put very little importance on prayer outside of Jewish liturgy. We also see a lack of gladness, generousness, blessings others verbally or financially, we do see a lot of praising God, and we are not well received with many other believers of Jesus.

This is why we must be whole Bible believers not just Moses-believers in Jesus. This tide is changing, and I am excited about that.

We then go on to see Paul write in Timothy, Ephesians, Corinthians, Galatians and many other books letters to future churches who are wrestling with finding the balance of God's intended desire for them to make disciples and preach the Gospel to the nations.

Paul calls us to be a united body, to put aside self-divisions, to cast out willful and rebellious sinners, to grow in wisdom and faith, and be loving.

*which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

- *Ephesians 1:23*

*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

- *1 Corinthians 12:27*

*So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.*

- *1 Corinthians 14:12*

<sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

- 1 Timothy 3:15

*“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.*

- 2 Thessalonians 1:3

The writer of Hebrews tells us gathering as a church is still a thing.

*“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”*

- Hebrews 10:24

*“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

- Hebrews 10:25

### **Conclusion:**

I have said many times, what happens in the Church first happens in your home, and if you don't fix what happens in your home, you look for a new Church. Then and only then can you affect change through and outside the church (the work of the church in your cities).

We have had an epidemic over the last 20 plus years. People have lost grace and mercy for the church and those a part of the church. Whether they take issue with seeker friendly environment, or they take issue with a more religious structured environment. Believers in Jesus within the body have become the tool of the adversary to attack, deconstruct, and do the very thing Paul warned us not to do.

The church is to edify and grow people in their relationship with Jesus and others. It is a place where you are to see and feel the Holy Spirit move. It isn't the only place the Holy Spirit moves. It is a place for you to repent (there is

something we don't talk about anymore) well I disagree with your thoughts; well, I think you need to repent! Repenting, confessing of sins, being baptized, so that you can be filled with the Holy Spirit for the edification for the church, not your own edification.

The church isn't the problem and never was. The people are. We don't want to put in the work, we want to edify ourselves, and Jesus is sending prophets to churches around the world saying wake up. Repent, preach the Gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons (don't just bring them to church), and spurn one another to good works, so that disciples of Jesus can be made, dead can be born again, and lives can be transformed. That's what God called the church to do. Jew, gentile, black and white, rich, and poor. Transform this world by first letting the Lord transform you.