

Oasis Notes – Oct 26, 2011

The Church – Its Members

Introduction:

A good question to ask ourselves is ...

“How do we know if we belong to the church or if we are just attending”?

Another important question to look at is ...

What does believing in God & in Jesus Christ, have to do with church life or membership?

Problems/Definition: Who has the right to define what “church” is or means? Scriptures or society?

- A building made of brick or wood, like a school or hospital.
- A specific group of people that show up at the same address each weekend.
- religious organization
- Hi-Tech church - online communication global environment (chatroom, computer screen or large screen in Centre Court).
- The Scriptures teach us what God intends the church to be, but it doesn't give us the exact “methods” to effectively build up the body of Christ. Matthew 28:19-20
- The church is **NOT** a **BUILDING** of bricks and mortar. It is a **BODY** and Jesus Christ uses **PEOPLE** to build his church, the **BODY** of Christ.
- Evangelical Christianity – guilty of discounting the church to merely “a personal relationship with Jesus”, meaning that “church” is made up of many **individuals who profess the same faith**, but that reduces church again to just an address where individuals gather
- Does “church” mean the same today as it did when Jesus said, “... I will build my church, & the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

Personal exercise:

- a. List as many strengths and weakness as you've seen or experienced in our church.
- b. Write down how you personally contribute to each one (strengths and weakness).
- c. Write down how you would like to contribute to changing the weaknesses.

Theology of Church - Why it is important to learn about the "doctrine of the church"

- The word used for the “study of church” is “*ecclesiology*”
- refers to the Biblical doctrine of the church

1. Uniqueness of Jesus Christ and His Church:

1.1 What makes Jesus different from all others? (Matthew 16:13-20)

Jesus declares his unique ***Messianic identity***.

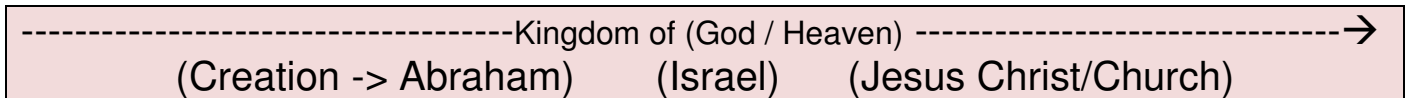
1.2 What makes the church different from all other religious groups, (even the Jewish temple and their local synagogues)?

In the same breath that Jesus declares his own unique identity, we also see that he introduces his "church" for the first time, indicating a very unique connection between the ***church, the Messiah*** and ***the God's Kingdom***.

1.3 The church is part of God's Kingdom:

The church is a very important part of the “Kingdom”, but the church is **NOT the Kingdom**. (Matt 16:13-20 cf Rev 1:16-18; Col 1:16-18).

- **God's purpose for the church is to fulfill God's will for His Kingdom on earth** (Matt 6:9-10). We have a message to share and it is eternal life
- Jesus did the work of the kingdom when he walked on this earth and when he left he commissioned the church to continue the work and ministry of the Kingdom **right HERE & right NOW.**
- **Application:** The ***uniqueness of the church*** and the ***uniqueness of Jesus Christ*** are directly connected to his purpose for coming to the earth. It has very special application to our "multicultural" and "multi-religious" society. The church is made up of local groups of believers all over the world, doing the work and ministry that Jesus did while he was on earth. We get to live and walk in the kingdom right now and we get to invite others into the kingdom.



Imagine this time line ... starting with creation (God's reign begins on earth)

- God's sovereign reign over humanity began at creation and will continue forevermore. Every knee will bow (Phil 2:9-11).
- Jesus often talks about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. He often said the "Kingdom is at hand"
- Look at your hand ... reach out and touch the person sitting next to you. Jesus said the kingdom is very, very close ... he said it is within reach.
- Today his kingdom is within reach He reigns over us (Col 1:16-18) and in us through the Holy Spirit, if we have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

1.4 **Jesus, the Messiah i- Apex of the Church:** (Col 1:16-18; Phil 2:9-11)

- The church is spiritually renewed and nourished as we gather together ***to glorify Jesus Christ***. The Holy Spirit energizes his people when we gather for worship & service. ***We are created to worship in community.***
- We have Jesus at the **head** or top of the church and we have Jesus at the bottom, the **foundation** of the Church.

2. Foundation of the church:

2.1 **The Church belongs to Christ:**

- a) **Jesus Christ** is both the head and foundation or cornerstone of the church. He purchased the church with His blood, and through the Holy Spirit it is infused with real life & power – the same power God used to resurrect Jesus from the grave. (Matt 26:26-29).
- b) **The Apostles** were its founding members (Eph 2:19-22).
- c) **Others:** Since then all those who have embraced Christ as Savior, personally by faith, are added to the body of the universal church. **God's kingdom purposes are fulfilled through the church.**
- d) **The Church began at Pentecost:** I(Acts 1:5-8; 2:41-43) We learn that the church began in Jerusalem 40 days after the resurrection of Christ, after Christ ascended into heaven. It all began the moment when Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to fill the believers.

3. The Nature of the church: What is the essence of church?

3.1 The word "Church" defined: (1 Pet 2:9-10).

- What does the word "church" mean
- The word **ecclesiology** comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning assembly. It is a compound of the Greek preposition **ek (out from)** and the verb **kaleo (to call)**.
- The meaning of the word refers to a "group that is **called out from**".
- "Ekklesia" refers to an "**assembly**" or a "**congregation**" of people that is "**called out**".
- Notice that the writer is referring to a **group of people set apart by God for God's purposes**. Often individuals are mentioned, but the letters are written to the churches.
- The church is not primarily geographical, because there were no church buildings in the NT times. But Paul often writes to groups of believers who lived at a specific location (Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, or Thessalonica).

3.2 The New Covenant: The church is the body of Christ and so others should be able to see Christ in us! The church is not an **organization**, it is a real, living **organism**. For lack of a better term, it has its own **unique spiritual "DNA"** which means that the church will **look like, function like** and **be like Jesus** (Eph 4:15-16). God spiritually transplants Jesus' heart into the heart of His church, & His law is written on our hearts (2 Cor 3:2-5; Rom 2:28-29; 1 John 5:9-10).

3.3 God's mandate for the church is inclusive: The mandate is the **heart of the church** because it comes from the **heart of God**. Jesus sums up God's mandate in the **Great Commission** (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) and in the **Great Commandment** (Matt 22:36-39).

- The "church" is not about **individualism**. It always refers to a corporate community of believers, whose reason for existence is mandated by Jesus
- The church **meets regularly** to ensure that it **stays on track with God's will & God's kingdom purposes and plans**.
- The NT picture of the church is **universal**, like the Kingdom of God and it always finds **expressions in and through local groupings of believers**, displaying the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole.

4. Portraits of the church

- Images the Bible uses to describe the church and significance of these images
 - Each of us resembles Jesus Christ & his character in some unique way. But when the whole church is seen together, the likeness of Jesus is even more clear and apparent to the world.
 - **3 images** used in the NT - each focus on a different person of the Trinity. Looking at the images **as a whole** helps to give us a more complete picture and understanding of God.
- 4.1 -> Picture of people of God - (God) The whole community** not the individual members. Like a **family tree** tracing "redemption" throughout Bible, emphasizing **God's initiating role in calling a people into being** (Rom 9:25-26).
- 4.2 -> Picture of The body of Christ - (Christ) Functional unity** of all members (genders, races, classes), emphasizing the single entity of one body with many parts (spiritual gifts), under **control of one head** Christ (Eph 1:22-23) ; Rom 12:4-6; 1 Cor 12:27; 2 Cor 6:16-17).
- 4.3 -> Picture of The Temple of God - The Holy Spirit** as the life infusing source of the church, empowering each member with spiritual gifts and energy to do the work of the gospel ministry (1 Pet 2:5-6).

So what does God desire to accomplish through the church, through Northview Community Church? (Acts 2:42-47) (Matt 22:38-39). How is Northview fulfilling its God-given mandate?

5. Functions of the Church

- Every local church engages in some basic primary ministry functions to keep the church and its ministry moving forward (**4 wheels**)
- **These ministries serve like the wheels of a wagon.** If one wheel is missing the wagon stops moving forward.
- Likewise, in a church, if one of these ministries ceases, the church will not be able to advance.

4 Essential ministry functions:

- **Wheel #1 -> Corporate Worship:** (Acts 2:42-43; 1 John 5:14-15; 11 & 14; Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16, John 13:3-5)
 - **Focus: triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** Bringing glory, honor and praise to God. Will continue throughout all eternity. Commanded to worship (John 4:23; Rom 12:1-2; Heb 10:25; 12:28).
- **Wheel #2 -> Mutual Edification:** (1 Pet 4:10-11; Eph 4:11-12; Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12-14; Phil 2:1-12)
 - **Focus: members of the church** – As we bring God glory, we are using our spiritual gifts to benefit, encourage and build up one another. The gifts are for building up this worshipping body, to make it become more effective. The gifts are the tools needed to do this work.
- **Wheel #3 -> Evangelism:** (Eph 2:10, Acts 1:8, Matt 28:19-20)
 - **Focus: Others** not yet in the body of Christ. The church by its life and witness, as a **redeemed** and **separated community**, reveals **God's saving purposes** to the world. This is what we were created for, to do good works that God prepared for us in advance. The church empowered by the Holy Spirit is a witness to God's salvation Meeting **spiritual needs of those not yet in the family of God** - We must learn to tell our faith stories to bring a **WITNESS** of Jesus Christ to a dying world.
- **Wheel #4 -> Social Concern:** (James 1:27; Matt 25:40)
 - **Focus: Physical needs** - The church united and empowered by the Spirit, make **Christ visible in the world** through acts of service especially to the vulnerable and disadvantaged. The church as a body, **witnesses to God's reign** in the world.