

Bible Basics Conference 2015: The church

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Well, good morning to everybody and we really enjoy to be here with you and we hope we can be also of some help for one another because we all belong to the same church and the topic of our conference is, of course, the local aspect of the church.

But this first presentation shows, it's like a reminder, shows the broader aspect of the church.

And I think this is a very important thing that when we gather in a locality, when we gather the two or three, that we never lose sight of the whole picture, what God had in mind what the church of God is.

[00:01:05] One example, for instance, when we come to break bread, we see the loaf in front of us and we can say, well, it is a picture of the body of our Lord Jesus was given for us.

He gave himself.

We can remember him in his sufferings, in his death. But at the same time, this loaf is also a picture of the body of Christ.

And I think when we come together, the two or three, we should always remember that when we break the bread, that in that, to that body, every true believer belongs, no matter where he is, and that we express the unity of the one body.

[00:02:04] So this is just an example.

The first question was, what is the church? What is it not?

It is surely not a building.

And we have many beautiful cathedrals all around the world. And people are proud, this is our church. But this is not what God had intended. It's not an organization. And you know, I've noticed

that people are leaving us, go somewhere else. Or even when there is weakness amongst us, we attempt to start to organize. We try to get things in our own way. And the more we organize, the less we're going to achieve what God had in mind. It's not an organization. It's not a denomination. [00:03:02] No church can say, we are the church of God. No one can claim this. It's not the professing church on earth.

And some of these ultra-dispensationalists, they said, you know, in the beginning, there was just the Jewish church, you know, everybody was from the people of Israel, and then later on it got sort of converted to the church of the Gentiles. This is also not what God had in mind.

It's also not a continuation of what was found in the Old Testament in Israel. Just, you know, a spiritual Israel now, in the New Testament now. It is something totally new. It was not revealed in the Old Testament. It's talked about a mystery, which was only revealed to us in the New, especially by the [00:04:04] vessel of the Apostle Paul, who was given this. And perhaps we can turn now to the next question, what it is.

It is indeed the church of the living God. And I would like to read from Matthew, where the Lord Jesus first mentioned the assembly. You see, we have different words which mean the same. Some translation, we find the word church. In others, we find the word assembly, which is more close to the gathering of people, the assembly.

But then we also have the word ekklesia, which is the Greek word, which is meant the called out ones.

And in Matthew 16, we have the first reference to the assembly.

[00:05:07] And we find that the Apostle Peter, he said about the Lord Jesus when he asked the question, who am I? He said, thou art the Christ, verse 16, the son of the living God.

And then in verse 18, he answered, upon this rock, I will build my church or my assembly and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

So that was the first references to the word assembly. And it's coming out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus, which confirms what is the foundation. It is his work.

He accomplished it on the cross. He had to die, he had to be buried.

[00:06:04] He rose again and he had to go back to the glory.

And only after that, the assembly could be founded.

That's why it says there was no church before Pentecost. And in John 9, in John 7, verse 39, the Lord Jesus said, but this spake he of the spirit which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

So we find that the Lord Jesus had to accomplish the work first and had to return to heaven and take his seat at the right hand of God. [00:07:02] And then he sent the Holy Spirit. Of course, the Holy Spirit was working before. We find him in the Old Testament, but he was not living in the saints. And only in

Acts 2, we find that the Holy Spirit came down and those who are gathered were baptized and this was into that unity, which is called the assembly. That's the starting point of the assembly there in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came down.

And ever since then, and we have a lot of confusion about this baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some preach even today, you need the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then you will reach a higher level and all these things, but that's not according to the Word. It was once and for all and everyone who comes to Christ is immediately added to the church [00:08:07] and it exists only of true believers.

You know God using many different pictures to explain what he really intended.

One picture would not be enough and so we find three major, and I say main pictures because there are others and we don't have time to go in all these details. But these three main pictures are the body, the house, and the bride. We find many references in the New Testament that these three pictures are used to illustrate what the church of God is.

[00:09:02] The body, there we find the characteristic more of the unity and still the diversity as well and we know when we look around how different we all are. Each one is different, but God has brought us together in unity.

And it is an organism, when you study the body, it's not an organization that would never function, but it's an organism which is really a beautiful illustration how the church of God should function. The house is more showing us the place that God intended to dwell amongst his people. That was always his thought and because it is his house, and we should never forget that, [00:10:01] he decides what the order is.

But he also passes on responsibility to us and whatever God has given into man's hand, we know we made a mess of it.

But that doesn't take away the responsibility each one of us has to live up to the standard which God has set out.

He's not a God of confusion, but of peace.

You know, peace should really characterize us when we come together as a family. And then the bride, that shows us again another aspect, more the aspect of affection, of intimacy and of association.

You know, we belong to him.

The Lord Jesus has bought us with a price and we can never measure the value of that [00:11:03] price, but he has bought us and we belong to him, and so we should be associated with him now, but also in all eternity.

Another characteristic, and this is again in contrast to the Old Testament, Israel, everything was related to this earth. The blessings, the benefits, if the Israelites were obeying the Lord, there was blessing, there was growth, there was riches, and there were all sorts of goodness which they enjoyed here on earth.

But the church of God is of heavenly origin.

We are of heavenly calling and also of heavenly hope. [00:12:01] Everything related to us has heavenly character and we often forget this.

We have to confess. We are sometimes so mixed up with this world and the things and we get tied down and we forget that our characteristics should be of a heavenly nature.

We are still in this world today, but we are not of this world. And this should be characteristic of us. Now, when we look at the body of Christ, I like to read Colossians 1 and verse 18.

And he, the Lord Jesus, he is the head of the body, the church or the assembly, who [00:13:05] is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. When we look at the body, we should remember a body has a head and the rest is the body. And this is exactly Christ the head, we are the body.

When I use my hand, when I turn my finger, it's all coming from my head.

And you know very well if you have brain damage, if you have a stroke, then the things does not function anymore and you cannot lift your hands or not lift your feet anymore. So this just shows us, God is using that picture to show us there is a head and this is Christ [00:14:02] and from there all things should come.

And Christ is also the head of the universe and also the second point here, Christ is also head over all things to the church.

He's head over all things, he's also head over us, but in this verse, it shows in the future where the Lord Jesus will be glorified and every knee shall bow and everyone will see that he is in charge and no one else.

And he's given to the church, that means we are participating in his glory.

There we are not sort of under him, we are with him. And what a beautiful picture it is. [00:15:01] The Lord who is rejected in this world today will finally get that place and the Father will guarantee this will happen. He will get that place in this world which he alone is worthy to receive.

The body is made up of all who believe in the gospel of salvation who accept the Lord Jesus.

Every true believer all over the world belongs to that body.

And as I said, the body shows unity, we are united to Christ. And when you read John 17, when you look at that, how the Lord is asking the Father in verse 21 for instance, his desire is that they all may be one as the Father and the [00:16:06] Son are one and that they may be all, that they may be one in us.

So this sort of unity is extremely important.

And how often when we look around is this unity even amongst us. We should bow our head, we

should confess this because the Lord would like us to go on even though we are so different in that unity which he has made.

Every one of us is a member of this body.

We are going to talk about gifts today, but every one of us is important. Every one of us has a function in that body, but I have not chosen my function, you have [00:17:06] not chosen your function, it's the Holy Spirit which has set us in that function where we are, as he will.

It is God who decided what function you or I are going to take in that body of Christ.

And you know, whatever God has given us, it's not in order that we might glorify ourselves and this is a great danger of man, that they want to show off, but whatever God has given you or me should be used for the blessing and the benefit of the body, of the others, not of myself.

There are two dangers. One danger is that I am not satisfied with what God has given me.

[00:18:02] I always look to the others and say, why is he so much better than I? If I only would be like him or like her, then I would be happy. And this is sort of an inferiority complex. And I know many who have such, and they say, well, we don't do anything because, you know, we are not as good as he or she, but every one is needed.

And the other one, there is more the aspect of pride.

You think, I am so good, I don't need the others. I can do everything myself. And he does everything himself and he makes a mess out of it because God would like every one of us to participate and to take care.

When we look at the church, at the assembly, we have to be careful to understand there [00:19:06] are three different aspects shown to us in scripture. We can use that when we look at the body of Christ.

The one aspect is the global and the eternal aspect of the church.

And that means that from Pentecost all the way to the rapture, every believer from that time till the Lord comes again, belongs to the church. That is the global and eternal aspect. Also used in an example as the body of Christ, like Ephesians 1, verse 23.

But then the second picture is, it is also a global aspect, but in a certain moment of [00:20:01] time. So today, every believer which is alive belongs to that body.

Those in Australia, those in England, those in America, all those true believers who now live belong to that body of Christ.

And there we also find this in Ephesians 2, verse 22.

And then the third thing is the local aspect. And I like to read 1 Corinthians 13, verse 27, 1 Corinthians 12, verse 27.

Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. Now to whom did he write this? To those believers who gathered in Corinth. [00:21:05] And so we have the local aspect, which we're going to look at much closer today. It's also called the body of Christ and that means nothing else that when we come together, even the two or three, we can't say we are the body but we should live in that sense to express something of that body. So they are members and each one has a function and all should look to the head, the head of the body. He directs us in all things.

Another thing is the house of God.

And I'd just like to read Exodus 25, verse 8.

[00:22:04] And let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them according to all that I show thee after the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it.

This was the first reference to a house of God here on earth, the tabernacle. And God didn't leave it up to the imagination of man. He says I show you a pattern and I want you to build it exactly as I showed you. And I tell you what material you have to use and what color you have to use and the size and everything is going to be dictated more or less, shown in that model.

And don't do anything else. And this is a principle which goes throughout all the time. [00:23:01] The principle in the assembly doesn't leave it up to our imagination how we should gather and what we should do. He directs all things.

But you know, his desire is to dwell amongst us, to dwell amongst his people.

And he wanted to dwell then. And when they had finished the tabernacle, the cloud came down and showed God was pleased. Then we find the temple, the temple of Solomon, the temple of Zerubbabel, the temple of Herod, the temple which will be used by the Antichrist, the beast, or the temple of Ezekiel during the Menelium. There's so many different temples, but when you read Haggai, just like to show you that reference, Haggai chapter 2, he asked first the question, verse 3, [00:24:13] Who is left amongst you that saw this house in her first glory and how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

So he refers to the temple of Solomon which was the most beautiful, full of gold and everything was perfect.

When they did the rebuilding of the temple after the 70 years, it was nothing like it. And God says, what do you see? It's nothing.

It's like nothing. And today we can fall into that and we say, why should we still go to the meeting that is nothing.

[00:25:02] It's so weak.

And you know, God doesn't say, well, it's all beautiful.

He doesn't say, well, you're doing all very well. No, we have to admit it is weak and we have failed.

But what God says further down is very important. Here it says, the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former. Or as JND actually says, the latter glory of this house, that's really how it should end, the latter glory of this house.

It is always the same house, this house, whether it was the tabernacle, whether it was a temple, whether it was the assembly, it is always this house. And he says, in spite of the failure of man, I will go and achieve it. [00:26:06] The latter glory of this house will be more beautiful than anything you have seen and experienced.

How wonderful.

God will reach the end, what he has purposed in his heart, in spite of the failure of man. When we look at the house of God, there's another three aspects, a God side and a man side. But God side in two ways, and we haven't time to read the scripture, but you have it here. In one verse, we find that the house is still being built, it's still growing.

So we haven't come to the end of it. So even today, there may be souls being saved and added to the church, it's not finished. [00:27:02] When it's going to be finished, when the Lord will come again, then the house is finished. When the last stone is added to that house, the Lord Jesus will come. But at the same time, the other side of God is, it is always complete. God doesn't dwell in a half-finished house. No, he lives in the midst of his people, and his house is always complete.

For man's side is our responsibility. How do we build? We have seen the Lord Jesus building a church, and this is going to be perfect. But he also given the responsibility to us, and we find that man rather work with wood, wood, hay, and stubble, because, you know, hay, you have immediately a big, a big thing. [00:28:05] With gold, you need a lot of work to have a little. And this is the way of man's.

One guy came once to me in Basel and says, look, we need rooms, you know. Can we use your hall?

Because in our church, they're coming to the Lord by the hundreds. Well, how wonderful.

But where is their church today? If they've come by the hundreds, we should see a lot. But it was just hay, and the fire came, everything was gone.

The bride, it is, of course, the intimacy, the intimate relationship between Christ and his church.

It's founded on his love. [00:29:01] He loved us with the love which you cannot measure.

It's exclusive. There is something special about the love for us. God also loves the world, but the love for his bride, for his sake, is a relationship we can never treasure enough. And when you look at Genesis where Eve was built, we find two things. Eve was suited to him, and was part of him.

It says she was like me.

She was made as a complement to me.

And the other thing, she was bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. So what the Lord has done to us

has transformed us into his image, that we are really his equal.

This is what he wants.

[00:30:02] The Spirit, when he works in us, he wants to transform us in a practical way more and more into the image of Christ.

And once we will be like him.

Our affection, our faithfulness, this is the other side. We are exposed to one man, not too many, not a little bit to Christ and then the rest is still the world, no?

We are subject to him. Also when you see the picture, God showed us marriage, that the wife is subject to the husband because he wants to show us how the church will be subject to Christ, even as a bride.

You know when you're engaged, what do you want, Miss? [00:31:04] You want to be with your fiancé.

And I once said, our son Peter just got married recently and he told me he had no time. He was so completely taken up with work and other things and then he got engaged. And then he had hours where he can call his fiancé, where he can speak, where do you take all these hours from yourself, you're up to here with work and you have no time for nothing and now you find time.

So the question is, we as a bride, do we take time for the bridegroom? Are we occupied with him?

You know, when the eternal state, this is my last, when the eternal state will be, it [00:32:02] talks again about the bride coming down from heaven, showing us again the heavenly character is coming down and God will dwell with his people.

God will reach his goal.

And you know, there is one who is looking forward to that moment. The Lord Jesus is longing for that moment to take his bride for which he has paid such a high price for himself.

But what about us? What about us?

Are we longing to see him?

Would it be a pleasure if now in this minute the Lord will come? Would you be ready to go?

Would it be a joy for each and everyone here to join up with him? [00:33:01] The Lord said, and I'll finish with this verse in John 14, verse 2, My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

That where I am, you may be also.

That's his desire. Is it also our desire?

It's the church, it's the bride. Every true believer belongs to the bride and will be there.

May we also never forget the global aspect of the church, even when we study the local aspect now in the next few hours, amen.