

The Church

New Life's Ecclesiology

- **What Is the Church?**
- *Qahal* and *haedah* are the two Hebrew words that describe the gathering of Israel together
 - As "called out" from the rest of the nations
 - When called out to worship, or come to a specific festival
- The Greek word for church in the New Testament: *ekklesia*: means an assembly; also, a gathering of the called-out ones
- *Ekklesia* is the Greek word used to translate these Hebrew words for "gatherings" 70 times in the Septuagint
- *Ekklesia* occurs 115 times in the NT and is always translated "church" except in Acts 19: 32, 39, 41 where it is translated "assembly"
- *Ekklesia* appears to be a generic term for a group of people being called together by God without specifying a structured organization with a leadership hierarchy
- Matt. 16:18
- "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church (*Gr. ecclesian*) and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
- I Cor. 3:11
- According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.
- Our word "church" has various uses:
 - **1) Any local congregation**
 - **2) A particular church or denomination** (*Church of England; Church of God*)
 - **3) A building** (*church vs. chapel vs cathedral*)
 - **4) Church as Distinct from the Non-church** (*the World*)
 - **5) Christendom:** Christian states or empires
 - Christian-majority nations where the Christian worldview dominates the culture, laws, and civic life
 - In contrast to an "Islamic" nation
 - Synonym: Christian Civilization

- **6) Church as a Mystical Spiritual Building or Temple**
- Eph. 2:21-22
- ...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
- **7) The Church as the Body of Christ: Jesus is the Head: the believing Church is His hands and feet**
- Eph. 4:15-16
- ...we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
- **8) Church as the Bride of Christ: awaiting the Bridegroom**
- Eph. 5:25-27
- Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
- Is your (*our*) church doing what Jehovah God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit want and expect a church to do in this culture in 2023?
- Or is your (*our*) church acting simply as a helpful social club or community center, following the principles of Christianity, but not actively experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit or anything supernatural?
- II Timothy 3:1-5
- But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

- What Should The Church Do?
- **1) Teach the Word of God**
 - Exegesis: the critical (*and hopefully correct*) explanation and analysis of Biblical texts
 - Hermeneutics: the theory and method of interpretation of the Bible
 - Homiletics: the art of teaching and preaching (*hopefully with power, with effect, with anointing*)
- **2) Maintain Good Doctrine (*Orthodoxy*)**
 - Our doctrine is consistent with the historical church creeds (*Apostle's, Nicene*), the early Protestant, the early Anabaptist interpretation of the Word and the Faith
- II Tim. 3:16-17
- All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
- II Tim 2:2-4
- ...for the time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires. So, they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.
- **3) Have Good Church Practices (*Orthopraxy*)**
 - Personal Orthopraxy
- Eph. 4:1-3
- I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace
- There is nothing more off-putting than a church full of people that know the Bible but don't live the Bible
 - Church Orthopraxy
- Good church practice includes worship, teaching, children and youth ministries, fellowship, ministry and counselling, opportunities for intercession, community, outreach (*local, national and international missions*), humanitarian efforts
- Churches should have good fruit: growth in maturing the saints (*effective discipleship*), growth in numbers, inspirational teaching, volunteer and staff opportunities (*spiritual gifts development*), favor in their community

- **4) Worship God**

- Our worship at New Life is consistent with the first century church, the early Protestant, the early Anabaptist, and the Pentecostal/Charismatic stream of Christianity

- John 4:23

- But a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him.

- “People can say that I couldn’t sing. But no one can say that I didn’t sing.”

- **5) Promote Unity, Agreement, Community, and Fellowship**

- I Cor. 1:10

- I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

- **6) Demonstrate the Fruit of the Spirit**

- Gal. 5:22-23

- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

- **7) Develop Anointed, God-appointed Leadership**

- Eph. 4: 11-12

- And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for works of ministry and to build up the body of Christ...

- **8) Encourage Gifted Volunteers**

- Galatians 6:2

- Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

- Colossians 3:23-24

- Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving

- **9) Conduct Outreach, Evangelism and Missions** (*local, national, and international*)
- Matt. 28:18-20
- “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...
- **10) May “Specialize”**
 - In Word teaching, worship, evangelism, missions, community service, social justice
 - A “perfect” church would do all and be all
 - But most churches tend to major on some of the church’s mission more than others
 - Due to the gifting and preference of the leadership
 - Indeed, historically, the church has been represented by six "streams" of emphasis:
 - All capable of hosting the Holy Spirit
 - And all capable of becoming so encrusted in tradition that they become lifeless
- **The Six Streams of the Faith and Their Emphases:**

• Contemplative	God's Presence
• Holiness	God's Righteousness
• Charismatic	God's Power
• Social Justice	God's Compassion
• Evangelical	God's Truth
• Incarnational	God's Hand
- A church with just one emphasis may generate discontentment in the otherwise-gifted congregation
- A solution: ministries under the church's umbrella led by people with a passion for other emphases
 - Life Groups at New Life: Alpha Class, Evangelism Explosion, God and America, Hebrew Roots of the Church, fellowship and community, Christian art, men’s and women’s groups, sports activities, service projects, finances, gardening, scripture reflection
- This also develops leaders
- **11) Host the Presence of the Holy Spirit**
- The Holy Spirit: the most disrespected and ignored member of the Trinity
 - Much of the church is *afraid* of the Holy Spirit

- Recommended Reading:
 - Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit by Daniel Wallace
 - Quenching the Spirit (*Examining Centuries of Opposition to the Moving of the Holy Spirit*) by William DeArteaga
 - The Presence and Work of the Holy Spirit by R. A. Torrey
 - The Quest for the Radical Middle by Bill Jackson
 - Christianity with Power by Charles Kraft
- The presence or absence of the Holy Spirit is the most important “test” for determining if a church building or gathering is a church or not
- The Roman Catholic Church in 869 AD decreed that there was no distinction between a “soul” and a “spirit” in the human mind
 - And proceeded to war against individuals who encounter the spirit world with accusations and inquisitions
 - Be it witches, alchemists, or many true Christian mystics
- Organized Christianity's major denominations, after having been birthed by the Holy Spirit in revival, tend to over-organize, and then over-control their congregations
 - They emphasize teaching over personal encounters with the Holy Spirit
 - And shun and even persecute individuals who seek the supernatural
- Much of the church keeps the Holy Spirit in a closet of the church building and does not let Him out
- Many churches admire and talk about God and Jesus, like one admires famous people (*like, say, George Washington*)
 - But do not really want to experience God and Jesus
- This is like developing an interested in hang gliding
 - Studying the sport
 - Even teaching the sport
 - But never daring to actually hang glide
- Not recognizing, not honoring, not involving the Holy Spirit in a church is quite unfortunate
 - Sometimes spiritually “fatal” for individuals and churches
 - Jesus may “remove the church's lampstand”
- Fortunately: in His mercy, God does not demand that we understand the Faith and His Spirit perfectly
 - And: because the Holy Spirit does not bear witness to Himself—only to Jesus—He will tend to be less emphasized than the first two persons of the Trinity

- John 15:26
- When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—He will testify about Me
- **The Trinity** – challenging to understand; essential to believe
 - It's the necessary reality and ramifications of a pre-existent, out of time and space, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God choosing to create and enter the four dimensions of space, matter, energy and time
- **God the Father**
- I Tim. 6:16
- He alone is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light. *No one has ever seen Him*, nor can anyone see Him.
- John 1:18
- *No one has ever seen God*, but the one and only Son, who is Himself God and at the Father's side, He has made Him known.
- John 4:24
- "God is *spirit*, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth."
- Ex. 33:20-22
- But God added, "You cannot see My face, for no one can see Me and live." The LORD continued, "There is a place near Me where you are to stand upon a rock, and when My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by."
- What about the Bible verses where God is seen sitting on His throne?
- Acts 7:55-56
- But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven and saw the *glory of God* and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."
- Rev. 4:2-3
- At once I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne standing in heaven, with *someone seated on it*. The One seated there *looked like* jasper and carnelian, and a rainbow that gleamed like an emerald encircled the throne.
- Rev. 21:22-23
- But I saw no temple in the city, because the *Lord God Almighty* and *the Lamb* are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, because *the glory of God* illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its lamp.

- The Church is to sense God's Presence and Display His Glory
- **The Presence of God:**
 - Everywhere; always "around": God is *omnipresent*
 - But only sensed and experienced by faith (*not by sight or other physical senses*), in the spirit of people who have faith in God (*believers*)
 - Ignored, rejected, not honored by the non-believing world
- Romans 1:20
- For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, *have been clearly seen*, being understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse. (*general revelation*)
- God's Presence is sensed in our spirits by our spiritual senses:
 - Hearing: the "still small voice"
 - Seeing: visions, dreams
 - Feeling: the sense of the Presence
- John 3:8
- "The wind blows where it wishes. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit."
- Here Jesus compares the Spirit to the wind: we can't see it but can experience its effects (*revelation, wisdom, healing, deliverance, solutions to problems*)
- Exodus 33:14-15
- And the LORD answered, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." "If Your Presence does not go with us," Moses replied, "do not lead us up from here."
- Psalm 95:2
- Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms
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- **The Glory of God**
- The evidence of God breaking into the world where it can be realized with the five *physical* senses (*ex. angels "manifesting"*)
 - To the shepherds at Christ's birth
 - To Daniel, Mary, John
- Exodus 40:34
- Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and *the glory of the LORD* filled the tabernacle. Moses was unable to enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

- Rev. 18:1
- After this I saw another angel descending from heaven with great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his glory.
- Numbers 14:20-21
- Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (*Millennial Reign*)
- The need to see the Glory--that is God being evident to the five senses--is for the non-believing (*pagans and us Christians*)!
 - We live by faith (*spiritual senses*) not sight (*physical senses*)
- John 20:29
- Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
- Believers' relationship to the Glory is that we get to show it forth on the earth by glorifying God:
 - By worshipping the unseen God (*hymns vs. worship songs*)
 - By sharing our testimony about God to others
 - By speaking about Him
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- 1 Chronicles 16:24
- Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples
- The teachings at New Life try to glorify God by speech and visual aids bringing the unheard, unseen God to your physical ears and eyes despite the "darkness" around us.
- Col. 1:27
- God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
- Rom. 8:30
- And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (*past [aorist] tense – to render glorious*)
- Psalm 34:3
- Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together
- II Cor. 4:6
- For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ

- Daniel 12:3
- Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.