

### The New Church

- The seeker-sensitive church
- The contemporary-worship church
- The house church
- The "family-faith experience" or family church
- The cyber-church - a variety of spiritual experiences through the internet
- The emergent church - with visual, mystical experiences
- Non-traditional church experience:
  - Independent worship events
  - Marketplace fellowships
  - Coaching communities
  - Internet faith groups
  - Para-church ministries intended to substitute for the church

### The Primary Causes of the Drift from a Church-centered Life

- From Outside the Church
  - The Pursuit of Materialism
  - The Busyness of Modern Life
  - The Over-commitment of the Family
  - The Quest for Self-fulfillment
  - The Cry for Egalitarianism & Individualism

### The Primary Causes of the Drift from a Church-centered Life

- From Within the Professing Church
  - The Anonymity of the Mega-church
  - The Rise of the Seeker-sensitive Church
  - The Rise & Influence of Para-church Ministries
  - The Decline of Expository Preaching

### The Reasons the Church Matters

- The Example of the NT believers
- The Teaching and Pattern of the Apostles
- The Commands of the NT
- The Priority of Christ

### The Key Words

- The English Word
  - English - *church* (cf. *Scottish - kirk; German - Kirche*)
  - From the Greek, *kuriakon*
    - From *kurios* = Lord
    - Means "belonging to the Lord"
    - Occurs 2x in the NT
      - 1 Cor. 11:20 - "the Lord's Supper"
      - Rev. 1:10 - "the Lord's Day"

## The Key Words

- The Greek Word
  - *Ekklesia*
  - *Ek* - "out"; *kaleo* - "to call or summon"
  - Doesn't mean the called out or separated ones
  - Means: "an assembly summoned or called together"

## Ekklesia

- In secular Greek
  - Liddell & Scott: "an assembly of the citizens summoned by the crier; the legislative assembly."
  - Cremer: "the common term for a meeting of the *eklectoi* assembled to discuss the affairs of a free state."
  - Trench: "the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the right of citizenship for the transaction of public affairs."
  - Came to refer to any assembly, regardless of their purpose or their manner of convening.

## Ekklesia

- In the Septuagint (LXX)
  - Primary background for NT usage
  - Almost 100x in the OT
  - Translates the same Hebrew word: *qahal*
  - Saucy: *Qahal* means "an assembly, convocation, or congregation and can be used for almost any type of gathering of people."

## Ekklesia in the OT

- Can refer to:
  - Angels
    - Ps. 89:5 - The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
  - A nation
    - Gen. 28:3 - "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples."
    - Gen. 35:11 - God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you."
  - The congregation of Israel
    - Num. 16:3 - They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"
    - Micah 2:5 - "Therefore you will have no one stretching a measuring line For you by lot in the assembly of the LORD."

## Ekklesia in the OT

- Can be for the purpose of:
  - **Civic affairs**
    - 1 Kings 12:3 - Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam.
    - Pr. 5:14 - "I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation."
  - **For war**
    - Num. 22:4 - Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field."
    - Judges 20:2 - The chiefs of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword.
  - **For evil**
    - Gen. 49:6 - "Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen."
    - Ps. 26:5 - I hate the assembly of evildoers, And I will not sit with the wicked.
  - **For worship**
    - Deut. 9:10 (1st OT use) - "The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly."
    - 2 Ch. 20:5 - Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court.
    - Neh. 5:13 - I also shook out the front of my garment and said, "Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise, even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!"

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Frequency
  - 114x in the NT
    - 3x - an assembly of pagan Gentiles
      - Acts 19:32, 41 - of a mob
      - Acts 19:39 - of a lawful assembly
    - 2x - the assembly of Israel in the wilderness
      - Acts 7:38
      - Heb. 2:12 (from LXX of Ps. 22:22)
    - 109 of the NT church (only 3x in the Gospels; Matt. 16:18; 18:17)

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Senses
  - a political assembly (Acts 19:39, 41)
  - the assembly of the nation of Israel at Sinai (Acts 7:38)
  - the church in the house of an individual (Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2)
  - most frequently, a local church (Acts 5:11; 11:26; 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:19, 28, 35; cf. Rom. 16:4; 1 Cor. 16:1; Gal. 1:2; 1 Th. 2:14)
  - a group of churches in a region (Acts 9:31)
  - all those throughout the world who profess faith in Christ and organize under appointed officers for the purpose of worship and service (1 Cor. 10:32; 11:22; 12:28)
  - most comprehensively, all who have been actually united to Christ as Lord and Savior (Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-25, 27, 32; Col. 1:18, 24)

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Never:
  - A building
  - A denomination
  - A state church

## Ekklesia in the NT

- Two primary meanings:
  - The local church
    - a local assembly (or assemblies) of all who profess faith in the Christ of Scripture
    - about 92x of the 109x references to the church in the NT
  - The universal church
    - all professing believers everywhere (about 17x in the NT)
    - the whole body of Christ's redeemed
    - further divided into:
      - *Visible*: the universal church as we see it; includes both true believers and false believers.
      - *Invisible*: the universal church as God sees it; includes only the true believers.

## The Application

- The NT does not know a believer who is part of the universal, invisible church, who isn't also a part of a local assembly.
  - To become a Christian = to be added to the church (Acts 5:11-14)
  - The NT letters were written to local churches and their leaders

## The Application

- Be faithful to gather with the church.
  - At the heart of belonging to a local church is "the assembly."
  - Heb. 10:25 - not forsaking our assembling together

## The Application

- Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing as part of the visible church.
  - Matt. 7:15-16 - "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?"
  - Acts 20:29-30 - "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."
  - 2 Tim. 2:17-19
  - Opposite danger: assuming people in the church are unbelievers
    - Calvin:
      - We should show "charitable judgment."
      - Recognize as believers, all who "by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments, profess the same God and Christ with us."

## The Application

- You can be part of the visible, local church, and not belong to the invisible, universal church.
  - Can belong to the church as we see it, and not belong to the real church as God sees it.
  - E.g., 2 Tim. 4:10 - Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.
  - Call to self-examination
  - James 1:19-27; 2:14ff
  - 2 Cor. 13:5 - Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?

## The Application

- One practice that is to be a regular and crucial part of the assembly is The Lord's Table or The Lord's Supper.
  - With other Christians in the context of the church:
    - By example of the early church: Acts 2:42 - the breaking of bread
    - By direct command: 1 Cor. 11:23ff-- do this in remembrance of me.
  - Why?
    - 1 Cor. 10:16-17



## The Main Metaphors

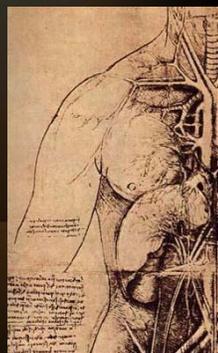
- Body
- Bride
- Building
- Flock of sheep
- Household or family
- Royal priesthood
- Pillar and ground of the truth



## Ground Rules

- God intends all these images to remind us that the church does not—cannot—exist separate from Christ.
- Don't choose one image as your primary way of thinking about the church.
- Remember that they are metaphors.
- Don't think of these images as only temporary and fading, but as forever accurate ways to understand the reality that is the church.

## The Body of Christ



## The Metaphor

- Used two different ways:
  - (1) A body in which Christ is the head and each individual Christian represents a different member of the body.
    - Christ as the Head:
      - Eph. 1:22-23 - He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body.
      - Eph. 4:15 - we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ
      - Col. 2:19 - not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.
    - Each Christian as a member:
      - 1 Cor. 12:27 - you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.
  - (2) The church as the whole body, with each Christian representing different members, including the head.
    - 1 Cor. 12:21 - the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

## The Meaning

- The universal church can be compared to Christ's body in which each Christian serves as a part or a member.
  - 1 Cor. 12:12-13 - even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
  - Eph. 1:23 - He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
  - Col. 1:18 - He is also head of the body, the church.

## The Message

- 1) As the head of the church, Christ provides the authority, leadership, and direction for His church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:12-13, 19-20).
- 2) Since we are fellow members of the body, we are united, so we must strive for unity (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:13; Eph. 2:16; 4:4, 16; Col. 2:19).
- 3) The spiritual growth of the church will resemble that of a body (Eph. 4:12, 16; Col. 2:19).

## The Message

- 4) The image of a body portrays the importance of our depending on one another (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:25; 1 Cor. 12:25-27; Heb. 13:3).
- 5) The picture of the church as a body with a great variety of parts reminds us to appreciate the diversity of strengths and gifts in the church (Rom. 12:4-5).
- 6) The fact that each of us is part of the body and has been sovereignly placed in the body to fill a particular function should motivate us to fill our role (1 Cor. 12:14, 17-20).

## Defining the Nature of the Church

- Key Words
- Main Metaphors
- Primary Attributes
- Key Components of a church
- Key Marks of healthy or pure church

## The Main Metaphors

- Body
- Bride
- Building
- Flock of sheep
- Household or family
- Royal priesthood
- Pillar and ground of the truth



## Ground Rules

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## The Body of Christ



## A Building or Temple



## The Metaphor

- 1 Cor. 3:9 - you are...God's building.
- Eph. 2:21 - in [Christ] the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.
- 1 Pet. 2:5 - you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house.
- Used:
  - Of a local church
    - 1 Cor. 3:16—you [plural; the assembly in Corinth] are the temple of God.
  - Of the universal church
    - Eph. 2:19-20 - you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
    - 1 Pet. 1:1 - Peter...to those ... scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia
    - 1 Pet. 2:4-5 - And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

## The Meaning

- The church is like a temple, built by God Himself to be His dwelling.
- The Foundation
  - 1 Cor. 3:10-11 - Christ
  - Eph. 2:20 - the apostles and prophets
- The Cornerstone
  - Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11 - Christ
- The Architect & Builder
  - Eph. 2:21 - Christ (cf. Matt. 16:18)

## The Message

- The priority of worship (2 Cor. 6:16)
- The church's character as holy, set apart to God
- The need for evangelism (1 Pet. 2:5)
- The leaders' responsibility to build by serving and equipping (1 Cor. 3:9-15).
- The terrible sin of divisiveness (1 Cor. 3:16-17)

## A Household or Family



## The Metaphor

- Matt. 12:49-50 - stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."
- 2 Cor. 6:18 - "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.
- Eph. 2:19
- Eph. 3:14-15
- Eph. 4:6

## The Meaning

- The church is an assembly of those adopted by God, who have thereby become part of His family.

## The Message

- This image should increase our commitment to and love for one another.
  - Eph. 4:1-6; 1 John 3:14-18
- We are to purposely choose to respond to one another like family members.
  - 1 Tim. 5:1-2 - Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as a father, *to* the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, *and* the younger women as sisters, in all purity.

## The Bride of Christ



## The Metaphor

- Eph. 5:23 - Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body
- Eph. 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church

## The Meaning

- The OT
  - Is. 54:5-6 - "For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you, Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, Even like a wife of *one's* youth when she is rejected," Says your God.
- The NT
  - Cf. 2 Cor. 11:1-2; Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 2:22; 19:7; 21:9
  - The church—all of us—are together the bride of Christ.

## The Message

- The depth of Christ's love for His church
  - In the price he paid for her...
    - Eph. 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
  - In His constant care for her
    - Eph. 5:29 -- No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church.
- The exalted position of the church
- The demand for the church's loyalty
  - 2 Cor. 11:2 -- I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as a pure virgin*.

## The Message

- The priority of personal holiness (Eph. 5:26-27)
- The need for our love and submission to Christ (Eph. 5:24; 1 John 4:19)
- The anticipation of the church for Christ's return

## 1<sup>st</sup> Century Marriage Customs

- *Betrothal*
- *Interval*
- *The Wedding Feast*

## How Do We Prepare?

- Rev. 19:7 - the church makes herself ready
- 2 Cor. 11:2 - the spiritual leaders in our lives also help us prepare; "I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as a pure virgin*."
- In Eph. 5 - Christ Himself is preparing us, so that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."