

The Worship of the Church

On one hand the Church of Christ is a sleeping giant, there are almost no limits on its potential to again conquer the World for Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the American Church of Christ is much like the passengers in first class on the Titanic when: far below decks water was just beginning to seep in to the steerage compartments. All still looked fabulous as the band continued to play, the affluent danced, chatted and the waiters delivered the evening meal.

It was the same before the fall of the Roman Empire, things looked very good and prosperous in Rome when England could no longer be held and the Roman Legions were withdrawing back to the European continent.

Are we seeing a glimpse of our future when we look at the deserted, beautiful, great gothic Protestant and Catholic cathedrals in Europe? Magnificent beautiful buildings with no people, some deserted, some in decay and falling down in ruin. Others of the more grand and opulent are tourist traps to be visited like museums, viewed but no longer used. The Church loses its power and vitality when its people view it as a building rather than an ek-klessia group fellowship of brethren.

There is great diversity in today's Churches of Christ. Some mega congregations are rich and powerful with many members; but on the other hand a great many are struggling congregations who can hardly afford a preacher and the note on the building. Most are small country congregations who have part time preachers or no preachers ... these practice the first century biblical doctrine of the priesthood of the believers cf:

I Peter 2:5-9 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. (cf Isaiah 28:16 & Ephesians 2:19-22) 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, (cf: Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42 & Acts 4:11) 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. (cf: Isaiah 8:13-17 & Romans 9:33) 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

We have helped establish hundreds of House churches, or "Home Churches of Christ" in the United States, and many - many foreign countries. Some are in China, where brethren are not yet free to worship as they please. Some congregations are in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other nations under the ISIS & Moslem boot of oppression. These brethren face penalty of death for their faith. Often they are called "Family Churches". This term is used to describe an independent assembly of Christians who gather in a home.

Sometimes this occurs because the group is small, and a home is the most appropriate place to gather. Sometimes it is because the group is a member of an underground Christian movement, which is otherwise banned from meeting, as in China. This was one of the patterns in the first century especially after persecution developed.

House Churches were not the exclusive primitive model because the brethren also meet in the Temple beside houses to house ... and in one case a school cf:

Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Acts 5:19-21 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 5:20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 5:21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Paul taught in one school house or building cf:

Acts 19:8-10 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 19:9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 19:10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

House Churches differ from Cell churches. Cell churches are usually associated with larger churches, as they are not self-governing.

Most people in Rome lived in 3 to 5 story apartments above an “insulae” which were small street front shops, surrounding a center courtyard many of which made up a city block.

The rich lived in “domas” houses which were again built around a center court yard or atrium which acted as a reception and living area.

Breakfast and lunch were generally light meals purchased at street front shops which were the fast food or McDonald’s of the first few centuries AD.

Dinner was the main meal which was served at a tri-clin-i-um which was 3 couches arraigned around a square table.

Christians typically met in homes, because of persecution before the Edict of Milan in 313 AD. Rome did not allow the erection of public church buildings. Clement of Alexandria, an early church father, wrote of worshipping in a house.

The Dura-Europos church, was a private house in Dura-Europos in Syria. This Church was excavated in the 1930s and was found to be used as a Christian meeting place in AD 232, with one small room serving as a baptistry. At many points in subsequent history, various Christian groups worshipped in homes, often due to persecution by the state church or the civil government.

The Assembly to Worship is clearly taught in Scripture cf:

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Jesus and the Disciples meet in the Upper Room

Mark 14:15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished *and* prepared: there make ready for us.

Luke 22:12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

Acts 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother of James*.

Meeting In Homes

Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Acts 12:12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. 12:13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. 12:14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 12:15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. 12:16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished. 12:17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said,

Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Acts 20:7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 20:8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

Acts 28:16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. 28:17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans

Acts 28:30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 28:31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Acts 21:8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him. 21:9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. 21:10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles. 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 21:14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

Romans 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 16:5 Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Ep-a'ene-tus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Colossians 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Philemon 1:2 And to *our* beloved Apph-ia, and Arch-ippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house:

II John 1:10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed:

There were also Large Group Public Meetings:

Acts 20:20 *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

So there is obviously no one perfect model except the Model Jesus gave us that size and place does not matter cf:

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

1 Corinthians 14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

Apparently the Church in Corinth met in a building or it was a large rich man's house because Paul says condemning the co-mingling of the Lord's Supper with a Love feast (fellowship meal) cf:

I Corinthians 11:22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

The 5 Fold Worship of the Church Worshipping God is our duty: cf:

John 4:23-24 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. **4:24** God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

Lord's Supper:

of which the original Passover was but a shadow of the perfect sacrifice to come – Christ's death on the cross:

Exodus 12: 1-15, 22-27 & 29-30,

Matt. 26:17-30,

Mark 14:15-26,

I Cor. 11:23-32;

Preaching:

Mark 16:15-16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. **16** He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

I Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

II Timothy 2:22 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

II Timothy 3:14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned [*them*];

II Timothy 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Singing:

Matt. 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

I Cor. 14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Eph. 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Heb. 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms

Notice in the old worship in the Temple the Jews played instruments of music until the sacrifice and after the sacrifice they sang only. The same was true in history. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us cf.

I Corinthians 5:7

The same was true in the original Church, they sang only and instruments of music were not introduced into the Church until Bonafice of Rome did so after 600 AD in the Catholic Church.

II Chronicles 29:25-30;

Praying:

Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Luke 11:1-13

Giving:

I Cor, 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **16:2** Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

II Cor. 9:6-9 But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. **9:7** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. **9:8** And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work: **9:9** (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Malachi 3:7-12 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? **3:8** Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. **3:9** Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation. **3:10** Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room* enough *to receive it*. **3:11** And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. **3:12** And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.