

# The Church & The Body of Christ

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Date: 30 April 2023

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Romans 12, chapter 1. I'm going to read the first eight verses. Paul writes this, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them, if prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with seal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

[ 1 : 3 1 ]     Amen. We pray God would bless the reading of his word. Let me pray. Our Father, we thank you for the great mercies that you have given us in Christ Jesus, that you would call us out of darkness to be your own people, that you would forgive our sins through Christ and his blood, and that you would join us to Christ and join us to one another.

And by your grace, you would enable us to build one another up into the fullness and maturity as the body of Christ.

God, we give you thanks that we can gather together this morning. We pray for those who are not able. We pray that you would bless them where they are and that we would find ways to encourage and build them up, even as they cannot be with us today.

God, we give you thanks for your great grace. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, today I want to bring a little bit of teaching on the subject of the church, the body of Christ, and the members.

And I should say up front that these terms are not the only way to describe the people of Jesus in the New Testament. And while we'll look at the meaning of words like church, like member, these are not the only words used to describe what they are talking about.

[ 2 : 5 7 ]     And the body of Christ is not the only metaphor in the New Testament that is used. So what we're looking at is not going to be an exhaustive study and I hope that our time this morning won't be an exhausting study either.

Nevertheless, these particular words and terms are important for our understanding of who we are, what we are, why we gather, how we function, and what we are meant to do.

We need to understand who we are. We need to understand what we are. We need to understand how we function, why we come together, why we do what we do. So let me start with the term church.

Most of you, if not all, will be familiar with Family Fortunes with Les Dennis back in the 90s. Our survey says, if you were on Family Fortunes with Les Dennis, and he was to say, we've asked 100 random people, we've surveyed 100 random people, and asked them this question, what does the word church mean?

What do you think the top answers would be? 100 random people, what does the word church mean? And you're on Family Fortunes and you're trying to get, it doesn't matter if it's correct or not, you're just trying to guess what 100 random people would say.

[ 4 : 20 ] And so what do you think the top answers would be? Shout out. Building? Any others? People? Anything else?

Place of worship. So you're getting all the points here. Sorry? Preachers. Yep.

The individual? The Christian? Okay, so, what if the survey was a little different? What if Les Dennis said, we've asked 100 Christians the question, what does the word church mean?

Our survey says, what answers, what would the top answers be, maybe? Body. Body? Gathering to worship God.

Any others? Fellowship? And so, I think, you know, perhaps the first group of random people probably would lean towards the building or the place of worship.

[ 5 : 33 ] The place, the building. And the second group, Christians, more often than not, would say, it's the people, not the building. It's the people.

And so, the aim this morning is to take a dive in to see what the Bible says and how the Bible uses these words and trying to define that in a bit more nuanced a way.

And so, how does the Bible use the word? How do the New Testament writers actually use this word, church, in the New Testament? Well, firstly, it's a Greek word, ekklesia, and the literal meaning of ekklesia is the called out ones.

That's the literal meaning. And the context that this word is used in the New Testament is always, always, always in relation to being called out of something for something.

And more commonly, it's being called out for a public meeting. And so, it's not just the people who are called out, it's the thing that they're called out to, a public meeting, a gathering, of some sort.

[ 6 : 45 ] Now, that could be, that could be, like a council meeting, could be a community meeting, could be whatever. But more, most commonly, the word is used in relation to called out of something, for something, most commonly, a public meeting of some sort.

Now, we have English words to describe that, don't we? And we'll see some of that in the New Testament, perhaps. It would have been better to use those English words rather than to use the word church, which is a bit of a kind of non-word word.

I think it comes from the German, Kirche. But it doesn't really mean anything. There is an English word that means public meeting or called out for a public meeting.

What would that word be? Can you think of any words, English words? Gathering. Okay, but perhaps there's a closer English word. You get...

Assembly. Assembly. You get these in schools, don't you? Assemblies. So words like that, gathering, assembly, stuff like that. So, how do we understand what the word church means in our English Bible?

[ 8 : 00 ] Because every single time it says church, it's ecclesia. It's that word called out ones for this public meeting. So, firstly, before we delve into the over a hundred uses, I want to show just two uses of that word.

Two places and two words in the New Testament where it mentions ecclesia. One is from Acts chapter 7 and the other from Hebrews 12 and those will help us understand what this word church means and what Jesus is doing with regards to church.

So, firstly, Acts chapter 7, if you want to jump over there if you have a Bible. If you don't, don't worry, I've got it right here in front of me, I'm going to read it out. Acts chapter 7, this guy Stephen, a Christian, is on trial for preaching about Jesus and he starts giving the Jews a history of their people.

and so he goes through the patriarchs, he goes through the time in Egypt and he begins to talk about Moses and Moses bringing the Exodus from Egypt and so, if you go to verse 35 in Acts 7, Stephen says, this Moses who they rejected and what Stephen's doing is he's trying to show the Jews how Jesus is the prophet that Moses is talking about, the person like Moses.

Stephen's trying to show the Jews in this history lesson that Jesus is doing what Moses did in a greater way. So he says, this Moses who they rejected saying, who made you a ruler and judge?

[ 9 : 41 ] This man God sent as both a ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. This man led them out. He performed wonders and signs in Egypt.

at the Red Sea in the wilderness for 40 years. This Moses who said to the Israelites, God will raise up for you a prophet like me, meaning Jesus. And he says, and this is the word church, right?

He says, this is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness for 40 years. He was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai and with our fathers.

And so there's the word, the word church, ecclesia, is translated as congregation, congregation. And yet Stephen is using that about who?

He's using it about the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai in the wilderness straight after they've been brought out from Egypt. and so this is the word church, the word ecclesia, the word translated as congregation here.

[ 10 : 52 ] Does anyone have a different word in their Bible? At all? Assembled? Church. Yours is church. There you go. Bit of consistency in your Bible there. That's good. That's good.

Assembly and congregation. So that's what it means. Stephen is saying the Israelites who were brought out of Egypt, out of slavery, brought in through the Red Sea from death to life, from darkness, to be a people.

Let my people go that they may come out and offer sacrifices to me. They may worship me. These people have been brought out of slavery and out of darkness and out of Egypt into the wilderness to the foot of Mount Sinai where God dwells, gathered together in a congregation of people to the foot of Mount Sinai to meet God and hear His word.

and to worship Him. The word is church. That's what church is. A congregation that have been pulled out of darkness, out of slavery, to the foot of the mountain of God to worship Him and to hear His word and to experience His presence.

And so that's the word that is used there. Now Luke records the word as being ecclesia and we have different translations. Now you might say, why do most translations not use the word church?

[ 12 : 13 ] Some do, but most don't. But if we understand what church is, maybe we would be better to use congregation more times in the Bible rather than the word church.

Congregation is a good word because people were congregated at the mountain of God. God called them out of Egypt to congregate them to worship Him and hear His word and experience His presence and to be His people.

So here we have this church word in the New Testament used to look back at Israel and Mount Sinai. The second place is Hebrews 12.

If you want to jump forward there, if you don't have it, I've got it here. Hebrews 12, this time it's looking perhaps you could say upward or even forward. And the interesting thing about this other reference of the word church in Hebrews 12 is that the writer of Hebrews draws a direct line from the congregation at Mount Sinai to what he's going to talk about here.

He draws a direct line. He says this is actually a picture of that. And so from verse 18, the writer of Hebrews says this, For you've not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further message be spoken to them.

[ 13 : 43 ] He's talking about Mount Sinai. He's talking about the congregation when they heard God at Mount Sinai. He says, You've not come to that for they could not endure the order that was given.

Even if a beast, even if an animal touches the mountain, it'll be put to death. Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I tremble with fear.

And so the Hebrews writer is saying, it's like that, but you've not come to that. You've come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, to the assembly, that's the word church, of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Moses.

So the right of Hebrews is saying, it's like that gathering at Mount Sinai from Egypt into the wilderness. It's like that, but it's not that. It's this assembly in heaven of those who have been enrolled in heaven by Jesus and his blood.

That's what you've come to, the heavenly Jerusalem. And so it's this great picture. Another use of the word this time, it's assembly.

[ 15 : 09 ] I don't know what it is in your Bible if you've got a different word. You've got church again? Church, church. That's it. And to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.

What a wonderful thing. This time he's talking about the heavenly Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly assembly. And so before we understand all the other uses of the word church in the Bible, we've got this picture of the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai meeting God.

And it's terrifying. And in a direct line to the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly Mount Zion, and those who have been enrolled in heaven.

The congregation in the wilderness and the assembly enrolled in heaven. And so here's the thing. When Jesus said, and most of us know this, Jesus said, I will build my church.

He says, I will build my congregation. I will build my assembly. He's not talking about a building that he's going to build. He's not even talking about one single assembly in a particular town.

[ 16 : 16 ] When he says, I will build my church, this is the kind of thing that he's talking about. Like the Israelites were at the foot of Mount Sinai, so those enrolled in heaven, that's what Jesus is building.

Jesus is building a great assembly of his people bought by his blood enrolled in heaven. The world can't see that fully yet. We can't see that.

But if we understand that that's what church is, then we understand what churches on earth are by that big great picture of what it really represents. So another example of this, synagogues.

Do you all know what a synagogue is? Synagogue is where the Jews gathered together, they taught, they heard the word. Actually, there's a lot more that goes on in the synagogue. There's community stuff, hospitality, care for the sick, care for the widows, the poor, all that kind of stuff going on in the synagogue.

But the synagogues were built to reflect the temple with the columns so that everyone could see with the place where the word was taught was where the altar was.

[ 17 : 23 ] And the door of every synagogue faced Jerusalem so that when you were leaving, you were reminded of this pilgrimage to the great big assembly where God is.

And so, similarly, the local assemblies, local churches are meant to reflect visibly and locally in a small way a greater reality that isn't visible or local on earth.

The picture of the assembly spoken about in Hebrews 12. Just the same way, it's the same way Jesus spoke about his kingdom. Jesus said to Pilate when he was arrested, my kingdom's not of this world.

If my kingdom was of this world, my servants would have been fighting, but my kingdom is not of this world. And in the same way, the assembly that he is building is not of this world.

Even if it consists of people who spend time in this world for a short time. And so, just as we see a glimpse of his kingdom, churches are like little embassies of the kingdom of heaven.

[ 18 : 33 ] Give a picture of something greater, a greater kingdom to come. The same way is true of the church being a glimpse of the heavenly assembly. Little local assemblies of people who follow Jesus are a picture of the great and heavenly assembly that is not yet seen.

See, they will give us a picture and a shape like a shadow, but it's not the full substance of what it really is. That's why Paul can say, your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When he appears, so will you in glory. Okay, how are we doing? Are we doing okay? Do you need to get up and stretch about, have a breather?

And so, this word church, okay, ecclesia, ecclesia, it's used about 114 times in the New Testament and 80% of those times it's talking about a local gathering of believers, a local assembly of Christians in little towns and places.

20% of the time it can mean the whole number of believers on earth and so that's the thing when it talks about church, more often than not, it speaks about Christians who are alive and visible on earth gathered together in little assemblies.

[ 19 : 57 ] Very few times does the word actually talk about what we might call the invisible universal church of all believers in all time. And so that's to say, when the New Testament writers use the word church, most of the time what they're referring to is locally assembled disciples of Jesus.

Locally assembled disciples. The usage of the word church in the New Testament is talking about locally assembled disciples of Jesus because this is who he is building his great church out of.

How do we know that Jesus is building this great heavenly assembly? Because we can see evidence of it in little local assemblies all around the world. All around the world.

To the ends of the earth. Not just in Jerusalem. To the ends of the earth. How do we know that his great kingdom is going to be full of every tribe and every tongue?

Because in every place in the world we see little local assemblies of disciples of Jesus that have been brought out of something, called out of something, and into something.

[ 21 : 03 ] It's great. It's fantastic. And so this picture of Israel coming out of Egypt into the wilderness is a visible picture of something that was to come.

The people at the foot of the mountain, what was that a picture of? If you fast forward a few hundred years or a thousand years when you've got the temple and you've got the king, the temple brought the presence of God and the king over the people, King David and the kingdom.

By the time Solomon comes, the kingdom of Israel was at the height of its glory. People from around the world are coming to Israel like the Queen of Sheba, coming because Israel's this great kingdom.

And that's what this congregation in the wilderness is pointing towards. But even that's pointing towards something greater, a greater king, a greater kingdom where God is with his people.

And so, it's a visible, albeit imperfect, incomplete picture of a greater, not yet visible reality. And that's, again, why in Colossians, Paul says that it's the shadow of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

[ 22 : 22 ] And interestingly, the word substance is actually body. the body belongs to Christ. Shadow of things, but the body belongs to Christ. You see, what we do when we gather together, we give a shadow of this great body that's yet to be seen.

So, the word refers to a local geographical assembly, which could be anything. Actually, funnily enough, in Acts chapter 19, there's this riot in Ephesus because of Paul.

Paul, and, let me read this, just, it's funny. Luke uses the word church here, right? And sometimes, sadly, this can describe what church is like.

Verse 32 of Acts 19, he says, Now some cried one thing, some cried another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them didn't know why they had come together.

Sometimes that's what church can seem like. And he uses the word church there, but he's really just talking about a public meeting that have been called together to deal with Paul.

[ 23 : 32 ] And the word church is used three times there, and it's actually the town clerk that has to deal with them and dismiss the assembly. But what does it talk about when it's talking about disciples?

Well, there's a wonderful picture in Peter. Peter's letter, right? And Peter, interestingly, doesn't even use the word church in his letter. Doesn't use the word church.

But he says this, and he gives an example of what church is. Peter chapter 2, he says, he says, As you come to him, as you come to him, a living stone rejected by men, talking about Jesus, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious, you yourselves are like living stones being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus.

For as it stands in Scripture, behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious. Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe.

But for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And Peter says, they stumble, talking about the Jews, because they disobey the word as they were destined to.

[ 24 : 54 ] But you, think about this, talking about you yourselves. You are a chosen race. You're a royal priesthood. You're a holy nation.

You're a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Now, here's the truth.

Once, you were not a people. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once, you had not received mercy.

Is this speaking to you? Speaking to me. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Isn't that wonderful? That's what Peter's talking about.

When you've been called out of the darkness, you've been called into his light to be a people for his own possession. What you have been assembled into is his marvelous light.

[ 25 : 59 ] Think about people who are here today. Were we together a people? I mean, a lot of us were Scottish together, but not all of us in here are Scottish.

Were we a people? No, we weren't a people. Had we mercy from God before? No, we didn't. But now, together, if you're believing in Jesus, together, we are God's people.

We are God's people and we have received his mercy. What a wonderful thing. Amen. Were we previously assembled in some sort of gathering?

No. But we have been called out of something. We are assembled together in a way that reflects that he has actually assembled us in heaven, in his body, in a way that isn't yet fully visible to the world or even to us.

Your life is hidden with Christ and God. And so, as we are called out of our homes in this world to gather together with the very people who have received mercy, you individually are not church.

[ 27 : 09 ] We are church. We are church as we gather together because we reflect that we have been called out of something and into something. That we have once not been a people but now we are a people.

We reflect this every time we gather. It's not just a club and we really forget it. We all forget it and we need reminded. Every time we gather here today, what we represent is that we've been called out of something and into something.

That we once were not a people but look at us, we're now a people. We once didn't have mercy but now we have mercy. Amen. Hallelujah. Now, we are not necessarily church every moment of every day.

We are properly church when we church, when we assemble. Our assembly is a shadow and a shape, a visible albeit incomplete yet very real picture of a not yet visible heavenly reality.

Now, think about this. If you're walking down the street on a very sunny day and you come to the corner of a building and you see a wee shadow coming out and you're like, oh, that's got arms and legs, that shadow.

[ 28 : 23 ] What do you expect to happen next? What do you expect to see next? A person. And if there wasn't a person there, would there be a shadow? No, unless there was like a coat hanging up or something.

And so, you expect to see a person because a shadow is a shadow of something and so, you wouldn't be surprised when a person comes around the corner. Now, you might not be able to tell what that person looks like.

You might not even be able to tell if that person is a man or a woman, if they have hair or no hair, what colour of hair they have, what colour of jacket they have. So many things about that person you won't be able to see from the shadow, but at least from the shadow you know there's a person.

And so, this helps us understand the church. The church is the body of Christ. Now, Paul says it's a shadow of things to come, but the body, the substance, belongs to Christ.

You see, when we gather together, when we are a church, what the world sees is a shadow of Christ. They don't see everything of who we are or what we are or who Christ is or what Christ is or what he is building, but they see something.

[ 29 : 35 ] And if the body, if the person wasn't there, there wouldn't be a shadow. But the fact that there is a shadow shows us that there is a substance.

it shows us there is a substance. And so, we come to the last thing, the next thing, the body of Christ. The body of Christ. This isn't the only term that's used.

There's the bride of Christ, the flock of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the household of God, living stones in a spiritual house. But this term, the body of Christ, what does it mean? Well, whenever you see the word body in the New Testament, it's the Greek word Soma.

And it's used 142 times. But most commonly what it's talking about is just a body, just a human body. The body of a healed person, the body of a raised person, the body of Jesus, teachings about what you do with your body, Abraham's elderly body, and the resurrected body, and so on.

The same word is used of the metaphor of the body of Christ for the church and most commonly this metaphor is used in two places, two groups. The first group is Romans and Corinthians and in the second group is Ephesians and Colossians.

[ 30 : 52 ] The first group, Romans, Corinthians, Paul uses this metaphor to teach the church, the assembly, how to act towards one another and how to function as part of the same body, that we're all body parts in one body.

And so he teaches us how to act with one another, understanding that we're only part of the body by the mercy of God. And then in the second group in Ephesians and Colossians, he emphasizes more that Christ is the head of the body.

Any individual, any local church, Christ is the head of that body. And so, how do we act together the joints and parts, knowing that we're only part of the body by the grace and mercy of the head of the body?

Now, some people might only see the body of Christ as being the universal church, but is this the case by the way the metaphor is used in the New Testament?

You see, similar to the assembly in heaven that is expressed locally and visibly, the body of Christ sometimes is used to describe more than the local assembly, but the majority of the usage is applied to the local assembly.

[ 32 : 08 ] And why? Because if it wasn't, the metaphor would simply not work. It wouldn't work. If it wasn't applied to a local assembly, the metaphor wouldn't work.

Now, that doesn't mean that there isn't a greater reality, but what Paul is concerned about is how that greater reality is outworking in a visible and local way.

how is the greater reality reflected on earth? That's what Paul's concern is. And so, Paul says to a local group of Christians in Corinth, a particular city, he says, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Now, how can he say that if he only means that the body of Christ is the whole universal church? He can't say that. But he says to the Corinthians, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Now, Paul isn't saying that they are the only body. He isn't saying Corinth is the only church that represents the body of Christ. And he isn't saying there's multiple bodies of Christ. But what he is saying is that a local assembly of believers is a local manifestation of the body of Christ to that place.

[ 33 : 26 ] How's Bells Hill going to see the body of Christ? The local Christians together, that's how they're going to see it. And so, would Christ only give one city a foot and another city a hand?

What would be the point of that? How could they see Christ if he only gave them a wee part? He's saying that each local assembly of believers is like an embassy of Christ's kingdom.



They're a local manifestation visible of the body of Christ in that place, each of them being parts of the body. The picture is this. He isn't just forgiving your sin as an individual.

He isn't just making little individual Christians. That's not what Jesus is doing. He's making a people. He's making a people for his own possession. That's what Peter said.

He's making a people for his kingdom. The New Testament assumes that Christians are not individual entities separate from a bigger body.

[ 34 : 31 ] Just as body parts don't survive separate from the body. Just as sheep who are apart from the flock could be devoured by a wolf. Just as a branch separate from the tree will not bear fruit.

Just as a stone separate from a building is not part of the spiritual house. Does that make sense? You can't be separate from the body. And so to be a part of the local assembly is an identification and demonstration of your union with Christ and with his people.

You cannot claim to be a part of the body without being a part of a body. Are you part of the body? Are you part of anybody? Does the body know who you are?

Does the body know that you're a part of it? Does the community that you live in know that you're a part of a body and that you function as such? Now, let me just say this.

The ways that this can be formalized, even in an administrative way, and formal way, the ways that that happens are imperfect. They're imperfect.

[ 35 : 42 ] And sometimes people have misused and abused. Sometimes people have been hurt such that they are put off committing to another group of people. think of it this way.

A divorced person is more likely, perhaps, to be hesitant to get married again than somebody who was never married in the first place. As the saying goes, once bitten, twice shy.

And so because of the misuse and abuse, people can be put off committing to a body. body. But that doesn't mean that you can survive separately from it or that you're meant to.

You see, the basic picture that we get in relation to the body of Christ is that just as a human body has order and a head and parts all connected together, all connected to the head, every part contributes and works in unison and union with the other parts, they all do that for the benefit and growth of the whole body.

if they're not contributing, if a body part's not contributing and benefiting the whole body, there's something wrong with it and it can bring harm to it. For a long time it was thought that the appendix didn't do anything in the body, so they were happy to just cut it out.

[ 36 : 58 ] Or the tonsils, it's so hard to get your tonsils cut out now. There's parts of the body that people think it doesn't really do anything to the body, so we can cut it off. Let me tell you, every part of the human body can contribute to the body in one way or another, and it's for the benefit of the body.

And when we see body parts harming the body, we know that something has gone wrong, like a tumour or something like that. So the context of these passages of the body of Christ is in relation to local church to show us how we function.

You cannot be a member of the universal church and not be a member of a local church. I'm not necessarily talking about formal membership. Some of that can be more administrative than functional and it's helpful.

But the reality is, if you're not a functional member of a local body, how can you functionally be a part of the universal body? Tell me this, see if your hand, if your arm has an itch, it sends a signal to your head.

Does your head scratch the itch? No, your head sends a signal to another part of the body to scratch it. And if you've got stubble, you might use your chin as well as your hand.

[ 38 : 17 ] You see, the head sends signals to other parts of the body to serve and attend to the body. Do you think that Jesus wants to administer his grace to you apart from the body?

You can't be a single Christian on an island. Do you think that you have nothing to contribute to the body? You do. There is so much that we cannot do as individual Christians separate from the body.

Not only will you be like an endangered sheep outside of the flock, but you cannot grow in the body separate from it. You cannot contribute or participate.

How can you love one another if you're not part of one another? How can you forgive one another? How can you submit to one another? Who are the leaders that you are to obey and who are the flock that the leaders are supposed to watch over and care for their souls?

Who are we that we ought to submit to one another? Where are the hands and feet and eyes and ears and nose and mouth of Christ in our towns if we are not together?

[ 39 : 22 ] You see, what a wonderful thing it is to be a part of a body, part of the body of Christ and to belong to an assembly that has been enrolled in heaven. To be part of that, even me, even me, we're going to take the Lord's supper in a wee bit and when you take the bread, the bread comes from one loaf and it's broken into many, so we are part of one body and individually parts of it.

And when you receive that, you think, even me, I can be a part of this. Even me, does Jesus not know who I am? He does and He died for you.

He shed His blood and broke His body for you to be a part of His body and His assembly that is enrolled in heaven. What a wonderful thing it is to be a part of the local invisible church because it means that you are part of the heavenly gathering if you believe in Jesus.

You see, we think too little of the assemblies. We think too little of the benefits of being a member. It's not just about being part of a club and getting a vote. It's not just about getting to go to a meeting that others can't go to.

No, there's far more benefits than that. We have been bought by the blood of Christ to be part of His body and members in His kingdom.

[ 40 : 42 ] Hallelujah. There's more to be said about that, but let me pray and we're going to sing together. God, our Father, we pray that you would give us a picture of the church like you see it.

like the bride that has been bought and made clean for your Son. Like the body of Christ. Like the people of your kingdom.

Help us to see one another as you see us. And help us to see the world as you see the world. So that we can know that you want more people to be part of your heavenly assembly.

assembly, bought by your precious blood for your kingdom to be with you forever. Help us to see others like you see them.

Help us to see these things like you see them. We pray in Jesus' name for His glory. Amen. Amen. Amen.