

FULLNESS

Why God's People Come to Church

#24 In Spirit and In Truth

9.4.22

John 4:23 NASB "But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."

"Let it be your care therefore to come more fully together, to the praise and glory of God; for when you meet fully together in the same place, the powers of the devil are destroyed, and his mischief is dissolved by the unity of your faith" -- St. Ignatius of Antioch 107 AD on his way to martyrdom in the Roman Coliseum

When it may be better not to meet at all...

Malachi 1:10 NASB "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands."

Note: These were not the words of critics. Neither were they the words of the self-righteous. We would never close the doors because of either of those groups.

But God Almighty spoke this terrible estimation in the days of Malachi because the people had prostituted themselves in their style of worship. God Himself brought seven indictments against the people of Israel in that day. Take note: even a restored people may fall back into old ways again.

Jesus explained to the woman of Samaria that a new day of worship is coming. A worship not based on geography, but on Spirit and Truth. That day is now, and is increasing as we see The Lord's Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:22-25 NASB ²² let's approach *God* with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let's hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let's consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, ²⁵ not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Acts 2:42-47 NASB They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all the believers were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Understanding the Present Challenge

Arguments abound concerning the importance of church attendance, including differences about church government, the methods of giving, the frequency and day of worship, the style of music and preaching, and some have even said there should be no preaching at all.

Others have said the institutional church has failed and would even be unrecognizable to the early Believers. In their eyes, the emphasis should be on house churches and smaller meetings, even if facilitated online.

The historical record, as well as passages like Acts 2:42-47, lead us to believe the early church functioned in both smaller and larger settings. Some things happen in smaller settings that cannot easily happen in larger settings. Some things happen in larger settings that are unlikely in a smaller setting. The intimacy of a small setting may encourage participation and involvement. Yet it is equally true that larger congregations can achieve things beyond the reach of a small group.

There is probably more allowance than we realize for cultural settings and preferences, but there are also foundational truths that we must not allow to slip away from us. These things are understood best when we consider these six reasons Christians came together from the very earliest times. These may not be the only reasons they gathered, but we can be certain they were vitally important to the earliest Believers. We believe they are still important reasons for us to gather today

- #1. To worship God together.
- #2. To be strengthened in Christ together.
- #3. To be equipped to do the work of ministry.
- #4. To conduct Kingdom business together.
- #5. To be touched and made whole by Jesus.
- #6. To be empowered to spread the Gospel.

Christian Life Lessons

1. There is a resonance in the spiritual atmosphere.
2. This is a time for drawing close, not walking away.
3. "There is great reward in the Secret Place right now."
4. There is a time your status as Bond-Servant begins to change. Your choice is whether you will walk away or have your ear pierced.

Exodus 21:2-6 NASB “If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall leave as a free man without a payment to you. ³ If he comes alone, he shall leave alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall leave with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall leave alone. ⁵ But if the slave plainly says, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not leave as a free man, ⁶ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.”