

The Local Church 2 - Part 1

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald discusses the significance of the local church, emphasizing Christ's headship and the role of elders in guiding the congregation.

Duration: 8:49

Scripture: Matthew 18:20, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18

Topics: "Church Unity", "Christ's Headship"

Description

This sermon delves into the concept of the body of Christ, emphasizing how believers are united as one body with different functions, all under the headship of Christ. It explores the importance of understanding the universal and local church, highlighting the significance of Christ as the head of the church and the need for close fellowship with Him for guidance and direction in church life.

Transcript

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We're going to read a portion from there, beginning in verse 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ. I'm just going to pause there and say that it really is so also is the Christ. That's a unique use of the word Christ.

Christ there means not only the head, but it means the head and the body. The Christ in that verse refers to the whole body of Christ. Astonishing.

Nobody but the Holy Spirit of God would ever put that in there. But it's required by the meaning of the verse, for as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is the Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit.

For in fact the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them in the body, just as he pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body

be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the foot, I have no need of you. No, much rather those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. Those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor, and our un-presentable parts have greater modesty.

But our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. First of all, let's review a little of the material we went over in the last session.

We talked about the assembly of God, and we came first of all to the definition, and we realized that the word means a called-out company of people. And when you specify it concerning the church, it's always indicated so in the scriptures. The word itself is quite a neutral word.

It can be used of a heathen mob in Ephesus, or a mob of people traveling through the wilderness. It means a gathered-out company of people. We mentioned that assembly is really a better word to use than the word church, because when you think of an assembly, you think of people.

When you think of a church, you think of a building, at least that's so in this country. Definitions are important. Then we said that the church exists in two forms, the universal church and the local church.

Universal church composed of all believers from Pentecost to the rapture, and the local church, a representation of the universal church. It should tell to the world the truths of the universal church. We mentioned that there are various types of the church or symbols or emblems of the church.

It's a body, it's a bride, it's a house, it's a household, it's a garden plot, and it's a temple for worship. We went through some of those things. We closed our discussion with the importance of the assembly.

It's important to God, it's important to Christ, it should be important to us. Now we want to think of some of the great truths of the church. Christ is the head.

Christ is the head of the church. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 23. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 23 says, For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church, and he is the savior of the body.

Christ is head of the church. Every declarative statement in scripture carries with it an imperative. You say, what do you mean by that? Every statement of fact in the Bible carries with it an obligation.

In other words, God doesn't just tell us Christ is the head of the church as a simple fact. He tells us that so that we can make it real in our lives and in our church fellowship. Headship speaks of administration and control, and Christ is the administrator of the church.

He is the controller of the church. When you say that Christ is head of the church, that excludes any human headship. It includes any pope, archbishop, president.

It includes any one-man pastor or minister, and it even includes the elders. The elders are not the head of the church. Christ is the head of the church, and the elders are under shepherds in the church.

How do we make this practical in our church life? Answer, by living in such close fellowship with the Lord that he can convey to us what he wants to do. How do you do that? Well, first of all, you do it by immersing

yourself in the word of God. I'm speaking particularly of the elders now.

Their work would be to immerse themselves in the word of God, in which we have the general outline of God's purposes for us and for the church. Immerse themselves in prayer, seeking the mind of God, and then seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Will God reveal his will to you? Of course, he will.

And he will tell you exactly what he wants to happen in the church. I think Ray Stedman wrote very well on this subject. He says, all too long, the church has acted as if Jesus were far away, leaving church leaders to make their own decisions and their own affairs, run their own affairs.

But Jesus said in the Great Commission, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. He's present not only in the church as a whole, but in every local church as well. He is present not only in the church as a whole, but in every local church as well.

Jesus himself is the ultimate authority within every body of Christians. And he's quite prepared to exercise his authority through the elderhood. The task of elders is not to run the church themselves, but to determine how the Lord wishes to run the church.

Much of this he has already made known through the scriptures. In the day-to-day decisions, elders are to find the mind of the Lord through an uncoerced unanimity. In other words, the elders get together.

They've sought the mind of the Lord, and the Lord is forming their intellects, emotions, and will as to his desire for the church. Thus, ultimate authority...

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