

**Sermon #10**

# **Church Meetings and Services**

Jesus the Messiah is the way, the truth and the life,  
the perfect image and likeness of God.

He is in the midst of every true church meeting.

God is brilliant, awesome, wonderful and mighty.

He deserves all our praise.

God is magnificent and amazing.

His presence is life and light.

God is completely and totally true.

No lie can stand in His light.

God is good, loving, kind and gentle.

No good thing does He withhold from those who love Him.

God's supreme gift to us was the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth,  
who overcame all evil and received all authority.

When we follow Him, we also overcome evil and receive this authority.

He is our King, Shepherd and Teacher.

God knows the truth and speaks the truth, regardless of what we say.

Regardless of what others say about us, God knows the truth about us.

Despite the praises of men, we can not fool God.

Man sees our religion, but God sees our hearts.

Speaking of religion, what did Jesus teach about church meetings?

Jesus taught righteousness, not churchiness.

In all the recorded words of Christ in the Bible,

He never commanded people to start a church. organization,  
join a church organization or go to a local church every Sunday.

In contrast, He commanded His followers to leave the hypocritical  
religious leaders, who He called blind guides.

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name,  
I am there in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:20

This indicates that He recognized even a tiny assembly of two people to be a church meeting!

There is no requirement for a local church building and organization or church membership.

The one requirement is that whoever gathers together must assemble in the name of Jesus Christ, who is truth, life, mercy, goodness and the grace of God.

One sentence written by the apostle Paul is frequently used to justify our current church system, church membership, going to church services, church meetings and all kinds of church activities:

“ . . .not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24

When we synthesize Jesus’ teaching of “two or three gathered together in My name” and Paul’s exhortation to not stop gathering together or assembling, we can see that a church meeting can happen just about anywhere at any time when two or more gather in His name!

If two believers meet accidentally on a street corner and spend five minutes encouraging each other with the truth, that qualifies as a meeting of Christ’s church.

Yet if a thousand people are gathered together in a magnificent sanctuary giving lip service to God but are not seeking truth in His spirit of love, this does not qualify as a meeting of Christ’s church.

God is not fooled by our churchiness and what we call “church meetings.” He knows His assembly when He sees it.

True church assemblies occur more and more often as we go forward in following Christ.

Our conversation and fellowship with others becomes less about worldly things and more about Christ and God, truth and love, mercy and peace.

Meetings with unbelievers decrease,  
while assemblies with believers increase.

It is certainly permissible and often desirable to meet with other believers in an organized church setting, but it is not a requirement. And it can become a hindrance to our spiritual growth if we limit church meetings to our local church activities, fostering a sense of exclusiveness and religious pride.

Every meeting you have with another person or group of persons is either a church assembly that builds you up and encourages you in truth, or a worldly encounter that can embezzle your spiritual inheritance and erode your faith in God.

This is why a believer should only marry another believer.

In most marriages you will have more meetings and encounters with your spouse than with any other human being.

A marriage, then, can be either a continual church meeting that brings unity, fulfillment and wholeness or a continuous battle that destroys you and your life in God.

Likewise, if you choose to be involved in organized religion, choose your fellowship wisely. There are many wolves in sheep clothing mixed in with genuine believers.

Just because someone is a member of the same church organization that you are does not mean you can have a church meeting with him!

The most important church meeting of all does not even require another physical body to be present. The fellowship you have through the Spirit of Truth with God and Jesus Christ is the highest and greatest and most rewarding fellowship there is.

This is the ultimate church meeting, because when you meet and unite with God, you are also meeting and fellowshiping with all believers everywhere through all time, for they are One in Him.

Unity in Christ is the church of God, and you can be part of its continual, eternal church meeting at any time or all of the time!

## Church Services

If God leads you to be involved in a local church organization and attend worship services, be aware that He has standards. He doesn't put His stamp of approval on every service and every organization that calls itself a church.

Through Amos 5:21-25 and Isaiah 1: 13-20 we can gain some insight into God's thoughts and feelings about some church services and activities:

- “I hate, I despise your feast days,  
And I do not savor your sacred assemblies.  
<sup>22</sup>Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings,  
I will not accept *them*,  
Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings.  
<sup>23</sup>Take away from Me the noise of your songs,  
For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.  
<sup>24</sup>But let justice run down like water,  
And righteousness like a mighty stream.  
The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—  
I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.  
<sup>14</sup>Your New Moons and your appointed feasts  
My soul hates;  
They are a trouble to Me,  
I am weary of bearing *them*.  
<sup>15</sup>When you spread out your hands,  
I will hide My eyes from you;  
Even though you make many prayers,  
I will not hear.  
Your hands are full of blood.

<sup>16</sup>Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.  
Cease to do evil,  
<sup>17</sup>Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,  
Rebuke the oppressor;  
Defend the fatherless,  
Plead for the widow.”

Obviously, just because a gathering is called “church” and people talk about God does not make it holy or good or favored in God’s eyes.

An evil assembly or church service is one in which the people’s hearts are not right toward God or each other, and they do things their own way instead of God’s way.

Bear in mind that church services don’t do anything for God—  
He is good, regardless.  
Church services are made for man’s enjoyment, instruction and encouragement—for us to gather with other believers to celebrate God and His goodness to us.

It is our Father’s will that when we come together,  
we do things His way:  
we are honest with one another and love each other;  
we accept the weak and include social outcasts and people  
of low worldly status;  
we confess our sins to one another and repent;  
we forgive one another and share each other’s joys and sorrows,  
we seek and speak the truth of Christ and reject all that is false,  
and we exhort each other to follow and obey Christ,  
so that we can all celebrate God’s goodness together  
with pure and joyful hearts.

In doing these things, we are God’s assembly,  
the Bride who He loves, cherishes and rejoices over.

Let's look at the handout and compare the attitudes that produce righteous assemblies with the attitudes that produce evil assemblies.  
{Go over handout}

God hates evil assemblies and services. Leave them.

And don't assume it is God's will for you to go to a church service.

His ways are not like our ways!

Pray first and seek His will with a pure heart;

then, if and when He leads you to attend a church service,  
go wherever He leads, and do what He calls you to do.

Today let us all judge our own attitudes—not each others' attitudes.

If your attitudes line up more with the right column on the handout than with the left column, I hope you will change your attitudes before you come to another service here.

You will be blessing yourself and others by doing so.

If you need help in doing this, the Lord stands ready to help. Just ask!

“I the Lord love justice and mercy, truth and righteousness  
in the hearts of the people. When these are absent,  
the worship is worthless; they may as well go home.

They are doing nothing for Me, yet they are deceiving others.

Come meet with Me and be with Me where I AM.

I AM God, your Father, and I dwell in righteousness, love  
and humility.

Come to where I AM, and I will come to you and live in you,  
and we will be together.

We are One in love and truth, so speak the truth in love  
and I will be speaking through you.

Do not get hung up on going to church and meeting with others;  
focus on meeting with Me, then whoever you meet will be blessed.

I AM with you always, so turn to Me and meet with Me whenever you  
need a companion. This is a church meeting.

AMEN.”

<b>Attitudes that Produce Righteous Assemblies</b>	<b>Attitudes that Produce Evil Assemblies</b>
<b>Unity in the Spirit of Love; Oneness</b> “Let’s serve God and follow Christ.”	<b>Competing denominations, sects, cults</b> “I want more members, money, power.”
<b>Truth:</b> “Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the light. Let’s each seek to know Him better and obey His teachings in our daily lives.”	<b>Doctrinal bickering:</b> “I’m right about baptism and you’re wrong; We worship the right way and you don’t. Our doctrines and creeds are right.”
<b>Acknowledging my need for God</b> “God saves me; God’s way is best; God has what I need.”	<b>Religious arrogance</b> “I’m saved; I know the answer; I’ve got the ticket—and you can get it from me.”
<b>Humility and loyalty to God:</b> “I belong to Christ and God, who is working for good through every local assembly. His purpose will prevail.”	<b>Church pride and church loyalty</b> “I am a member of _____ Church. My church is better than yours; my church has more to offer; my church is right.”
<b>Freedom in Christ</b> “You are free to follow Christ and do what He says. You are also free to reject Him and do things your own way.”	<b>Religious oppression</b> “Do what I say. You ought to teach Sunday School. You’d better tithe. Come to every service. Make vows to the church.”
<b>Honesty about ourselves</b> “I have done this wrong: _____. Watch out for these sinful tendencies in me: [fill in the blank with your flaws]	<b>Hypocrisy and pretense:</b> “See, I am a good, responsible, respectable, neat, active and faithful churchgoer. (But my personal life is nobody’s business.)”
<b>Righteousness of Christ</b> “God is good, and He is my Shepherd; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”	<b>Self-righteousness</b> “I am good: I go to church, I tithe, I pray for people; I don’t cuss or do drugs or have casual sex or steal or kill.”
<b>God-justification</b> “God is just and fair, good and true; He has mercy on me and forgives my sins.”	<b>Self-justification</b> “Everything I do or say is o.k. because I go to church and believe in God.”
<b>Exalting love over church traditions</b> “My elderly parents need financial support from me to survive, so I give it to them and give less to the church.”	<b>Exalting church traditions over love</b> “I pay my tithes and offerings to my church and let the government and social workers take care of my needy parents.”
<b>Exalting Christ:</b> “Look at Jesus, not me. Listen to Him teach. Read about His life. Believe His words. Look at what He did for me. Follow Him.”	<b>Exalting oneself</b> “Look at me preach. Look at me sing. Look at all I’m doing for the church. Listen to me. Praise and glorify me.”

**Note:** God works through *all* for good—even through evil assemblies. He can work through them to correct, discipline, rebuke or frustrate people who are bent on evil or who have gotten off His path.

**Notes:**