

The Church, Its People, Its Glorious Benefits

Gospel Quiz:

- 1) Knowledge of God: Same word 3 times describing God? Holy, holy, holy
- 2) Is man holy? No. Where do you find that information?
- 3) What's the problem? Need reconciliation. Where find?
- 4) What is the solution? Believe/Repent Where find?

** Big question; Who revealed that to you? (You would not have unless H.S. taught you)

- We are continuing along with a summary of the faith found in the Apostles Creed.
- "I believe in, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins"

(Notice that our catechizer asks what do you believe? Not do you believe.)

Q. 53. What do you believe concerning the holy and catholic Church of Christ?

A. I believe that the Son of God does, from the beginning to the end of the world, gather, defend, and preserve for Himself, by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole of mankind, a company chosen to everlasting life, and agreeing in true faith; and that I am a lively member of that company, and so shall remain forever.

Q. 54. What do these words mean, the communion of saints?

A. First, that all and everyone who believes are in common partakers of Christ and all his graces, as being His members, and then that everyone ought readily and cheerfully to bestow the gifts and graces which they have received to common commodity and safety of all.

Q. 55. What do you believe concerning remission of sins?

A. That God, for the satisfaction made by Christ, has put out all the remembrance of my sins, and also of that corruption within me which I must fight all my lifetime, and does freely endow me the righteousness of Christ, that I come not at any time into judgement.

I. What is the Church?

- Emphasis, as I mentioned, what do you believe?
 - Important; If our criteria is *only* what we see, there is room for disappointment.

(What we see *is* important; there's just so much more to it)

- People believe a lot of different things about Jesus' church

There are many variations/denominations. (Paul and Barnabas split)

(Denomination is a banking term borrowed by the church; various sizes/kinds, but all **currency**)

(Legitimate. As long as it teaches/practices an orthodox gospel; Scriptural.)

- Know that the Local church filled with saved sinners, differences of opinion, interpretation of tertiary matters, we can find the orthodox in many denominations.

(Could part over infant baptism, musical preferences (popular), election, (tough one) etc.)

Main Idea: What you believe about the Church will shape your view of God's purposes in the world, your growth in grace, even the trajectory of your life.

Matthew 16:15-18

¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For **flesh and blood has not revealed this to you**, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." **On the rock of that confession!**
(So Jesus is the builder, He's in charge, He has a plan and he is executing his plan)

- What does the word church mean?
 - "ekklesia" called out ones, (not a building) an assembly (called out, called to)

Deut 7:6 "For you are a people **holy** to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

"An assembly of persons brought together, not by chance, or in a disorderly manner, but called out of the kingdom of Satan by the voice of the Lord, and by the preaching of the gospel, for the purpose of hearing, and embracing the word of God." Zacharius Ursinus

- Did the Church begin at Pentecost?

Our instructor tells says "from the beginning to the end of the world" is this church

- The Church of Jesus Christ exists from Genesis to Revelation and beyond

From Adam, Abel, Enoch, Job, Abraham, Deborah, Rahab, David, Peter, Eusebius, Augustine, Luther, Zwingly, Knox, you, others who have not yet come to faith.

(For as long as the world has existed the Lord has always been gathering, defending, and preserving His church.)

- The Lord spoke to Abram. He left his home to go; he knew not where.
 - Peter preached at Pentecost; people followed after the word of God
- Faith comes by hearing the word of God.

God through his messengers speaks truth, HS applies it, men and women follow

He has given under-shepherds who herald the word of God – the people of God respond.

He is addressing the called ones – We should listen for His voice, pray for the herald.

(Pulpit after reformation in center that we be word centered)

(Acts 2:47) “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- The same thing happened to you - (The Lord added you to the church)

He added you to the universal church, and added you to a specific church.

** Do you believe that? H.S. revealed it to you – We are “Called out Ones”

(Ever think about the timing? What if the Lord, for instance, added 100 people to our church in a week. We are scrambling now to keep up with interviewing new members, fitting them into the life of the church, asking the Lord to raise more officers. Perhaps it is a mercy not all are added at once. The Lord is doing something in our midst)

(What if no biblical church in my area? Move!)

- The Church, the called-out ones, belong to Christ

She is his reward

Isaiah 53:11-12 “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.¹² **Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many**, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

- When a king goes to war and conquers his enemy. In this case king Jesus conquered sin and death. He also cast Satan out of heaven (Rev 12). The king then returns with the plunder, the prize. This portion is a people ransomed.

The church is made up of these rescued people.

How does he gather them? He proclaims his word, the sheep hear and follow his voice

** Do you believe that? H.S. taught you from the word

- Visible / Invisible Church (must mention)
 - Visible; all that you see, not all regenerated
 - Invisible; those who are in the church and also regenerated
- The Assembly has always been, but over time, as the scriptures have progressively revealed, we understand the marks of a true church:
 - 1) Profess the law and gospel described in the Word. Word centered
 - 2) Practice the Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord’s supper)
 - 3) Practice the keys of the kingdom
 - 4) Proclaim and practice obedience to God revealed in his word
(Treasures and gifts distributed through the preaching of word and sacraments)
- All of these members are sinners, so not perfect.

- A project under construction

The foundation is everything. You can build a beautiful building, but if the foundation is not solid it eventually come crashing down.

Isaiah 28:16-17 “Behold, I am the one who has **laid as a foundation in Zion**, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of **a sure foundation**: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’ ¹⁷ And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line...”

Matt 7:24-25 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who **built his house on the rock**. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been **founded** on the rock.”

You will notice that the church is an unfinished work. The foundation is there, but there are construction materials laying around; not yet all in place. It is always a bit of a work in progress. The Lord continues to add to it and we are still growing up in grace. Right? (Are you all grown up?)

- Some have the foundation right and then build other edifices on top

1 Cor 3:10-15 “Let each one **take care** how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

** Two things: First; we can build other than what we ought.

We can disregard the beauty and magnitude of God's glorious church. Give it little regard.

For instance; some believers disregard the clear teaching of election. This diminishes God's rightful glory. Secondly, the inference is that they are still believers.

- Why “Holy catholic church” - Means: Set apart; and for a purpose right

From every age, nation, language, race the church always has been, and ever will be.

John 10:29 The Father has given them to me (Jesus pursues his church)

- This is bigger than what we see (All of history revolves around Jesus gathering his own)

Zech 2, Young man with measuring stick,

vs. 4 “Run, say to that young man, ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages **without walls**, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it. ⁵ And **I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.**”

** Talks of coming peace and prosperity in Jerusalem (the church)

8:22, 23 **Many peoples** and strong **nations** shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. ²³ Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the **nations of every tongue** shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

** God himself is always working to gather, defend, and preserve his church

Do you believe this? H.S. taught you

II. What means the “Communion of Saints” (Common partakers)

- Saint: Someone who is washed clean by the blood of Christ; whose life is being renewed by the Spirit of Christ.

All (All) are on equal standing. (Elijah was a man with a nature like ours... He was like us)

- We are common partakers in Jesus' reward, Our mission: Grow up, Proclaim his gospel

Eph 2:19 fellow citizens with saints of all ages, foundation Christ, grows into a holy temple

Eph 2:22 "In him **you** also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

- Gifts: He gives gifts (people) to his church.

Some bring knowledge, some wisdom, sympathy and compassion, helps, etc.

- 1 Cor 12 is not an exhaustive list

There is utterance, teaching, wisdom, etc. Eph 4 – for the building up of the church to do ministry

- We **see** God's love, care and preserving power over the church by giving people (you)

Deacons - each have different gifting and what drives them. Organization, Accounting, Managing, Helps (get it done), not only that, but whatever comes up they just get it done. (read insurance policy)

AWG – talents for the task, desire and drive to pursue this colossal task

Music – talent, strong interest

Tech helps – A/V, and Web design

Administrative, Organizers, acts of kindness, one another ministry, hospitality, discipleship, on and on

Why has the Lord given such various gifts?

*For the good of the whole. We are his hands and feet to the world.

(Witness outside church: real important witness is how sinners live in harmony under Christ)

**** No one is insignificant. All are important. All have a contribution.**

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"

The ear cannot say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,"

Never say, "I am not needed" **All the parts belong and are needed.**

Eph 4:15-16 "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when **each part is working properly, makes the body** grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Our unity is Christ; for his sake we apply ourselves for the good of the whole. God gets much glory when we serve and defer to one another. The witness of the church is greater than the individual.

** Do you believe that the church is much more glorious than a bunch of people meeting once a week to hear an uplifting message? H.S. gave you that

III. What do you believe concerning the Remission of Sins

When Israel sinned again and again the Lord would discipline them. They would cry out to their Father, and he would remember his covenant with them and deliver them. (love this Psalm)

Ps 107:10-13 “Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons,
¹¹ for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
¹² So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help.
¹³ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

This scenario plays out so many times in the OT that we have to say; “Okay, I get it”

The picture is that, because they were his children, they were never abandoned.

The Lord would discipline them as children and they would *eventually* repent.

Child of God,

God loves you as if you never sinned

He freely grants eternal life to the believer on the merit of Christ

Freely offered to you, but not free to him

When we sin, we experience a sense of distance with God.

We even experience natural consequences.

The Lord will discipline us as a father does a child.

It is possible (naturally go there) to believe God is taking out the punishment your sins on you by these experiences.

** The Father has already punished ALL of your sins on his Son. **

(He who sees all will discipline his children)

(Remember; the worlds attitude toward sin is cavalier. That is contagious. All sin is evil)

- Who grants remission of sins?

No one can forgive sins except the person against whom it is committed, and who is offended.

To whom ultimately have we sinned against?

Ps 51 “Against you, and you only, have I sinned”

No creature can grant anything that rightfully belongs to God

- But wait, the church binds/looses, declares forgiveness

Ans. The apostles forgave sin as far as they announced the forgiveness of God. So the Church forgives sin, when she, according to the command of God, pronounces forgiveness to the penitent.

Your neighbor forgives privately, but God alone frees you from the guilt of sin by his own authority.

He alone cleanses us from all impurity by the blood of his son.

- Why does God forgive us?

Isa 43:25 “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions **for my own sake**,
and I will not remember you sins”

To remember means “let count”

The Lord looks at you, considers your life, he weighs you on the scale, he hears your appeal. He takes into account 'You Are' in Christ, and he doesn't allow your sins to factor on the scale. God chooses, on the basis of Jesus Christ's work, not to remember.

**** The Lord chooses to forgive you. He wants to forgive you****

By his mercy, for he loves you, and Christ has satisfied his justice.

- Otherwise, God would not yield his justice

Objection: God, as a most righteous judge, will not let sin pass unpunished. He cannot remit/forgive without sufficient punishment of the sinner. And to punish the innocent in place of the guilty is also detestable/abhorrent to God.

That argument would be strong 'if'

- 1) The innocent were unwilling – Christ was willing
- 2) Not the same nature – Christ is
- 3) Not able to undertake satisfying punishment – Christ was able
- 4) He could not rise from it – Christ was able
- 5) He was not able to renew or regenerate the sinner – Christ was and is

Eph 5:2 ... Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Isa 53:5 He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

- What is our response?

(If you are given a 2k ticket to Super Bowl (played on a Saturday) and told "You have to go to the will-call booth and claim your ticket. Would you be attending the game if you don't pick up the ticket?

It's yours, but you have to go get it.)

Come in faith. By faith alone which the Holy Spirit kindles in us

"The decree of God is to forgive the sins of his people, the church over all time, but the execution takes place when we, by faith and repentance, apply the forgiveness offered to us."

Then we are the recipients, heirs, of the benefits equal to all saints, of Christ's works.

Do you believe this? H.S. applied this to your hearts

- What is the Church to be?

Tit 2:14 who gave himself for us to **redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.**

He sits on the promised throne of David and what king has no subjects?

What shepherd; has no sheep? What bridegroom; has no bride?

The existence of the church today as well as the assurance that she has always been and will always be, is guaranteed in the promise given to the Lord Jesus Christ that He is the eternal King.

2 Kings 7 David; “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

When we express our faith in saying “I believe in the holy catholic church, we are referring to promise given to our Savior, the Son of David, the Son of God.

Elsewhere he says, “Thy throne, O God, is from everlasting to everlasting”

Deut 4:9-10 “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children— ¹⁰ how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’

Questions:

1. How might the enemy of Christ weaken his church?
2. Knowing how glorious the plan and purpose of the church is; can a believer ignore the call to the local church and still be a Christian?
3. The bible teaches election throughout its pages. Can someone who professes faith in Christ, and that the scriptures are the word of God, but denies election still be a Christian?
4. Whose responsibility is the purity of the Church? i.e. if error in her midst?

Lois Kunsman

Satan doesn't want to draw attention to himself. He wants to take glory away from Christ by weakening his church. His reward. Weak gospel, weak obedience, shallow sense of worship.

We view the local church as shepherded by Christ, undershepherded by officers given to his church.

How important then is it to pray for your leaders that they would follow Christ?

- It is important what you see.

When you look to join a church, you see the Lord changing lives, you see sacrificial love lived out in one another ministry, reverence for the word o

- Blood relatives “Nothing comes between family”
(Jesus would disagree. When asked to disobey God’s word, part ways)
- We have a blood relationship as well. By the blood of Christ we have common bond
- We have equal participation in the benefits of Christ
- Gifts are given for the common benefit of all

- Many assemblies have gone heretical

The worst would not be false religions like Hindu, or Buddhism. They are obviously contradictory to the word of God. Plainly seen. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, holds up the bible and gives a false interpretation of it. Many are fooled into thinking they have satisfied God. This is more offensive than idol worshippers. They misrepresent God with his word in hand.

- Look how harshly Jesus rebuked the Pharisees. (blind guides)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces.”