

7-8-18 Message
THE CHURCH'S SUPREME DUTY TO ASSEMBLE THEMSELVES

Next week we are going to have a special week of meetings on the church grounds. It is our annual tent meeting revival meetings. The truth is there are not a lot of churches having week long revival meetings anymore. The trend seems to be cutting back on everything. Many churches no longer have Sunday evening service, or mid week service. So most revival meetings go out the door with all the rest of these other meetings. Now we wonder why there are so many churches closing in our day. Just what is the most important thing that a church does?

Now think about this. The group of people that would be our Lord's disciples he used the greek word Ekklesia which is the greek word for assembly. This is the real biblical meaning of what the word Church means. This group of people we call His Church, Jesus called them His assembly. Now think about this, Jesus invented this name. They don't call the congregation and meeting place of Jews a church it is a congregation. their meeting place is called a Synagogue. The Moslems do not call themselves a Church they call themselves a community or congregation who meet in a Mosque. Jesus said his followers would be referred to as His Church. His Assembly.

About 150 churches close every week in our country. And why do they close? Usually because they think they cannot afford to keep their buildings open. Or because there are too few people coming. This is a stupid reason for closing. Look, as long as I am alive and I am part of the Elkdale Baptist Church you do not have to worry about it closing. The reason why is I believe this promise.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Churches do not close because of lack of people because as long as you have two or three people interested in assembling together in the name of Jesus, Jesus said that is a big enough group of people for him to be interested in being part of that gathering.

There are very very few times that I have ever cancelled Church services. The few times I have is because I feared it may be too dangerous for people to come here. There was one time I lived in the back of the church and there was so much snow I could not get out the front door and I had to literally climb out the window of my house and shovel out my front door to get to Church. There was another time I canceled Church services because I headed down the driveway to plow out the church and when I went back up my driveway I got stuck and the snow was so bad I could not even walk to my truck and I was stuck inside my house till Monday morning. But this I say, if I could have gotten in my truck and plowed my driveway out and plowed the church out, I would have held church services even if two or three people showed up. Because that would have been a big enough crowd for Jesus to show up for. So if it is a big enough assembly for Him to be there, then I would want to be there also.

If the building that we are meeting in would burn down, we are still going to assemble ourselves together as a church.. We can meet in my house, my garage, in the barn. If persecution breaks out and there are only a few of us left, we are still going to meet as Christ's church. The Church is not this building, **the church is the assembly** that meets in this building.

The only thing that closes a church is lack of interest and a lack of a desire to gather together as an assembly and as God's people in whatever place God allows us to have. But mark it down there will still be interest somewhere else. There will always be a Church somewhere and some place where there is a true group of people that want to meet. And if God called me to preach I can say to you as long as I have the health to speak and the breath to preach I will want to be with God's people and serve our Lord and Savior in the capacity that He has given me to serve Him.

I say to you, as the LORD said to us all, **THE GATES OF HELL ITSELF CANNOT PREVAIL AGAINST THE CHURCH THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS BUILT!**

Now if the finances got so bad that the church could no longer pay the heat bill, the light bill, a salary for the Pastor, I say to you, I am staying here and having church. I will figure out a way to have meetings.

It does not take money to have a church, all it takes is interest. The only reason that there are 150 churches closing every week in this country is because there is a lack of interest. As long as you have people who love Jesus and that group of people still want to meet you can have a church.

A survey was taken of churches in America. It was found that about:

50% of all Christians in America go to a church of 100 or less people. This represents our church.

30% attend churches of 100-500.

12% attend churches of 500- 1000.

And only 8% attend mega churches of 1000 or more.

Now I say that to say this: the most defining thing about a church is not its size but the desire to do what Jesus told that church to do. **ASSEMBLE THEMSELVES TOGETHER IN HIS NAME.**

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The reason there is a decline in morality and Christianity in our nation today is because there is a decline in assembling ourselves together.

Now I say all this to say that I think it is important for you to come to our week of meetings next week. This morning I am going to give you some Biblical reasons why I think it is important for you to do your best to be at every meeting we have scheduled this next week.

I. THE THERMOMETER OF THE HEALTH OF ANY CHURCH CAN BE MEASURED BY THEIR DESIRE TO ASSEMBLE THEMSELVES TOGETHER.

1. THOSE WHO ARE NOT RIGHT WITH GOD GROW WEARY IN ASSEMBLING THEMSELVES TOGETHER WITH HIS CHURCH.

Throughout the history of God's people, their attitudes toward assembling themselves together to worship the Lord has been a thermometer of the spiritual health. In Malachi 1:13 we read that the people of God were saying that the commands of the Lord were weariness. They were saying what weariness it is to do what God wants us to do. Furthermore, they said it was vain to serve the Lord.

Malachi 3:13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

Malachi 3:14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

This is an age old problem. People think that they have more important things to do than attend God's services and worship God.

Look, when you have that kind of attitude the Lord takes note of it. Remember Mary and Martha. Martha thought Mary was wasting her time sitting listening to Jesus, when in fact it was Martha that was wasting her time.

I see so often that people get weary in being faithful to assemble themselves together in the church.

2. IN THE EARLY CHURCH THEY ASSEMBLED THEMSELVES TOGETHER DAILY:

I will remind you that in the book of acts the people of God assemble together daily.

Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

How sad it is that people find it too hard to assemble themselves together three times a week in the contemporary church.

How many days a week does the world think it is necessary to prepare our young people for life. Monday - Friday how many hours. How do we offset this?

Recently I heard that a teacher asked her students to draw a picture of themselves and hand it in. The child drew a picture of himself with a baggy jersey that looked like a dress to the teacher and the teacher told the parents they need to take their child to a counselor for gender counseling.

Think about this. The government says we need your children to assemble themselves on our campuses for 6 hours a day 5 days a week and during that time they are bombarded with humanism. That is 30 hours a week. How sad it is that many Christians can't come to church faithfully for 5 - 6 hours a week if you came out faithfully for Sunday School, Sunday Morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night that is only 6 hours a week. And then to offset this 1000 hours a year of being bombarded with humanism. Is it too much to come out for a 5 day Bible School? There is something wrong spiritually for the Christians who can't find time for God.

3. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT GOD TOLD HIS PEOPLE TO ASSEMBLE THEMSELVES TOGETHER.

God gave Israel 7 great feast days, and you can biblically measure the health of the nation spiritually by their zeal to keep these great feasts. Three of those feasts were mandatory to attend. God said I want every man in the nation to go up to Jerusalem for these three times:

Deuteronomy 16:16 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

Feast of Unleavened bread 7 day feast.

Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, a day always a Sunday or 1st day of the week.

Feast of tabernacles, 7th month starting the 15th day of the month.

When Israel had a decline of interest in obeying these feasts there was a decline in the nation, in days of revival there was renewed interest in obeying these feasts.

Some of you have some health problems. How important is your physical health?

If I could give you a formula to improve your health would you do it?

My wife and I heard about a program that would help your health a few years back and we have followed it and have gotten good results. God gave a formula in his word for his people to follow to help them spiritually. Yet so many of God's people do not follow it and it they suffered for it.

I do not believe that formula has changed. Setting apart a week long intensive time in assembling yourself together is good for your spiritual health.

You read the Bible, when God's people obeyed the Lord things went well for them. When they didn't, things went awry.

In the days of Josiah, Israel had neglected the feasts for so long that when Josiah sent invitations out to keep the passover week they laughed him to scorn.

II Chronicles 30:10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

II Chronicles 30:11 Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

It wasn't long after that that Israel was destroyed! Even though Josiah was one of the greatest kings that Israel ever had, for the most part the children of Israel did not have a heart for the things of the Lord. The evidence was how they rejected Josiah's invitation to assemble themselves to worship the Lord. About 28 years later Nebuchadnezzar would totally destroy Jerusalem.

II. THE MOST IMPORTANT FEAST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES. IT IS THE ONLY FEAST IN THAT GOD WILL REQUIRE ALL THE GENTILE NATIONS TO KEEP IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM.

Zechariah 14:16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

Zechariah 14:18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

This will be a yearly revival meeting that everyone is supposed to attend in the Millennial kingdom. It will be held the 7 month starting the 15th day of the month.

I believe in that day our calendars and the calendars of the whole world will become a Jewish calendar. The Jewish calendar was based off of feast days, each month was just numbered 1st to 12th month. The calendar will be a lunar calendar and one thing about this calendar is that there will be a consistency of what day of the week the feasts will land on. In our calendar the days are all mixed up. For instance we celebrate the 4th of July as a holiday every year. We just never know what day of the week the 4th of July will fall on. Our calendar is called the Gregorian calendar and it is based off of the sun.

Now what is interesting in all of this is that this year our tent meeting revival week will start this year the seventh month of our calendar year and the 15th day of the month. The numbers line up with the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles. Now I know that it does not line up with the Jewish calendar that way, but in our gentile Gregorian calendar it does.

1. NOTICE THEY WERE COMMANDED TO DWELL IN BOOTHS OR TENTS.

During this week God commanded his people to dwell in booths.. these booths look much like stick framed out tents overlaid with palm branches. In the wilderness Israel dwelt in tents. Booths are cheap tents. A booth is fine since they will only be used for a week not 40 years. Anyone could make one. People that wanted to be a little more sophisticated and comfortable actually built pole framed tent material and decorated the tent with Palm branches.

Now is it just a coincidence that we decided to have our tent meetings the 7th month the 15th day of the month? A few years back I was reading Zechariah where I noticed God was going to command the gentile world to keep this feast and I looked at our calendar and it just happened that that year our tent meeting week fell on the 7th month the 15th day of the month just like this year. I praised God and thought to myself this is our little taste of what God wants us to do and will do in His eternal kingdom. When His will, will be done on earth. In that day every one of us will celebrate the feast of tabernacles the 15th day of the 7th month. Each year in Jerusalem.

2. NOTICE GOD WILL PUNISH THOSE WHO DO NOT ATTEND AND BLESS THOSE WHO DO.

Now I want you to notice what the punishment would be for those who refused to attend these meetings.

Zechariah 14:17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

Zechariah 14:18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

There would be no rain that year for that nation. It would be a famine. This feast was a feast commemorating and thanking God for the great harvest given that year.

Deuteronomy 16:13 Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:

Deuteronomy 16:14 And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

Deuteronomy 16:15 Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.

This was a feast of rejoicing, they were to build these booths and set up a table and eat and rejoice with family and friends and celebrate the blessings of the Lord.

When the people did not come and obey the Lord than the punishment would be that God would withhold the rain for that next year. Imagine the difficulty this would cause for the nation!

We sing that old Hymn, Showers of Blessings. Do you want showers of blessings? Then assemble yourself as God told His people to. And do what did they did in that feast week.

How different would it make in the way you invited people to such a feast if you knew what was at stake as far as blessing and cursing for those who came and those who neglected to come to these meetings.

Note: By way of application you do not know what kind of blessing may come upon that person who comes to the revival meetings this year. Invite people out..

3. CONSIDER WHAT THEY DID AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

- A. They rejoiced together and had a good time of eating together and fellowship together, having refreshments. Do we not do that revival week?**
- B. They sang together and praised God together. Do we not do that?**
- C. They read the Bible publicly and explained what it meant.**

Nehemiah 8:17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

Nehemiah 8:18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

D. Notice in Nehemiah how the first time in the bible the word pulpit is used.

Nehemiah 8:3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

Nehemiah 8:4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

Let me suggest to you that these people did pretty much what we do at our revival meetings.

III. CONSIDER THE ANALOGY THAT WE COULD MAKE BY WAY OF APPLICATION TO OUR SPECIAL REVIVAL TENT MEETING WEEK WHICH IS NEXT WEEK.

We know we are not under the Jewish ceremonial law, but so important is the spiritual truth that the feast of tabernacles represents, that God is going to require the whole gentile world to obey this one week of meetings in Jerusalem. The whole world Jew and Gentile alike.

Zechariah 14:16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

WHY????

I believe it is because there are so many good spiritual truths that can be learned from the object lesson of this feast. These spiritual lessons can be applied universally for all people and nations not just the Jews.

1. THERE IS A HISTORY TO REMEMBER ABOUT THE CHILDREN OF ISREAL IN THE WILDERNESS.

We need to remember what happened to them when they murmured and complained. We should fear the Lord He has power to punish and to reward us.

If He did it to them He will do so to us. Their punishment was an object lesson for the peoples of the whole world.

2. WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL FOR THE HARVEST AND PHYSICAL BLESSINGS HE GIVES.

The actual time of the year that the feast will be celebrated will be in the fall and not the summer.. The feast was supposed to come at the end of the harvest season. The people were supposed to bring their tithes and offerings to the Lord. God is pleased when we show Him our praise and thanksgiving! Through sacrifices of giving.

3. THE TENT REMINDS US THAT TO HUMBLE OURSELVES BEFORE THE LORD.

God wanted His people to get out of their comfort zone, come out of their nice houses, and dwell in these booths for a week.

4. A TABERNACLE OR TENT IS A TEMPORARY DWELLING.

Our bodies are called a tabernacle, we are in this earthly body but for a short time. We need to use that time to serve the Lord and be faithful to Him.

Some day we will tear down this tabernacle and shed this vile body.

Remember:

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Invitation:

In the days of Nehemiah the people of God were reading their Bibles and they discovered that they should obey the feast of tabernacles, and they did. The Bible says this:

Nehemiah 8:17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

They failed to obey the Lord for about 800 years.

Look, if you come to these meetings and learn one thing from reading and learning it will be worth it all!

Nothing has changed all these thousands of years. If you want to be blessed, obey the Lord.

THE WORD CHURCH MEANS TO ASSEMBLE. WHAT GREAT ACTIVITY IS IT THAT THE CHURCH DOES BUT TO ASSEMBLE OURSELVES TOGETHER.

When the church slacks off in this great command from our blessed Lord it will bring the decline in the spiritual condition of that church. So as we see churches having less and less meetings, why are we surprised that this downward spiral leads to more and more churches going downhill?

Let's step up the pace in these end times and assemble more zealously.

Let's step up the pace and meet more regularly, don't forsake the church.

Let's step up the pace and invite people with more zeal. Make these meetings time of rejoicing.

Let's be like Nehemiah who in perilous times said to his brethren, "LET US RISE AND BUILD".

Let us be like Josiah who sent the posts out and said to the people of God, come and let us assemble ourselves together and keep the feast of the Lord.

Let us ask God for showers of blessings this year for this week of meetings.

Let us remember it matters not if we have a big crowd or a little crowd it is that we are there for the sole purpose of obeying the Lord and asking his blessing on our lives.

HE SAID HE WILL BE THERE.

THE QUESTION IS WILL YOU BE THERE SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS OR WILL YOU BE SITTING IN THE KITCHEN WITH MARTHA GETTING A GRUMBLING SPIRIT ABOUT WHY THINGS ARE NOT GOING WELL FOR YOU IN YOUR LIFE?