



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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“For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)

Vol. 24 No. 13

LORD’S DAY 29 MARCH 2020

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Morning Service – 11am

Afternoon Service – 2pm

Opening Prayer

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Responsive Reading

Psalm 53

Scriptural Text

Romans 13:1-14

Romans 14:1-12

Pastoral Prayer

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Sermon Message

Duty to Civil Authorities

Duty to Weaker Brethren

Benediction

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

Pr Mok Chee Cheong

NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please note that due to instructions from the government with regards to the ongoing Corona Virus epidemic, we will be suspending our Activities and Sunday Worship Services in the Church premises with immediate effect.

Instead we will be streaming the sermons via a video conferencing facility each Sunday.

Please email admin 'at' newlifebpc.org.uk for more information.

SHORTER CATECHISM QUESTION 4

Q: What is God?

A: God is a spirit – infinite, eternal, and unchangeable – in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Comments:

The first thing we are here told concerning God is, that he has no *body* as we have. The second thing is, that he is not limited like us by want of power, affected by time, or subject to change. And the third thing is, that in character he is wise, and holy, and just, and good, and true. This is *our* God – the greatest of all beings, and the best.

Scriptural Reference:

John 4:24, Job 11:7, Daniel 4:35, Psalm 90:2, Psalm 102:26, 27

MEMORY VERSE

Last Week

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

Matthew 6:34

This Week

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;”

Psalm 33:18

Next Week

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:28

ARE YOU WEEPING OVER OUR EMPTY CHURCHES?

Almost all churches have become empty overnight. The public worship of God has been removed across many nations. If you are kept from attending public worship, are you mourning over that as David did (Psalm 42:2-5)? Why should it cause so much distress? Worship is the highest activity we can engage in and God places special emphasis on public worship (Psalm 87:2). What is more important than the public worship of God? This is the purpose for which souls are brought out of spiritual darkness (1 Peter 2:9). The intention is not to make people feel guilty because they are prevented from attending public worship. Sometimes there are things beyond our control that stop us. The crucial question is: are we weeping over such an extraordinary and solemn removal of public worship across the face of the earth?

Some will say that they can worship privately at home and this can make up much of the loss. Connecting distantly as a spectator to an empty building is not the same as public worship. Private worship is a great privilege and benefit, it can bring us much edification. But, by definition, it is not, public worship. It is there that we most want to praise God (Psalm 22:22&25). Thus, the Westminster Confession says that God is to be worshipped “more solemnly, in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calleth thereunto” (WCF 21:6). The Lord promises a special blessing for public worship (Exodus 20:24). David greatly desired that and so should we (Psalm 27:4; 63:1-2).

What about the public glory of Christ? The public glory of Christ is vital—His glory in the Church and in society. One great means of this is public worship of God (Psalm 29:9). God is more glorified by public worship than any other worship. It is possible for us to glorify God in the secrecy of our hearts and the privacy of our homes. Surely we want God’s glory manifested publicly as well as privately? Usually this is what is meant when we read in Scripture about the glory of the Lord being revealed. We want as many people as possible to see that glory and to join in praising God together (Psalm 96:1-3; Psalm 66:1). “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Psalm 34:3).

Scripture never envisages the removal of public worship as being anything less than disastrous (read Psalm 74 for just one example). It is no light thing, it is not “just one of those things” that are unusual and regrettable but nonetheless merely “unfortunate”. Many interpreters have concluded that the beginning of gathered public worship is described in Genesis 4:26. It would be solemn to look back and identify the present moment as a time when people began not to call on the name of the Lord, because of the removal of public worship.

The book of Lamentations is for just such a time as this. It brings events into perspective. Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of everything. He pours out his heart and sorrowful prayers before the Lord. His tears flow freely, especially concerning the spiritual losses such as the destruction of the temple. “The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate” (Lamentations 1:4).

It is noticeable that he traces it back to God’s warnings through the prophets that this would take place. Thus, it is ultimately the Lord who has “cast off his altar” and sanctuary. He has “violently taken away his tabernacle...destroyed his places of the assembly” and “caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion” (Lamentations 2:6-7). The following is an updated extract from David Dickson’s exposition of that verse.

1. GOD REMOVES HIS PROTECTION

Another point of his lamentation is that God has taken away the hedge of His protection from His Church. It is as if a man would pull away his hedge from his garden and let all the beasts in. He has taken away His tabernacle, as any would pull away his hedge from his orchard. He has destroyed her places of assembly, so that they did not have a place to meet in. He has caused their solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten, that is, there is no memory left of public solemnities. The fact that God violently pulls away His tabernacle shows us that there is no place so holy that God is held to unless it is visited in a holy way. Although He said of Jerusalem, “this is the place of my rest forever,” (1 Kings 8:13 and 9:13) yet when they abused it He forsook it.

2. GOD REMOVES HIS PRESENCE

Jerusalem had this promise, yet God removed His presence because His worship was abused. How will then any place without such a promise affirm that God is held to it? There never was a place that God was more strictly held to than Jerusalem. Yet when they abused it He left it, for He is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13). Let no one think they will enjoy the Word and gospel unless they walk in the light of it. Will the Lord expose His Word and ordinances to mockery and cast His bread to those that are not hungry?

But seeing the Lord is pleased to maintain a tabernacle among us, let us not defile the place of His rest by our sins. Do not stir up our love till He pleases (Song of Solomon 2:7). Do not provoke Him to be driven away from us and go His way. For if we do, although we may be dear to Him and also as near to Him as the signet ring of His hand (Jeremiah 22:24), He will pull us off and cast us away. He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), but will do to us as to His Church in former times.

3. GOD REMOVES THE VISIBLE CHURCH

God “destroyed the places of the assembly.” This shows that the sins of professing Christians will provoke God to remove the face or outward appearance of a visible church. If we do not make better use of our meetings in the church, God will make them like filthy lavatories. There was no visible church on earth except Jerusalem, yet when it was abused by idolatry, He scattered it. Although some stones here and there were reserved for a new building, the face of a visible church was abolished. It is as great folly to say there will always be a visible church in a place, as to say that a church cannot offend God.

Judah’s solemn feasts were the equivalent of our communions. If we do not make use of our solemn meetings, frequent preaching and communions, they will go out of remembrance. The public ensigns (i.e. military flag) by which we should follow our Lord will cease to be displayed.

CONCLUSION

These are truly solemn considerations that we must take to heart. They are very applicable to our own time. It is easy for us to take public worship for granted until we have it removed. Have we treated it as we should, have we benefited from it as we ought? Have we been too glib in assuming that God would not cast off the professing Church in the west? Could it be that (as with Old Testament Israel) we have actually corrupted God’s worship to suit ourselves rather than His commands and therefore God is taking it from us?

David Dickson (c.1583–1662) *was a Professor of Theology at the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh who wrote commentaries on many different books of Scripture. He opposed the unbiblical worship and church government foisted on the Church in Scotland by Charles II and this cost him his position.* — 20 Mar, 2020

Note: The above article is taken from [Reformation Scotland](#), the website that promotes the restoration of the reformed faith. May I encourage you to access the website for various spiritually helpful and edifying articles, video and resources for your personal and family spiritual growth. — PM