

Lesson 8 | Wednesday, January 24, 2024

MIND YOUR KING, lessons from Doy Moyer's Book, Mind Your King.

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For the last lessons, we have tried to show that God has communicated to us the way He has made us to communicate with each other. We **tell** others what we want, we **show** others what we want, or we **imply** what we expect of others. In our last lesson, we addressed the question about silence and how it applies to worship, particularly with instrumental music.

Because of His Sovereign Rule, **King Jesus is Head of the church**.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. He is also the head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:15-17).

Yet what does the Bible say the church is?

1. It is not a building. c.f. "you are" (1Corinthians 12:27)
2. It is not a denomination. c.f. "Christ is not divided" (1Corinthians 1:10-13).
3. It is not a club. c.f. "through the church" (Ephesians 3:10).
4. It is not a political action group. c.f. "contending for the gospel" (Philippians 1:27-28).

The church is people.

1. **People who were saved by the blood of Christ** (Acts 20:28).
 - a. Though some argue the meaning of *ekklesia* should be derived from its etymology, ("ek" out of, "klesis" a calling), "Called out is not the primary significance of the term in Scripture. We should not confuse etymology with usage. The main idea of *ekklesia* is that of an assembly, group, or congregation.
 - b. Usage in non-religious usage, Acts 19:32,39,41.
 - c. Usage of ancient Israel, Acts 7:38.
2. **It is the whole group who have been saved**, or universally who belong to God through Christ, the universal church as it is called. Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 12:23). And in this sense, there is just one church (c.f. Ephesians 4:4, 1:23). But the subgroup of the universal church is people, not parties or groups (c.f. Romans 12:4-5).
 - a. Other figures are used to describe this group: **body** (Colossians 1:18); **household** (1Timothy 3:15); **temple** (1Corinthians 3:16); **bride** (Ephesians 5:22-23).
 - b. A modern usage of words helps us comprehend further.
 - i. When there is a flock, it is made up of sheep. The sheep are the individual parts of the whole collective noun. A *shepherd* leads the flock.
 - ii. When there is a fleet, it is made up of ships. The ships are the individual parts of the whole collective noun. An *admiral* leads the fleet.
 - iii. When the universal church is conceived, it is made up of Christians – not churches. The *head* leads the body – the church.
3. **It is the group of people who are banded together to carry out the Lord's will** where they are locally, the local church as it is called (c.f. 1Corinthians 1:2). And in this case, congregation and church are interchangeable words. And in this sense, there are many churches (c.f. Romans 16:16) but not different "organizations" of denominational loyalty (c.f. Galatians 1:2).
4. **It is the group of people when they are gathered together** (c.f. 1Corinthians 11:18; 14:19,23).

While the Lord's people have always been (c.f. Hebrews 11-12), this group of people who belong to the Messiah's new covenant (c.f. Hebrews 8:7-13) are in distinction, the New Testament church that Jesus said He would build (Matthew 16:18).

Institutionalizing "Church." What I am talking about here is the idea of making something part of an established system or restricting something to an establishment. When we do this, we think of the church as an entity all on its own comma separated from all the individuals who comprise it... Wikipedia (yes, actually) states that concept I am wanting to convey: "the term institutionalization is widely used in social theory to refer to the process of embedding something (for example a concept, a social role, a particular value or mode of behavior) within an organization social system or society as a whole." That definition describes how we might sometimes think of the church. We might embed our concepts and behavior into the system and lose sight of the individual. We are used to this kind of talk when it comes, say, to the Roman Catholic Church, where the church is taken of as an establishment separate from the people. But that problem is not just theirs consider how this happens among God's people today:

1. **Christianity becomes confined to the institution.** The church must be kept pure, we reason, and that means that the group must be kept free from error. If the church is doing things right," we think that as long as we attend the church, we are right.
2. **Work and worship is confined to the institution.** We attend worship but we may not actually engage in worship. We enjoy worship but because we like what we hear and we feel lifted up but we might not have actually praise God ourselves. We make it more about what we get out of it as an audience rather than what we are giving to God as participants.
3. **Doctrine gets institutionalized.** This is evident when we might ask what the doctrine of the Church of Christ is?... The church holds the right position on a doctrinal matter, then that's what really counts. We ask, what do we believe about this or that? It may not matter how much we know or what we believe as individuals. Rather, the answer is embedded in the institution and we'll just go to the preacher or elders or even a brotherhood magazine to learn what we are supposed to think.
4. **Salvation is institutionalized.** I would be hard pressed to come up with any better illustration... than Robert Turner's little red wagon illustration. "It seems many think of the church as something like a little red wagon. Established on Pentecost -- it stood ready to roll, and people could jump in and ride to heaven. But somewhere along the line a side-rail broke, an axle was bent, the tongue came loose, and finally a wheel fell away. Luther tried to put the wheel back on, but further bent the axle in his effort. Others replaced the tongue with a new but different instrument -- unsuited to the purpose and function of the original tongue. Alas, the church was broken down and out of service. Then, Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone determined to restore the church. They straightened the axle, replaced the tongue with an original model, repaired the side-rail and put the wheel back in place. *Now*, people could again ride home to heaven." (Plain Talk, January 1964).' (Moyer, 145-150).

Solutions:

1. **Recognize that our identity is in Christ** – and not an institution.
2. **The [local] church will never "work" if individuals do not work.** Reread Ephesians 4:11-16. If we institutionalize this, we push it off to the group to have a program – or a position to fulfill it.
3. **Remember that individuals have responsibilities that the group does not** (c.f. 1 Timothy 5, especially 16).
4. **However, God still wants us to assemble together for the edification it brings us** (Hebrews 10:24-25).