**The Blessing of the Assembly**

**Introduction**

1. The church was a part of God’s eternal plan, as well as all the activity assigned to it. This includes the regular assembly of the saints.
2. Forsaking this assembly is an age-old problem – **Hebrews 10:25** – not simply shirking responsibility but shooting themselves in the foot – WE NEED THE ASSEMBLY.
3. While the question of whether we need to, or why we need to be at each assembly of the saints needs to be answered, **perhaps we should ask why such a blessing from God is viewed with such reluctance.**
4. The Psalmist showed that the assembly was an immense blessing that anyone in their right spiritual mind would yearn to take part in – **Psalm 42:1-5** – at a time when he was separated from the assembly, the Psalmist intensely craved it. It was a primary and irreplaceable part of his life.
5. **It is proper to view the assembly as a part of our Christian duty, but it is imperative that we understand it as an immense and indispensable blessing of God.**
6. Preserves a God-Centered Perspective
7. The Universe is Theocentric
	1. The book of Revelation commences its major theme of victory in Jesus with a symbolic scene of the throne room of God. It would provide great assurance to saints persecuted by a government bent on destroying them. God is in control.
		1. The scene stands to give us perspective on the entire universe, including our purpose and place.
		2. God is at the center, and worthy of all attention, glory and praise.
	2. **The throne scene is vivid, depicting concentric circles of beings worshiping God at the center:**
		1. **God (center)** – **Revelation 4:2-3, 5** – holy, righteous, just.
			1. **Four Living Creatures** – **Revelation 4:6-8** – do not rest worshiping God.
			2. **Twenty-four Elders** – **Revelation 4:4, 9-11** – perhaps representative of all the redeemed; 12 patriarchs (Old Testament); 12 apostles (New Testament)
		2. **The Slain Lamb (center)** – **Revelation 5:6-7** – Lion of the tribe of Judah **(v. 5),** able to open the scroll (representing God’s eternal plan of redemption).
			1. **Four Living Creatures, Twenty-four Elders** – **Revelation 5:8-10** – worship the Lamb.
			2. **Innumerable Number of Angels** – **Revelation 5:11-12** – worship the Lamb.
			3. **Every Creature** – **Revelation 5:13-14** – worship God and the Lamb.
		3. **Their worship –** Praise ascribed: God’s holiness, infinite power, eternal nature, glory, honor, creation, sacrifice/blood, redemption, blessings on those redeemed, etc.
	3. **The most fundamentally supreme, virtuous, and fulfilling activity that anyone can ever engage in is the worship of the Creator of the universe, Redeemer of mankind, and Revealer of Divine truth.**
8. The Worship Assembly Exemplifies This, and Keeps Us Properly Oriented
	1. **Any purposeful assembly of people indicates something or someone which is greater than the people, and acting as a force which brings them together.**
		1. Whether it be an idea, entertainment, a service, etc.
		2. *EX: Sports stadium* – joyful, hopeful, excited loyalty to a team brings together thousands who do not know each other, yet participate together in hoisting the same banner, and cheering for the same team.
	2. **Consider the Lord’s Supper** – **Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:26** – consistently gather for an express purpose, united public proclamation of the overwhelming grace of God for which He is worthy of all praise.
	3. **Consider the Singing** – **Colossians 3:16** – united focus on praise and adoration of God with the adjoining exhortation to full devotion to His will.
	4. Same for the:
		1. **Preaching** – all sit in reverent silence and let God speak His will to them with focused intentionality to enact it in their lives.
		2. **Praying** – all assent to petitions, praise, and adoration offered to the One who knows their every need and can fulfill them.
		3. **Giving** – all give liberally from their hearts knowing it was God who blessed them and showing their desire for His will to be carried out as a priority over theirs.
	5. **The assembly properly shapes our perspective in a world which seeks to warp it – Psalm 73**
		1. *The disorientation* – **(vv. 1-3)** – do the selfish ungodly have it right?
		2. *The doubt* – **(vv. 13-14)** – is my faithfulness to God in vain?
		3. *The place of correction, and renewed perspective* – **(vv. 15-17)** – when I came to worship God I regained focus of reality.
		4. *The renewal of a theocentric perspective of life* – **(vv. 25-26, 28)** – God is my everything.
9. Fills the Need for Fellowship
10. Man is Created in God’s Image
	1. Those who think they can have a relationship with God by living a primarily individualistic life separated from the church are mistaken on the fundamental basis of God’s nature, and the likeness with which he made man.
	2. God made man in His image – **Genesis 1:26**
		1. They are spiritual beings with a physical body – **Ecclesiastes 12:7; John 4:24** – as God is spirit.
		2. Plurality is also involved – ***“Us…Our…Our likeness”*** – **Genesis 1:27** – ***“male and female He created them”***
		3. Made for relationship, fellowship – **Genesis 2:18**
	3. The very nature of God is inseparable from the concept of relationship, and fellowship – **Acts 17:29** – ***“the Divine Nature”*** – only 3 of which possess it – **cf. 2 Corinthians 13:14** (distinct, but all God – the Divine nature) – united in their nature.
		1. United, and jointly participant in truth and scheme – **John 16:12-15**
		2. Believers called to the same “oneness” – **John 17:20-21**
11. The Worship Assembly is the Central Place for Fellowship
	1. The newly established church immediately engaged in fellowship – **Acts 2:42** – context of worship, and truth.
	2. They were regularly assembling to participate in the newly received blessings of the Messianic kingdom – **Acts 2:46; Hebrews 10:19-25** – this was a newly felt boldness to approach God and do so jointly with others.
	3. They were united in mind, purpose, and love – **Acts 4:32**
	4. With one accord they gathered regularly to hear God’s word, and have it confirmed – **Acts 5:12**
	5. They went in and out together – **Acts 9:28** – involved in the regular activities of the church.
	6. When the church in Antioch was established, Barnabas and Saul were there to strengthen them – **Acts 11:25-26** – what they did was assemble regularly with the church.
	7. When James was killed, and Peter left in prison, the church assembled to pray together – **Acts 12:5**
	8. Joint participation of community, family, kingdom citizens – **Colossians 2:2, 19; Romans 12:4-5**
	9. Coming together as a church is of paramount importance – **cf. 1 Corinthians 11:17-19, 33**
12. Affords Accountability
13. We Need Accountability
	1. When accountability is lacking, self-will can take over – **Judges 2:10-12; 21:25** – they did what they wanted.
	2. The people avoided accountability with false prophets – **Jeremiah 5:30-31; 6:14-17** – God provides accountability through proclamation of His word.
14. There is Accountability in the Worship Assembly
	1. Acceptable worship requires holiness – **Psalm 96:7-9** – the very concept of approaching our Holy God to worship Him naturally produces a kind of accountability (**cf. Matthew 5:23-24**).
	2. Warning and exhortation – **Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:24-25**
		1. Exhort – “to admonish, exhort, to urge one to pursue some course of conduct” (VINE)
	3. Exhortation, warning, comfort, support – **1 Thessalonians 5:14-15**
	4. Teaching, and exposing evil/error, enjoining the good on others – **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22**
	5. Teaching and admonishing through song – **Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16**
	6. Listening to and participating in the grace of God brings us accountability – **Titus 2:11-15**
15. Facilitates Faithfulness
16. **All the faithful worship faithfully, but none who neglect worship remain faithful.**
	1. ***“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).***
17. Faithfulness and Faithful Worship with Brethren are Inseparable
	1. Part of God’s design in the assembly is for the stirring up of faithfulness through exhortation – **Hebrews 10:24-25**
		1. Assembly is an action of consideration of others – **cf. Philippians 2:1-4** – based on the blessings I enjoy in Christ that I know are given to all my brethren, I show interest in their spiritual well-being.
		2. I assemble to encourage others, and as they do the same I myself am encouraged.
		3. There is a reason the Psalmist craved the assembly – **Psalm 42:4** – we need the encouragement provided by each other in the assembly.
	2. The assembly promotes growth – **Ephesians 4:11-16** – the design itself includes mutual participation.
		1. These “gifts” of verse 11 are FOR equipping the saints UNTO work, UNTO edification of the body.
		2. **I.e. when I assemble and receive teaching from God’s word, I am made ready to do His work myself that then builds up the rest of the body.**
		3. IN this process we reach maturity and are able to fend off evil doctrines.
		4. **(vv. 17-24)** – this edification through the assembly teaches me how NOT to live, and what Christ demands of me as His follower.
	3. The communal focus on God and all His wonderful attributes, promises, and blessings calls us to faithfulness – **Psalm 95** – God-centered worship, meditation on who He is, exhortation to faithfulness.

**Conclusion –** The Lord has blessed us with many things and let us not forget that the assembly is one of them. We are in desperate need of regular worship with God’s people.