



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 16:18

"The Nature of the Church"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] He said he loved the church and gave himself for it, so it was an important aspect of the intent that he had when he suffered in his atoning work. And the Apostle Paul, whom we are called to imitate, considered the church of great importance, for he suffered many things for it, and considered his greatest sin to be the persecution of members of the church.

We have had a great emphasis on the local church in the last generation, perhaps the last twenty years. Many books have been written on the church. Generally speaking, they are written on the life of the local church, its fellowship, the things we can do to get more members on our membership roles and things like that. The scriptural doctrine of the church has not come in for any great amount of emphasis.

Now, being very biased in my own view, standing with the apostle, seriously being biased in my view in the sense that I have a certain position, and I think it is scriptural, I think I understand why doctrine is neglected. The doctrine of the New Testament concerning the church does not really support the kind of views of the local church that predominate in our Christian churches, for the most part. Therefore, the doctrinal side is omitted.

Now, at the same time, with the great stress on the church we have had a, I think, an indication that the state of the church is not really very healthy. There is a great deal of activity in our churches, but the activity is not always healthy activity. There is, I think, a great deal of superficiality, a lot of shallowness, and it is permitted to continue partially because of inadequate views of the local church. So is it possible, I have asked, that the clanking of Ecclesiasticism of our day represents a great deterrent to the completion of the task of the one body of evangelization in accordance with the will of God. I think it is possible that they did so.

The schedule of the class topics you can see on the bottom of page one and page two of the introductory materials. There will be nine lectures, the first tonight on the nature of the church and we will close with one on the future of the church. The course requirements I hope are very plain. For those of you who are taking the course for credit, there will be a reading assignment of three hundred and fifty pages from the following works. And by these works are in the church office, and they may be taken out on a reserve basis. We are keeping them on reserve because we do not have extra copies. Some of them are out of print. And I would like, if I may, to request that only those who are taking the course for credit go to Mrs. Ray and seek to obtain these books. You may see her for reserving the books for this reading assignment. After you have done your reading I would like for you to write a brief critique of the reading. That critique should be around two thousand words, which means that it should be about eight pages double spaced, type written. And it should be written and handed in to me at the last class hour of the course. In the critique I am interested not only in the things that are good about these books, I am interested also in the things that you find that are not. Be critical, and in being critical don't be general. Don't say, "This was a bad book. I didn't like it. It made me mad." [Laughter] "It's a good book. I liked it. It made feel really good." Or something like that. If you said you didn't like the book, tell me why specifically you didn't like it. "I didn't like the book. I think it is wrong for these reasons, one, two,

three." And also, point out in your critique where the author makes the statement that you think is unscriptural or wrong. So be specific in your critique.

Now, if you would like to do something a little more "creative" then I suggest that you submit a paper of approximately fifteen hundred words, that's about six pages type-written, on one of the following topics as credit for the course. First, the church meeting according to the New Testament, what does the New Testament say about the local church meeting? What kind of meeting should it be? What should go on in the meeting of the church? Second, the ministry of the word in the local church according to the New Testament, who ministers the word in the local church according to the New Testament? How should it be carried on, and so on, or the pastor-teacher according to the New Testament? First of all, is there such a thing as a pastor-teacher, if so who is he? What does he do? If there is such a thing as a pastor-teacher is he to be the one man who ministers the word in the church? Does he have organizational authority in the church? Is he a kind of president of the corporation? Should all things ultimately find their head in him? Is he really the head of the church, the pastor-teacher according to the New Testament?

Now, of course, I know the conviction to which you will come if you study the New Testament, but I assure you there are lots of opinions about this. And if you are interested in doing something like that, I think it would be especially rewarding. Now, please remember if you do take the course for credit, you should see Mrs. Ray about taking the books out. And I would also appreciate it if, again I repeat this, if you're not taking the course for credit let those books be the province of those who are taking the course.

Now, let's turn to our outline for our subject for tonight, because we do have a great deal of material to cover. Some of it I will not attempt to cover, but will just mention when we come to it. But I want you to read it and ponder it. It will not be part of what I want to say. So if you have now lesson number one. At the top of the page it

says "The Nature of the Church." There are four pages, one, two, three, four. And this is lecture number.

From the divine view point to the period may be called the age of the Father. Incidentally, when I say this I don't mean the Son was not active in the Old Testament or that the Spirit was not active in the Old Testament, but simply that the emphasis rests on the activity of the Father in the Old Testament. Then when we come to the period of the gospels, the stress rests upon the second person of the trinity. And finally, in the Acts of the Apostles through the Epistles we have great stress upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now, from the human view point, we live in the age of the church. Looking at it from the divine view point we can see the activity of the trinity through the ages with prominence on Father, Son, and Spirit. But from our standpoint we live in the age of the church. The Lord Jesus said "Upon this rock, Peter," the confession, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God, I will build my church." One of the simplest things that the New Testament teaches is that as you read the Book of Acts and the Epistles, that's what they apostles were doing. They were building the church. Or to put it from the divine standpoint, the Lord Jesus was building his church through his apostles and the disciples. So we live in the age of the church. That age has continued.

Now, we shall be concerned primarily with the local church, about which the New Testament is, in my opinion, remarkably clear, but over which there is great confusion as well as great neglect. Now, of course, you might say to me, as many do, the doctrine of the church is not quite clear to me, and after all do not the Presbyterians have one idea concerning the church. They believe in Presbyterian government. Do not the Baptists have another form of church government, they believe in congregational church government. And do not the Episcopalians and the Methodists have a still different form of government, they believe in an Episcopalian form of government, government by a house of bishops. And in the case of the Episcopalian church their arch bishop is a direct descendant of the Apostle Peter. They believe in apostolic succession. So Dr. Johnson,

how can you possibly say that the New Testament is remarkably clear? Well, I still claim it is remarkably clear, and I think that you will discover in the case of some of these historical types of church polity there is an admission by those who practice them that they do not practice the New Testament form of government, but seek to justify a transformation of the New Testament form of government to suit them.

Now, if you were looking in the New Testament for a form of teaching that would strip this subject of all mystery, all necessity of study, then of course you won't find it. It's not here. There is, in my opinion, no doctrine that is so plain in the Bible that there cannot be question about it. And in the case of the doctrine of the church it is not so clear that there is no possibility of argument over it. But the want of definiteness is an essential element in the divine scheme of training. Why does God write his book as he does? Sixty-six books written by many different people, some of them epistle, some of them prophecies, some of them apocalypses, others books of narration, why did he do it this way? Why did he not write a systematic theology? All questions settled all you'd have to do is look at page nine hundred and seven, section three, paragraph one, line eight hundred and four. It would be like a bit of canon law. Well, one of the reasons for this is obviously the very study of Scripture is designed to let us know and let you know how much you really want to know God's word. So we search the Scriptures.

There is a statement which was made by a man who wrote a book on Ecclesiology. He didn't really agree altogether with the form of doctrine of the church that I support, but he made a statement which I think is very true. This is what he said. "But shall we not have to concede that the polity, which was actually instituted, is not as sharply defined as we must think it would have been had it been meant for a precise and final pattern. We answer; this depends upon the divine purpose in the revelation given. If God intended to strip the subject of all mystery, so as to save us any study or questioning about the matter, we say, yes we must concede. But if he intended study, not merely of the word, but of history and the philosophy of history to be a means of grace, if

he intended we should comprehend church polities in their relation to human minds and to the dissemination and preservation of great fundamental truth, if he meant that we should sense the force of systems as well as work them, we reply, no the very want of definiteness or clearness may be an essential element in the divine scheme of training.

All that can be said on this score can be alleged with equal force on the subject of justification by faith, regeneration by the Spirit, or the atonement itself. Indeed the very character of Christ has drawn forth many fold more controversies than has the subject of church organization or government. The reason I cite that statement is because there are people who say, "The New Testament does not give us any church polity. We can conduct the affairs of the local church as we please. We have freedom in this." But when we look at the New Testament that is not really what we see. It is not true that we have this freedom that we are supposed to have, but if we mean, and I don't mean this, if we mean that is so clear you don't have to study at all, you don't have to ponder what did the New Testament mean with regard to the pastor-teacher, with reference to the local church, with reference to gifts, with reference to what goes on in the church meeting, if you didn't have to do all this, well then, of course, the New Testament is not like that. But then these who say the Bible is not clear on the church, therefore we have freedom to conduct our affairs in the church as we please, overlook the fact, as Mr. Fish pointed out, that there is difference of opinion over justification. There is difference of opinion over regeneration. There is difference of opinion over almost all of the great doctrines of the church.

I'll give you an illustration. Is salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ, and are the benefits of his death received by faith and by faith alone? Every one in this room would probably say, "Yes." But if you were to make that same statement in the presence of other professing Christians, let's just say the Roman Catholics, what would the answer be? No. It comes to us through the sacramental system of baptism and so forth. Make that statement in the presence of the members of the Church of Christ, they would

say, "No, in order to be saved we must repent, confess, believe, and be baptized." So if you think I'm saying to you the New Testament is so clear that there can be no discussion about the question, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that if you study it. If we really go to it and study it, we will find that the New Testament is remarkably clear in its main outlines concerning its church government principles. And I think if you would do that, all of you be confirmed in the conviction of the major truths that are practiced right here in Believers Chapel, not everything. We hope everything, but it's probably not true.

One of the interesting things you may have discovered if you have read systematic theologies is that most of the systematic theologies do not have sections on the doctrine of the local church. That's very interesting. Take Hodge's theology, Charles Hodge does not have any section on the local church. Take Berkoff, he doesn't have any section on the local church, to speak of. Or take Shedd, he doesn't have any section on the local church. It's remarkable how this particular subject has been neglected. And in the Presbyterian Theologies, and probably they have more good ones than any other, in only two, Thornwell and Breckenridge is there any treatment of the doctrine of the local church. That's very interesting. Now, Charles Hodge, I think intended to write a book on Ecclesiology but never got around to do it. We'll excuse him a little bit from that stand point. But in his theology he didn't have it.

Now, we've already referred to the importance of the subject, but let me say these further things. First of all, it is very difficult to distinguish between theological importance and scriptural importance, but I think it can be done. And I want to say simply this, that there is, I think, some reason for us saying that the doctrine of the church is theologically important. How many visible institutions did the apostles establish? How many did they establish? Did the apostles establish the Believers Bible Institute at the Church at Berea or the Church at Corinth? Did the apostles establish a theological seminary? Did the apostles establish the 1st century Campus Crusade for Christ? Did the apostles establish an Intersarsity Christian Fellowship? Did the apostles establish the West Indies mission? Did

the apostles establish the Cretan mission? Mission to the Isle of Cyprus? Did the apostles establish, well you can name the many Christian organizations that we have established apart from connection with the local church. They do not abide under any discipline from a local church. They are institutions that exist autonomously. Did the apostles establish any other institution than the local church? I don't know of any one. I cannot think of any other institution but the local church that the apostles established. And the apostles said, "Be imitators of me."

Does the purpose of the church demand order and structure? Well, notice what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians chapter 3, and verse 10. He makes a rather amazing statement about the reason for the existence of the local church. He says, "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. Isn't that interesting? Do you know that God is, through the church, making known his manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers? What does that mean? Why, that means that God has as one of his purposes in the present day, the informing of the angelic hosts of facts that concern his manifold wisdom. And what is the means by which he's doing this? The church, the church; look at it. "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places." Isn't that interesting? Now, that demands, in my opinion, order and structure. Chaos cannot exist in the local church, and through the chaotic condition God's manifold wisdom be seen.

You know, I really think that this doctrine of church order impinges on the questions of the sufficiency of Scripture. I have a lot of friends with which I debate these questions. And I've only debated them for thirty years. And they know a lot of my arguments and I know a lot of their arguments, and I think mine are better, [Laughter] of course. When we get to heaven, we will find out whose are really better. But you know, if you really believed that the Bible is sufficient for the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Eschatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but when it comes to

the organization of the local church you can just be perfectly free to have any kind of organization and government you like, does not that raise the question of the sufficiency of Scripture? I think it does. It seems to me that if the Bible is sufficient for our individual life and for our collective life, that we may therefore expect it to be sufficient for our church life. And I think it is. I think the things that we are to do in the local church are things that are set forth for us in holy Scripture. The principles that are found here are principles that we should follow in our churches.

I don't know whether you've had a chance to read *Time Magazine* for this week or not, but there is another article on this subject that is plaguing the Christian church in this country, homosexuality and the clergy. And in the Presbyterian church in the north, the article is about that particular church, The United Presbyterian Church, which the author of this article says is anything but united. The question is now a question between the conservatives and the liberals, and the conservatives are saying "Let's follow the Bible, the Bible is clear." The liberals are saying, "No, we don't have to follow the Bible." Why don't we have to follow the Bible? Well, listen to this.

"Like many modern Bible scholars, the liberal majority decided that these verses having to do with homosexuality in the Bible, so plainly expressing God's abomination of it, decided that these verses merely express the opinion of the Jewish priestly writers and Paul who were 'conditioned by time and place.'" In other words, the things that the writers of Scripture say are conditioned by time and place. Why, do you know that if we really followed that principle, and don't think it is not found in our conservative seminaries, there are those who interpret the Bible culturally, conditioning its message by time and place in our conservative institutions. Do you know that if that really were a biblical principle, that the writers of the Bible were men who taught things that were conditioned by time and place, the atoning work of the Lord Jesus could not be preached as we preach it? What simpler thing to say than the idea of a blood sacrifice was a cultural thing? They all performed blood sacrifices. It was cultural; we don't have to

believe that Jesus Christ offered a blood sacrifice. Those men were conditioned by time and place. So in spite of the fact that the Bible plainly says that, we've moved away from it. It's all conditioned by time and space. When we come to the doctrine of the church, do we say the same thing, that the principles found in the Bible are principles that were conditioned by time and place? No. I like what the conservative said, "Since the Bible is so explicit, they wonder if the church will have biblical basis for imposing any restrictions on human behavior if it votes moral acceptance of active homosexuality." We wouldn't have any basis for any biblical doctrine if we assumed that the Bible is not clear in matters of the local church. But what they said was conditioned by time and place.

Scripturally, the doctrine of church order is important, because the apostolic references to the local church and the things that they say about the local church are often given in imperative form. Now, please don't take that too literally. I don't mean by that you will find imperatives. Well, there are imperatives addressed to local churches in the Book of Revelation in our Lord's messages to the churches. He says, "Repent and various things like this." What I mean by this is necessity is laid upon the local church in many of its activities. For example, the Apostle Paul, when he finishes his instructions in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 concerning the local church and the church meeting, incidentally, at the conclusion of that rather lengthy chapter he says, "But let all things," well verse 37, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment." They are not optional. They are the Lord's commandment. And then in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and 2 and 3 gives us instructions concerning life in the local church. He says, "I write these things in order that ye may know how you ought to behave. How it is necessary for you to behave in the church of the living God." So the things that are set forth in the New Testament are not optional things. They are set forth in the context of necessity. The principles are obligatory. The practical importance of the church order is, I think, seen when we reflect upon the fact that order is necessary for ease of function.

Now, I know that in Believers Chapel we don't always do things too well. We stumble around and fall onto our faces a lot, particularly the elders. We don't try to, but we do fail. We are human beings. But we all know that if we are to have an effective, enjoyable kind of meeting of the local church and a united and effective ministry to the people outside of our local fellowship, there must be order. There must be a sense of structure. There must be a sense of a goal. There must be a sense of the means to the goal. We must know these things. There must be order and ease of function. And the simple New Testament order is beautifully effective, because it's not culturally or historically conditioned. It is broad enough to encompass different cultures, and yet at the same time it is specific enough to keep us from chaos. I think it is most suitable for universal application.

One of the things about the simplicity of the church order taught in the Bible is that it is workable in the United States. It is workable in Europe. It is workable in Africa. It is workable in South America. It is workable every where. It would not be workable to have the forms of church government that do exist today in certain parts of the world. Even those who practice those forms admit it. But the simplicity of the church order of the New Testament is beautifully workable. It has upon its face the imprint of universality. And I think the reason is because it is biblical.

Let me turn now to the definition of the term church, the biblical usage of the term. The English word church, you probably know this, comes through the Scottish word Kirk, and the German word kirche. Ultimately from kyriakos, the Greek word that means to "belonging to the Lord." What is the church? Why, it is a group of people who belong to the Lord. It's perfectly all right to call Believers Chapel a church. Some of my friends can't say the word church. When they want to say the word church, the word assembly comes out. "Let's go out to the ch-- assembly." [Laughter] That's because the word ecclesia means "a called out group" and assembly has come to be the only term that can refer to the church. But it is all right to call the church a church. Because the word

essentially means "belonging to the Lord," and that's what the members of the church do. They belong to the Lord.

The Greek word *ecclesia*, I say, is derived from eck plus chaleo which means eck means "out" chaleo mean "to call." So the church is literally a called out group. Now, I'm not going to say too much about some of the details here. I want you to read through them for yourself. I want you to notice this, there seems to be no clear proof that the New Testament writers were building upon an Old Testament concept. Now, I confess that's a little strange. I would expect that that were true. I refer some of you theological students to a book by, I think it's, J.Y. Campbell on the doctrine of the church or on the church, in which he has engaged in some extensive study of this question. And I also suggest that you look up the article in *Kittle's Theological Word Book*. You will find that there is fairly general agreement among the men that I have quoted, that the New Testament term church is not built specifically on an Old Testament expression. The word simply meant "an assembly." And in the New Testament, the following uses of the term are found. In the singular it denotes the single local church in some geographical locality. We can talk of the church of the Thessalonians, and we would mean the local church in Thessalonica.

It also, in Acts chapter 9, verse 31, denotes a group of churches without any denominational idea, for example, the church in Judea. We could say, by the way, the church in Dallas, if there were just one church here, the church in Dallas. That would be a biblical expression. Or we could say the church in Texas, and we would mean by that the body of the church is looked at as a collective group or as a whole group. That would be scriptural too. That usage is found in Acts chapter 9, verse 31, the collective sense.

Then in the singular it refers thirdly to the one universal body of Christ, whether or on the earth or on earth and in heaven. That is, I think, the sense of Matthew 16:18, "On this rock I will build my church." He does not mean one specific local church. He

doesn't mean simply the universal church in heaven. But he means the one universal body whether on earth or in heaven, looked at as one great body of believers. Some on the church at the present time, some now in heaven that used to be on the church, third sense.

In the plural, it denotes the sum of individual local churches, whether in a named region, no definite region, or neither. In other words, we can speak about the churches and use it in the sense of the sum of individual local churches. We could say the churches in Texas that particular usage is found also in the New Testament.

Now, I want you to notice the paragraph in which I say there are several current uses which are not found in Scripture. First of all, the word is never used for a church building. In other words, when you drive down the street and you look up and saw, "There is the Preston Holler Presbyterian Church" that is an unscriptural sense of the term. It's never used for a building. As a matter of fact, we have no record so far as I know, Bishop Lightfoot said this, and he was one of the great New Testament historical scholars of his day. Bishop Lightfoot said that we have no record of any building being used as a church building until the 3rd century. So for hundreds of years, no building was set aside for the meeting of a church. We don't have to have a building to have a church. I guess Believers Chapel had its historical origins, ultimately, in some meetings in homes. It was a church then if they had practiced all of the ordinances. We didn't at that time, but we did practice the Lord's Supper for a while. That was just a small time. So the word is never used for a church building.

Second, the word is never used for a denomination. In this article that I read for you this controversy is said to be taking place in the United Presbyterian Church. Now, we do not have in the Bible the term church ever used for a denomination; the Baptist church, the Presbyterian church, the Episcopalian church, the church whatever it may. The denominational sense is not found in the Bible. That is why, so far as I'm concerned, when a person unites with a particular denomination he really has something to explain.

That sense is not found in Scripture. That sense suggests there is a division in the body of Christ, and that of course is why the Bible never uses that sense. So it is never used for a denomination.

Third, it is never used of a state church or of a national church like the Church of England. That sense is not found. The Church of Scotland, that sense is not found. The idea of a national church is not found in Scripture.

And fourth, the word is never used of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. We'll say more about this later, so we'll just pass that by at the moment.

The Hebrew word *kahal*, now I have some material concerning the Hebrew word *kahal*, but essentially what we are saying about this is again that there seems to be no clear identification of the term church with the Old Testament terminology. The term church takes on a new flavor, because of its relation to the Lord Jesus in his saving work. In the New Testament the Lord Jesus says, "On this rock, I will build my church." Now, the fact that he puts that in the future would seem to suggest that the church is not in existence at the time that he said that. And therefore, that the church is not expected to be built upon an Old Testament concept. That seems to be the sense that one derives from the study of the Hebrew word *kahal*, or the Hebrew word for an assembly, and of the translation of those words in the Old Testament Greek version.

Capital B, the dual aspect of the church. Now, we can note these things. They've already been alluded to, but I want to note them here. The church refers then to first, a local church. And then it refers to a universal church. Now, when we say the term church refers to a local church, such as the use in the singular, what do we mean? What is the definition of a local church? Let me just give you a brief definition, kind of one the spur of the moment. I've given this a lot of times. It's not that I'm making it up right now, but it may not be exactly accurate on every point. But the local church is a group of professing believers, that's the first point, professing believers. Second, who meet regularly in one locality. Third, under the oversight of elders. Fourthly, with deacons and

gifted men. Fifth, observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. And sixth, continuing in the apostles' doctrine. Isn't that simple? That's the local church, a group of professing believers who meet regularly in one locality under the oversight of elders, with deacons and gifted men, observing the ordinances and continuing in the apostles' doctrine. That's a local church, whether they meet in a house or a building is non-essential.

By the way, the early founders of the United States of America had a lot more understanding of biblical doctrine than we did on this point. Do you know what they called their churches? You can go in New England right now and see them, meeting houses. That's what they called them, the meeting house; it was the place where the church met. Now, the church of Christ is accurate in its terminology. If you look at them they'll have Preston Road Church of Christ, and maybe underneath, I'm not sure this is true of that particular church, but they will say, "The church of Christ meets here." That's scriptural. The church is a body of believers. When you pass Believers Chapel you don't say, "That's the church, Believers Chapel." No, it's not. Believers Chapel is scattered all over Dallas. That's Believers Chapel. And on Sunday they meet here, but the church is a group of people.

What about the universal church? Occasionally it's said that the local church is the visible church and the universal church is the invisible church. The New Testament however, never speaks of the invisible. I think it uses the church in the sense of the universal church, but the invisible idea of the church is not really stressed in the New Testament. There is a local church and there is the universal church composed of all the believers whether they're on earth or in heaven. Vance Abner used to say, "I believe in the invisible church, but I don't believe in that invisible church which is invisible on the first day of the week when the visible church ought to be meeting." Or something like that. Sometimes it's said, "The local church is the organization while the universal church is the organism." But should not the local church be an organism and not simply an

organization, why of course. We are bound together in a bundle of life and we are all in the body. And incidentally my Christian friends, because we are born into the body of Christ and we are brothers and we are sisters in the body of Christ, our closest relatives are our Christian friends, not our blood relatives, but our relatives in the Spirit, so that our brother and our sister are the members of the body of Christ. Isn't it striking how the New Testament throws light on true life? The Lord Jesus, remember, was told, your mother and your brethren are outside. Who are my mother and my brethren? Those that do the will of God, they are.

Well, the resultant definition of the church then, looking at it in the light of what I've said above is, the church is God's convened assembly having both a local and universal manifestation. And of course, if we define the local church, we'll define it as we did.

Now, what I would like for you to do if you will is to take a look at II, and III and I have put here the function of the church toward the world, toward the nation Israel, toward itself, toward the angels, toward God, and given you a little clue about what is the ministry of the church toward these entities. What I would like for you to do is some study on your own and look up those passages and see if that outline is justified. And finally, III, does not have a great deal of importance. It is an interesting thing that there are a number of figures of the church in its relation to Christ. There is a rich symbolism in the New Testament. You know about it. You hear the church called the body, life in the body, body life, and things like this, that's a representation of the fact that the church is spoken of under the figure of a body. The key point in all of these figures that I have listed here, I am not sure that all of them are included, but the seven that I have mentioned, the key point is the fact that there is a union of sorts between our Lord and the church. And that is stressed by these great figures which give us aspects of our Lord's ministry and aspects of our response to it. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for all that the Bible says concerning the local church. Enable us, Lord, to understand and enable us to see what the Scriptures do teach concerning our local manifestation. Help us, Lord, to understand, and then Lord give us...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]