

Bible Basics Conference 2024

**Introduction  
and  
The Assembly's Beginning**

**Mark Grasso**

# Origin in counsel

- God's will concerning the earth and all creation: to head up all things in Christ
- To take place in the millennium – but was always God's counsel, even before the earth was created

# Origin in counsel

- Also before the world's foundation:
    - Every Christian believer was chosen by God for blessing
    - God determined that believers in this dispensation:
      - would be a special, separate company – the assembly
      - will share Christ's inheritance – i.e. will reign with Him
  - When the Lord appears, the assembly will appear with Him, and will be linked with Him – even His 'fullness'
- (Eph. 1:3-11, 23; 3:3-10; Col. 1:25-27)

# The assembly now

- Destiny of assembly characterises it now
- E.g.
  - We are already linked with Christ, our Head (Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18)
  - We do not seek an earthly inheritance – we have a better, heavenly inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3-4)
  - We look forward to being with the Lord in heaven (1 Thess. 4:16-18)
  - As we consider Him in heaven, we are transformed to be like Him (morally) as He is now (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 4:17) – just as we will soon be like Him bodily (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:29)

# The assembly now

- Assembly already has great privileges
- Bible gives guidance and help to enjoy those privileges
- Subject of conference is the assembly, on earth, while we await the Lord's return, using Acts as framework

# Announcement

- God's counsels concerning Christ and the assembly: a 'mystery' (i.e. not revealed) in Old Testament times (Eph. 1:9; 3:3-5; 5:32; Col. 1:27)
- In Old Testament, God had a people who were especially His own and whom He separated from other nations: i.e. Israel (e.g. Lev. 20:24)
- God wanted them to be a special possession for Himself (e.g. Ex. 19:5-6)
- Sadly, Israel was disobedient, and as a result God did not receive what He wanted from them

# Announcement

- Much of the Lord's oral ministry concerned Israel – although many principles applicable to believers today
- But in Matthew 16:18, Lord spoke about something new and distinct:

*'I will build my assembly'*

# Announcement

- Key parts of Matthew 16:18:
  - 'I' – Lord Himself, and Lord alone, will establish it
  - 'will' – future
  - 'build' – something new (not 'continue what already exists')
  - 'my' – belongs peculiarly to the Lord Jesus Christ
  - 'assembly':
    - again, something new (not 'Israel' – neither literally nor 'spiritually')
    - *ekklesia* – a called out or separated company of people, composed of every believer in this dispensation, made into one body (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:14-16)



# Beginning

<b>Adam</b>	
Initially alone (Gen. 2:18)	
This was not good for him – God realised he needed a companion who was like him	
Adam sleeping (a figure of death) necessary for Eve to be built (v. 21-22)	
Eve was formed out of Adam, and hence like him (v. 23)	

# Beginning

<b>Adam</b>	<b>Lord Jesus</b>
Initially alone (Gen. 2:18)	On coming into manhood, was alone (John 12:24)
This was not good for him – God realised he needed a companion who was like him	Speaking reverently, also true for the Lord
Adam sleeping (a figure of death) necessary for Eve to be built (v. 21-22)	Only after Lord's death would there be fruit (John 12:24)
Eve was formed out of Adam, and hence like him (v. 23)	After Christ voluntarily delivered Himself up, assembly became His body (Eph. 5:25-30)

# Beginning

- In summary, the Lord's death is the foundation
- But the Lord could not be linked to every member of the assembly if He remained on earth – hence, He also had to ascend to heaven
- Assembly is connected with the Lord risen and ascended
- Examples:
  - Leviticus 23 links feast of first-fruits (Lord's resurrection) with feast of weeks (day of Pentecost)
  - Assembly formed on first day of week – day of His resurrection (Acts 2:1); and this remains key day of week for assembly (Acts 20:7)
  - Assembly formed when the Lord in heaven sent power from on high – i.e. the Holy Spirit (John 7:39; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:2-4, 33) <sub>11</sub>

# Beginning

- Assembly is inherently heavenly
  - In origin, calling and destiny (e.g. Phil. 3:20)
- When formed, it was literally a single company
  - Still true today (1 Cor. 12:13)
- When formed, it was literally a called-out company (Acts 2:1-4)
  - Remained literally true for a time (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:32)
  - Will be literally true at rapture
  - Now?
    - Remains true in principle (John 17:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4)
    - Should be true in practice
- Note practical manifestations of these things (e.g. Acts 2:44-46)

# Beginning

- Assembly's purposes while it remains on earth:
  - To be a people separated to God, having been purchased by Him for His special possession (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 2:9; Acts 15:14)
  - To praise God (1 Pet. 2:5)
  - To manifest the excellencies of God (1 Pet. 2:9)
  - To be a witness of and for Christ (Lev. 23:17-20: many references to 'two' in feast of weeks (assembly))
- Again, should remain true in practice

# Continuation

- Established by the Lord (Matt. 16:18)
- Company at Pentecost added to by the Lord (Acts 2:47)
- Up to rapture, the Lord will continue adding living stones to this spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5)
  - But to do this He uses His servants – i.e. us (1 Cor. 3:6-7)

# Final notes

- Three uses of word 'assembly' in New Testament:
  - Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:25 – all believers from Pentecost to rapture (fullest sense)
  - 1 Corinthians 15:9 – assembly on earth at a particular time
  - Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 1:2 – assembly on earth at a particular time and in a particular city
- But the latter are to reflect the former (e.g. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:13, 27)

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- Acts is not a doctrinal book – but early history reflects doctrine
- Doctrine concerning assembly is found in Paul's letters