**#7 THE CHURCH**

This week we will consider what the church is and what should characterise it.

*We believe that the universal church is a body of which Christ is the Head and is made up of all who have received salvation. This body is made visible in the local church, which is a congregation of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the furtherance of the gospel, the administering of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Further, they are responsible for mutual care and discipline and for the administration of good works. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.*

***Hebron Statement of Faith (Draft)***

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**A. Some Basics**

1. Consider the following verses – what do they tell us about Christ’s place and role in the church? What are the implications of this?

* ***Ephesians 1:22-23***
* ***Colossians 1:18 & 2:18-19***

2. Read ***Acts 2:42-47***

*Some context:*

Acts 2 describes the birth of the church. The Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples and Peter preaches to the Jewish crowd. He explains the phenomena they have seen and heard, and proclaims Jesus Christ (“whom you crucified”) to be raised from the dead and “made both Lord and Christ.” These are convicting words and three thousand people heed Peter’s call to repent and be baptised. And so the church is up and running…

In these verses what things are we told the members of the early church dedicated themselves to? Do these remain the priorities today?

**B. The Make up of the Church**

Read ***Ephesians 4:1-16***

3. Try to sum up this passage in a sentence or two.

4. Paul tells us what makes for unity in the church:

a. In vv1-3 what are the necessary character qualities for church unity?

b. In vv4-6 what are the essential shared beliefs around which church unity exists? Why are these ‘ones’ essential for unity (e.g. do we need them all? Could we add others?)?

5. In vv7-11, Jesus is described as the giver of gifts to the church.

 a. [From the passage!] What are these gifts?

 b. What is the purpose of these gifts (vv12ff.)?

c. In what ways do we get this pattern wrong in church life? How can you correct it? From the passage, what are the dangers of getting this wrong?

6. In what ways will you commit to help build up the other members of the body of Christ this week?

**To finish:** Spend some time in prayer as a group. Give thanks for the church of God “which he bought with his own blood.” Ask the Lord to help you regard the church as precious a thing as he does. Give thanks for the leaders God has gifted to the church. Pray for growth in maturity as a church. Pray for each other’s needs this week.