

A Biblical Theology of Worship  
*The Worship of the Church, §4.2-4.3*

- I. God calls his people to assemble before him in both the Old and New Covenants.
  - A. What is different...
    1. No more tabernacle and temple.
    2. Sacrifices have ended.
    3. No priests or Levites.
  - B. The realities have replaced the types (or shadows) now that Christ has come.  
 Hebrews 12:18-24; 7:25.
  - C. The continuities include what God's people are called to do by God.
    1. The church "comes together".  
 1Co 5:4-5; 11:17; 14:26.
    2. The church is "in assembly."  
 1Co 11:18, *in one place*, 1Co 11:20; 1Co 14:23.
    3. Contrast saints dispersed and saints assembled.
  
- II. The Old Covenant background for the "assembly of the church"
  - A. Israel's sacred assemblies.
  - B. Examples...  
 Deuteronomy 9:10; 18:16; 31:12; 2Chron 29:28; 1Kings 8:14; 2Chron 6:3.
  - C. In the Psalms...  
 The assembly is where the praises of Messiah are declared (Ps 22:22, 25; Ps 40:9-10), and in the *assembly* also the saints will praise God (Ps 89:7; Ps 107:32; Ps 149:1).
  - D. The NT typically uses ἐκκλησία for "assembly" but occasionally also uses συναγωγή for Christian meetings.  
 James 2:2-4; cf. Hebrews 10:25.
  
- III. The saints assemble at appointed times before God to express their loyalty to the Lord of the Covenant.
  - A. Structure of biblical covenants.  
 Covenant was a common form of agreement between men and nations throughout the whole of the Old Testament period
    1. They were religious acts sworn to in the name of God or the gods of both parties, often accompanied by sacrifice (see Gen 31:51-54; Jer 34, esp. 15-22; Ezek 17:11-21, esp. 18).
    2. Placed in the temple of God.
  - B. God's covenants closely resemble the suzerain-vassal treaty form, as can be seen in the Sinai covenant, Exodus 19-24:
    1. *The Preamble*
    2. *The Covenant History*,
    3. *The General Purpose*:
    4. *Stipulations*: 20:1-17; 21:1-23:19)
    5. Blessings (23:20-33)
    6. *Covenant Document* (24:4)

7. *Oath* (19:8; 24:3):
8. *Sacrifice* (24:5-8) and *altar* (20:22-26):
9. *Covenant Meal* (24:9-11):

#### IV. Worship as covenant renewal.

- A. Worship seen as covenant renewal leads the Church to remember the various aspects of covenant enactment.
  1. To confess her failures in serving God
  2. To seek God's forgiveness.
  3. To renew her intentions to obey the Lord
  4. By his grace, to experience the restoration of joyful communion with her risen Lord.
- B. According to the *Westminster Confession*, the Church comes together...
  1. "more solemnly, in the public assemblies" (21.6),
  2. to engage in a covenant dialogue with God through the "means of grace:"
  3. prayer, Bible reading, preaching, singing psalms, and the sacraments.
- C. Israel's first assembly took place at Mount Sinai. Ex 3:12; 5:1; 19:10ff.
  1. On appointed days to *remember* God and his covenant.
  2. Centered on the ark of the covenant.
  3. All Israel gathered at the tabernacle/temple three times yearly and in their homes weekly, Lev 23:2-3.
- D. The Sabbath was a weekly feast in the Old Covenant, Lev 23:2-3.
  1. From family centered Sabbaths to Synagogues.
  2. Weekly assemblies for prayer and Scripture reading.
  3. Architecture oriented toward the temple.
  4. Feasts: Ex 23:14-17; Lev 24; Deut 16
  5. Meaning of the Sabbath... a covenant sign given as a reminder of God's creation, the redemption of God's people (Ex 20:11; Deut 5:15), and the heavenly consummation yet awaiting them (Heb 4:1-10).
- E. Under the New Covenant...
  1. Church assemblies include women and children as well as men.
  2. No longer tied to one place.
  3. No longer tied to yearly feasts.
  4. No barriers...except that of sight.
  5. Same purposes.  
To pledge its loyalty to the Lord of the covenant by remembering him, hearing him, praising him, thanking him, and being fed by him.