



COVENANT

Bible-Presbyterian Church

Preaching Christ for His Glory and His Kingdom

Order of Worship — 9 August 2015

Theme for the Year: "Out of Myself and into the Savior" (Ezekiel 14:4-6)

Prelude	<i>The Lord Is in His Holy Temple</i>
Call to Worship	
*Opening Hymn	489 - <i>Glory to His Name</i>
*Invocation & † <i>Gloria Patri</i>	
Responsive Reading	Psalm 121
Hymn	TP 121
Tithes & Offering	
*†† <i>Doxology</i> & Offertory Prayer	
Scripture Reading	Hebrews 7:1-10
Hymn	112 - <i>Blessed Redeemer</i>
Confession of Faith & Pastoral Prayer	
Sermon	"The Greater Melchizedek"
*Closing Hymn	145 - <i>Hail Thou Once Despised Jesus!</i>
*Benediction & <i>Threefold Amen</i>	
Silent Prayer & Postlude	<i>The Lord Bless You and Keep You</i>
Announcements	<i>*Congregation standing</i>

† Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
And to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning,
Is now and ever shall be:
World without end. Amen.

†† Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Covenant Bible-Presbyterian Church meets every Sunday at 3:00 pm
at 47 Davis Road, Attadale, Western Australia

Website: www.covenantbpc.org.au

Email: pastor@covenantbpc.org.au

Merging of Two Groups in the Early Church: Lessons for Our Merger

Christians of Different Races, Social Strata, and Sexes Are Equal

Galatians 3:28-29 - "There is neither Jew nor Greek...for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

This passage tells us that there are no distinctions between God's people in God's kingdom. All are Abraham's seed & heirs to God's promises to him. All are equal.

Since Christ brings peace to people, and has broken the racial & social barriers (Ephesians 2:14), there is no longer any social distinction between Christians.

The Early NT Church Was Jewish

The vast majority of converts in the early church were Jews. Jesus came for them (John 1:11), the gospel was for them first (Romans 1:16), & preached first in Jerusalem & Judea (Acts 1:8).

All of the early Christians were happy (Acts 2:42-47). They shared with one another & sought the Lord together.

Although they were Jewish, there were things that distinguished them. One issue was different language media used.

Problems in the Early Jewish Church: Discrimination and Bitterness

The unity didn't last long. Discrimination & bitterness came into the church. The Greek-speaking Jewish Christian widows were not receiving their share of food & money. The Hebrew-speaking Christians were apparently not fair.

But the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians were unkind. They murmured & caused dissension. They were apparently bitter.

All Christians. All Jews. Different language medium. Discrimination.

Gentiles Were Added to the Church

God continued to bring different people together. That spiced things up. He started saving "unclean" Gentiles.

God prepared Peter for this by sending him to stay with Simon the Tanner (Acts 9:43). Tanners touched blood regularly & were considered "unclean."

There, Peter was told in a vision to eat "unclean" foods. Peter was unwilling until God told him the food was made clean (Acts 10:9-16).

Around the same time, God spoke to Cornelius, a Gentile, & told him to send for Peter so that he might hear the gospel (Acts 10:1-8).

When Peter met Cornelius, he said in Acts 10:34 - "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

Indeed! God saves any who would believe in him. Cornelius was saved & received the Spirit. The Jews were amazed (Acts 10:45).

When the apostles & Jewish brethren heard this, they were amazed & they glorified God who had chosen to save the Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

God is no respecter of persons!

The Jewish Christians Had Problems with the Gentile Christians: Tradition

What was an amazing thing quickly turned sour. Many Jewish Christians were not comfortable with the Gentiles.

They were too different, too "unclean." They did not eat the same foods, behave the same way, & stick to the same ceremonial cleanliness.

The issue wasn't discrimination or bitterness, but tradition. The Jewish Christians held certain traditions sacred & were unwilling to part with them.

Many said that the Gentiles had to be circumcised - to follow the Mosaic

ceremonial law. It caused a lot of quarrels (Acts 15:1-2).

Wise Counsel from the Synod

It escalated to synod in Jerusalem. Apostles, pastors, & elders from all churches convened & made a decision.

The decision synod came up with was simple. The Jews weren't troubled the Gentiles about circumcision (v 19).

But the Gentile Christians should adhere to 2 kinds of abstention:

1. The moral & therefore binding abstention - they were to stay away from idolatry and fornication (v 20).
2. The cultural & therefore temporary abstention - they were to stay away from things polluted by idols (i.e. food offered to idols) and from blood and unbled meats (v 20).

These things were temporary because in 1 Corinthians 8:4 & 10:25-27, there was no binding prohibition (except for love) on eating food offered to idols.

The same applies for blood. Food doesn't defile a man (Matthew 15:11).

James' decision was tempered by practical instruction. It was important that Gentile Christians didn't antagonize the Jewish community in every city and destroy the church's witness among Jews (Acts 15:21).

And Paul's caution in 1 Corinthians was to urge the exercise of accommodation in wisdom and love.

Lessons for Us

We are an Australian church, although ethnically we are majority Asian.

God-willing, when we move to the morning service, many folks from ABC will join (merge?) with us. We thank God for their love and affection for us.

There will be adjustments for us and them. We want them to feel welcome and part of our fellowship.

Hence, there must never be discrimination between God's people based on race, language, or anything.

God is no respecter of persons. We never want to give people cause to be bitter. And we never want to be bitter.

And while we celebrate diversity in God's kingdom of different people, different cultures, different cuisines, and different languages; let us also be sensitive to accommodate un-familiarity.

Additionally, there may be traditions and formalities we hold dear. But if they aren't Scripturally binding, we should not be fighting tooth and nail to uphold them. That being said, neither are they wrong.

The road ahead will be interesting. Cultivating unity in diversity can only be achieved with Christ's charity. ~ *Pastor*



Westminster Confession of Faith XXXII - Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead

2. At the return of the Lord Jesus Christ such living persons as are found in him shall not die but be changed,¹ and all the dead in Christ shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.²
3. The bodies of the unjust shall, after Christ has reigned on earth a thousand years, be raised by the power of God to dishonor.³

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

2. Job 19:26-27; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

3. Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:43; Philippians 3:21, Revelation 20:1-3.

Worship Service Roster

<i>Service</i>	<i>This Week (9.8.15)</i>	<i>Next Week (16.8.15)</i>
Speaker	Mark Chen	Mark Chen
Worship Leader	Terence Lee	Jimmy Orchard
Pianist	Valerie Ong	Elizabeth Huang
Welcomers	Micah & Hannah Chiang	Danny & Susie Tan
Offering Stewards	Ian Read, Jacob Woo	Rex Sriharan, Vincent Chiu
Usher	Hannah Chiang	Joyce Ng
Kitchen Duties	Mary-Anne Chan*, Helen Wong, Vincent Chiu	Mary Loh*, Ken Hong, Grace Wang
<i>Prayer Meeting</i>	<i>14 August 2015</i>	<i>21 August 2015</i>
Speaker	Mark Chen	Mark Chen
Chairperson	David Pang	Micah Chiang
Pianist	Valerie Ong	Ian Tay

Announcements

1. A warm welcome to all worshipers. May God richly bless you. Please stay behind after the service for fellowship and tea.
2. Next week's message: "A Better Priest, Because a Better Person" (Hebrews 7:11-28).
3. Ministry leaders are reminded to submit their reports for the papers for the upcoming Annual General Meeting of the church. Please submit them to Terence Lee by 30 August 2015.
4. **Extraordinary Congregational Meeting.** Date: Sunday, 23 August 2015. Time: After the worship service at 4:30 pm. All communicant members are required to attend.

Appointments for the Week

FRI	7:45 pm	Prayer Meeting & JF
SAT	4:30 pm	Young People's Group
SUN	2:00 pm	Adult Bible & Catechism Class
	3:00 pm	Worship & Sunday School

Last Lord's Day Tithes & Offering, & Attendance

General Fund - \$2,914.50. Missions Fund - \$330.00. Building Fund - \$7,955.00 (#270 - \$200.00, #271 - \$1,000.00, #272 - \$1,100.00, #273 - \$2,000.00, #274 - \$900.00, #275 - \$755.00, #276 - \$2,000.00). Total Tithes & Offering - \$5,403.50. Attendance - 133.

Building Fund to Date

Starting Fund	\$54,185.68
Pledges Collected	\$246,935.00
Non-Pledged Gifts	\$158,239.82
Loans Received	\$380,000.00
<i>Subtotal Building Fund</i>	<i>\$839,360.50</i>
<i>Outstanding Pledges</i>	<i>\$44,785.00</i>
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>\$884,145.50</i>

Building Fund Account:

Covenant Bible-Presbyterian Church
(Westpac Bank, Applecross)
BSB: 036-031 Acct: 316969
SWIFT: WPACAU25

Elders: **Mark Chen (Pastor)** 0415 932 373. **Jimmy Orchard** 0413 274 407.

Deacons: **Ken Chong** 0402 553 313. **LH Chua** 0435 601 373. **Terence Lee** 0418 845 617. **Johnson Lim** 0402 145 682. **SK Loh** 9386 1660.