



Talks

GLUE – Session 5 – Church

Recapping from Session 1 – Creation

So far, God has made human beings to be co-creators with him in the world. God and humans are together working to bring order out of chaos and everything is good and right and lovely. Perfect

Recapping from Session 2 – Collapse

Because of human pride humans have separated themselves from God and from each other. God is pure and perfectly holy and we are not. We have got ourselves into a mess.

Recapping from Session 3 – Community

God chooses a community to bless and influence the world that the world might know that God is God. God promises this community that they will bless the world. God's presence is in temple.

Recapping from Session 4 – Christ

Jesus comes into the world claiming to be God. Jesus, lives, dies and is resurrected. God deals with the sin of the whole world – that which separates humans from God. A new creation is established.

1. What is church?

When I was a child I went along to church with my mum and dad. All I remember of the worship was that the building was cold, the women wore hats, the vicar wore a dress, we sat on wooden pews and we sang Victorian hymns. When they did provide Sunday School it seemed that all we ever did was colour in pictures of Moses. I swear that it wasn't long before I had a whole collection of Mosai decorated in multiple colour combinations. Church was boring, out-of-touch and irrelevant – well, to me anyway. God had left the building. You can imagine my surprise when at the age of sixteen, after moving house, I went along to my local church to discover a warm building, lively songs, engaging talks and a whole heap of families and children. But more than that, what really threw me was that when these people talked to God they claimed that God talked back! Either they had completely lost it or they were onto something.

These Christians claimed that God had come in the person of Jesus and somehow made humans spiritually clean so that God's presence could come and be with them – even 2000 years later. That somehow Jesus had made it possible for God's spirit – the Holy Spirit – to come and live in them. They made the outrageous claim that God was now living in them by his Holy Spirit and this is what I was witnessing.

So, at the age of sixteen I discovered that the church is not a building, nor is it a bunch of people sitting in pews singing Victorian hymns on a Sunday morning.



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2. Remember the temple?

Remember way back how God's chosen community – the people of God built a temple for the presence of God? (FATHER) Then remember how when Jesus came he replaced the temple – in other words he *was* God – how he said that the temple would be torn down and rebuilt in three days? (SON)

For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth)

In the New Testament we discover that Christians understand themselves individually as The Temple and collectively as The Temple. This is a metaphor for somewhere where the presence of God lives (HOLY SPIRIT).

It's worth pointing out that right at the beginning in Genesis God said, "Let us make humans in *our* image" - as if God was more than one? Remember that? Well, now we can see that God is a community - Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit. Cool eh?

In the historical narrative of Acts in the Bible, the Holy Spirit came and filled (God's presence came and lived inside) the first Christians at the Jewish festival of Pentecost (a festival where God gave his life-giving law to Moses). So Christians now celebrate the festival of Pentecost as when the Holy Spirit came.

The Holy Spirit started to fill non-Jewish followers of Jesus. This was a major revelation to the disciples who were all Jewish. It meant that Jesus had come not only for the Jews but for the whole world.

3. The Church in Uplyme

The church isn't a building or a style of worship. No, the church is a community of people filled with the Spirit of God who are called to redeem, restore and renew the world. A community called to use their God given creativity – under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit – to bring order out of chaos – in peoples lives, relationships and the environment.

To cut a medium story short I'm now a vicar (I didn't see that coming). I'm a leader of a church and this is exactly what we are about. We try to care for the elderly, bereaved, lonely, marginalised, sick and needy in our community. We help to support families – children, young people, parents (whether they are double or single), and those who are on their own, engaged or married. We do our best to support our local school – the staff, teachers, governors and pupils. And we support communities in rural Zambia by providing fresh running water and sanitation so that 11-year old girls don't have to walk through three miles of dangerous wilderness to fetch water. We love God and we love what he is doing through us.

Our church has a strapline - "Joining in with the mission of God".