

SESSION 5 NOTES Witness: An Alternate City

Acts 2:42-47

Christ has been given dominion over the present age and the age to come (Ephesians 1). The present age is the age in which everything falls apart—spiritually, emotionally, socially, and physically. In the age to come, all that will be restored (Psalm 96). When Jesus came to earth, He brought the power of the age to come into this world, so that we can experience it now. When He comes again, this present age will end completely and the future age will come fully. Meanwhile, we live in “the overlap of the ages.” So, how can we live in such a way that onlookers might experience that age to come?

Matthew 5:14 — we are to be “a city on a hill.” We are supposed to be an alternate city where our lives shine forth to show the world the glories of the heavenly city. The church is to model, at least partially, what the age to come underneath Jesus Christ will look like. How do we do this?

1. An alternate city is gospel-speaking.

We must talk about Jesus. We can talk about many important things, but this is the most important. According to 1 Peter 3:15, we must speak to everybody without superiority (because we ourselves have believed only by the grace of God) and with extreme gentleness.

2. An alternate city is neighbor-loving.

Jesus always embraced the moral and spiritual outsider (Matthew 5:47). How do you embrace, bring peace, and bring healing to your neighbors?

3. An alternate city is community-transformed.

John 17:17-18 — Jesus sends His disciples and prays that they would be sanctified (not eloquent). There is a credibility that comes from consistency and transformation. This credibility cannot be bought with eloquence.

We are to be witnesses in our communal lives, too. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul exhorts us to offer our collective bodies as a singular sacrifice. Our community is to demonstrate an alternative to the world’s way of living. When we get together as a community, we should be constantly rethinking the implications of the gospel on every aspect of our lives.

We need gospel-speaking, neighbor-loving, community-transformed communities everywhere. This is why church planting is so important.

Jesus’ command to be witnesses is a communal command. “Be a city” is not something we can do on our own. We must be individually obedient and communally obedient.