

LESSON 5: THE CHURCH

This study looks at one of the most confusing and misunderstood doctrines of the Bible. People have all kinds of ideas as to what a church really is. Some people think a church is a building (a cathedral or some place of worship). Others think of a church as a denomination (a human organization) and speak of the 'Catholic church', the "Presbyterian Church," the "Baptist Church." Christians also believe the Church consists of all born again believers in the world, an invisible, universal church as taught by Christ and Paul. Today we are going to talk about the local church, which is the way the word "church" is used most in the Bible.

THE CHURCH IS A NEW TESTAMENT INSTITUTION

Look up Matthew 16:18. This is the first mention of the Church in the Bible.

A. Who founded the Church? _____

B. Look up John 1:42. What is the meaning of Peter's name? _____

Note: Peter's full name is Simon Peter bar (son of) Jona

C. Look up 1 Peter 2:3,4,6-8. Who did Peter identify as the "Rock" upon which the Church would be built? _____

Note: The Old Testament is primarily addressed to the Nation of Israel. The New Testament is mainly addressed to the Church. Do not confuse these two entities. The Bible makes a clear distinction between Israel and the Church in 1 Corinthians 10:32.

THE CHURCH IS AN ASSEMBLY

The word "church" (or "churches") is found 114 times in the New Testament, and it is rendered from the Greek word ekklesia.

The word ekklesia has only one meaning - "a company of people called out for a specific purpose." It has its roots in the democracies of the Greek city-states, when the town crier would call out the citizens to a meeting to conduct business. In Matthew 16:18, the Lord Jesus did not change the meaning of ekklesia, but He distinguished it from other assemblies of the day with the personal pronoun "MY".

Thus a New Testament Church is the "Lord's Assembly."

THE CHURCH MUST BE ORGANIZED

1. A Church is not a rabble (disorderly mob). The word "assembly" implies organization.

a. Look up Colossians 1:18. A church is likened figuratively to a _____. The human body is an "assembly" of many parts. Does a pile of skin, flesh, organs, bones, etc., constitute a body? Of course not! They must be put together according to a plan. (see Psalm 139:1).

b. Look up 1 Timothy 3:15. Here, a church is likened figuratively to a _____.

The house you live in is also an "assembly", but does a pile of bricks, timber, plaster, nails, etc., constitute a house? Of course not! These things must be put together according to a plan or blueprint. Study 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16, where the Church at Corinth was likened to a temple.

2. A New Testament Church is to be organized - the blueprint is found in the New Testament.

THE CHURCH MUST BE CONSTITUTED

1. By this we mean it must be made out of the right components. How absurd to assemble a motor vehicle out of milk, leaves and uranium! How foolish to build a house out of paper, bandages, and meat!

2. So too, a New Testament Church is not to be made up of just anything - or anyone. God specifies the correct components in the New Testament.

3. Write out Acts 2:41

(Circle the following words RECEIVED, BAPTIZED, ADDED)

This verse gives God's order and qualifications for church membership:

a. Receive the Word of God (in our words today, receive Jesus as your Savior.)

b. Baptism

c. Added to the church (See also Acts 2:47; 5:14)

4. This is the only Scriptural way by which people become members of a Baptist church - salvation comes first, then believer's baptism, then join in membership to the church.

THE CHURCH HAS A "HEAD"

Man-made religious organizations have their heads - presidents, popes, moderators, superintendents, etc. Each New Testament Baptist church also has a Head - but one vastly different from any of the above.

Look up Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 5:23,24.

A. Who is the Head of each New Testament Baptist church? _____

B. Each Church is to be _____ to its Head

C. Look up Galatians 3:1 and 5:7. In what way is a church subject to its head?

Note: Jesus Christ is not a "figure-head." Any "church" which is not subject to Him and His laws is out of control. No church has the right to make its own laws - it must obey the laws already given by the Head through His Word. A Church without a living Head is dead!!

THE CHURCH HAS OFFICERS

A. Look up Philippians 1:1. What are the two offices in a church?
_____ (elders, pastors) and _____

B. Look up 1 Timothy 3:1-13. This reference gives the qualifications required for these two offices.

Note: The terms bishop, elder, and pastor are used interchangeably in the New Testament. We prefer to use the term pastor because the other two have been given unbiblical ecclesiastical connotations.

C. MY PASTOR

1. Look up 1 Peter 2:25 and 5:4. Who is the Chief Pastor of my Church?

2. The word "pastor" means shepherd. Look up 1 Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28. What does the Bible call the church in relation to its pastor? _____

3. According to 1 Peter 5:2, what is the duty of the pastor?

4. According to Ephesians 4:12-14, why has the Lord given my church a pastor?

5. According to Acts 20:17, 28-31, how will my pastor protect me?

6. According to Hebrews 13:7, I am to _____ my pastor and _____ him.

7. According to Hebrews 13:17, I am to _____ my pastor and _____ to his leadership in the church.

How Should I Address My Pastor?

Many feel unsure as to what they should call their pastor in conversation. There is no God-given title for a pastor, and it is unwise to refer to him as "Reverend" or "Father". (See Psalm 111:9; Matthew 23:9).

However, just as we train children not to call their parents by their first names out of respect for their place and authority, and thus with their teachers and policemen, etc., it is right to show similar respect to the man God puts over you in your church.

My Pastor prefers to be addressed as:
Pastor Skea

YOU AND YOUR PASTOR

Give your pastor your confidence, love, encouragement, and constantly pray for him. Be his co-worker. Go to him in your difficulties; call him when in need. He is best able to help you with counsel from the Word of God. Never make him your idol- keep your eyes on the Lord. Do not harshly criticize your pastor or be a party to scheming against him.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13 and 1 Timothy 5:17-19

Love and appreciate the wife of your pastor also. She holds no office in the Church and has no authority - yet she is vitally important to her husband's ministry.

THE CHURCH MAKES DECISIONS

A true New Testament Baptist church never makes laws - it simply follows its Lord's commands as set forth in His Word. In a practical sense, a church often needs to make decisions in keeping with this principle. Unlike the hierarchical systems of many religious bodies, Baptist churches practice what is known as the Congregational form of church government, where the congregation as a body of believers make important decisions.

A. Look up Acts 6:1-5. Who chose the seven deacons?

B. Look up Acts 1:15-26. What preceded the vote of the whole church in electing a successor to Judas? _____

C. According to Matthew 18:17, what is the highest decision-making body in spiritual affairs? _____

D. According to Matthew 18:18, the decisions of a church congregation are ratified in _____ .

THE CHURCH IS AN INDEPENDENT INSTITUTION

A. Each New Testament Baptist Church is Independent.

In Acts Chapter 15, men from the Church at Antioch came to the Church at Jerusalem to consider a matter of extreme doctrinal importance. After they determined the teaching of God's Word on the matter (verses 15-18), the issue was resolved. Even then, the Church at Jerusalem HAD NO AUTHORITY over the Church at Antioch. Their sentence was that "we trouble not them...", and they simply wrote a letter making a request. See verse 19 This is a far cry from the hierarchical religious systems of man - where the various congregations within a denomination are controlled and dictated to by "higher authorities."

B. Churches Are To Be Separate From Governments.

1. The word of God teaches a complete separation between the spiritual and the secular. See Matthew 22:21b

a. Christians are to be law-abiding citizens. Romans 13:1-7

b. Christians may disobey a civil law only in the case where they are compelled to disobey God's law. Acts 5:29

2. Governments should not involve themselves with the establishment or support of any particular religious group, except to offer security and protection as it would all citizens of the land.

C. Churches May Scripturally Cooperate With Other Churches

Independence does not mean isolationism. Baptist churches may Scripturally cooperate in certain areas with other churches of like faith and order - provided such cooperation is voluntary, and does not violate the sovereignty, independence and autonomy of each church.

1. New Testament churches worked together to help each other and support evangelism. See 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Acts 11:22-26; 2 Corinthians 8:19.

2. New Testament churches worked together in social relief. (Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:25,26) This financial assistance was a gift, not a loan.

3. New Testament churches were involved in regional fellowship.

a. Galatians 1:2 Churches of _____

b. 1 Corinthians 16:19 Churches of _____

c. Galatians 1:22 Churches of _____

See also Colossians 4:16, where two churches were to share the Scriptures and other apostolic writings.

THE CHURCH IS A COMMISSIONED ORGANIZATION

A. The Lord Jesus Christ established His churches to continue His work here on Earth. This is not a social ministry, but a spiritual one. Just before the Lord returned to Heaven, He left His Church with what is known as the "Great Commission."

B. Look up Matthew 28:19, 20. List below the verbs (actions) in these verses.

1. _____ ye.

2. _____ all nations

3. _____ them

4. _____ them to observe

C. This Great Commission is repeated in each of the Gospels and in the Book of Acts. Read the following verses and see exactly what the mission of a Baptist church is.

(Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8. Also, 1 Corinthians 15:58

THE CHURCH HAS ORDINANCES

A. BAPTISM will be taught in Study 11.

B. The LORD'S SUPPER will be taught in Study 15.

THE CHURCH IS TO BE FINANCED

TITHING will be taught in Study 22.

THE CHURCH AND ME

You have learned many things about the New Testament Church.

Listed below are some practical suggestions for you to receive great blessings from your local church.

A. JOIN IT

1. It is God's will for every born again believer to be a member of a sound Bible believing New Testament Baptist church.

**2. Look up Acts 2:47. "The _____ added to the _____
_____ such as should be saved."**

**3, Look up 1 Corinthians 12:18. God has _____ the _____ in
the**

_____.

B. LOVE IT

**A Christian ought to love the things his Lord loves. Look up Ephesians 5:25.
Christ _____ the _____ and _____
Himself for it.**

C. SUPPORT IT.

**1. Your church is the place where you will grow, find comfort and fellowship, and
serve the Lord. Write out Hebrews 10:25**

**2. Plan now to attend as many of the services and meetings of your Church as
you can. Decide in your heart never to miss a service unless providentially
hindered.**

READING ASSIGNMENT:

Read through 1 Timothy chapter 3

MEMORIZATION:

Try to commit to memory Hebrews 10:25