

How to Identify the Church

**A Five Minute Bible Study
Student Workbook**

by Aaron Battey

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Introduction

How many times have you been asked the question, “What church do you go to?” I’ve stopped counting. Even better, coworkers or random strangers will put it out there that they are looking for a new church. I have thought to myself, “Man, it would be nice to say, ‘Here is a book I wrote on that very subject!’” Well, this is that book.

This book is really for a wide range audience. Maybe you have gone to the same church your whole life and don’t really know why you go where you go; your parents went there, so you do too. Maybe your church has started practicing things that make you uncomfortable. As culture continues to influence the evangelical world, this is becoming more and more commonplace. Perhaps you became a Christian but never really joined a church, and now you are looking for the right one. All these circumstances and more call for help. Hopefully, this book will give you the tools you need to identify the church that Jesus built: the church that you should know. The key criteria in our search are 1) what pleases God, and 2) what glorifies Him. If, on the other hand, you are just looking for a directional guide for a church social club of sorts, this book probably isn’t for you.

Lessons 1-4 are going to establish the meaning of some key terms and biblical concepts that often cause confusion in discussions about the church. The word *church* gets thrown around a lot, but how many people

actually know what it means, what it *really* means? Lessons 5-7 explain how to make sense of all the church chaos in Christianity. There are all sorts of churches everywhere! Is this by God's design? Lessons 8-13 time travel back in history to uncover exactly where all those churches actually came from. In the process, you will learn about important teachings and consequences that came about as the result of major church divisions. Finally, Lessons 14-15 set forth some basic and straightforward teachings and practices that distinguish the church of the New Testament from many churches you might encounter in your search.

If you are wanting to learn more about the church, and especially what the Bible says about it, start reading. Read each lesson, which will take generally around five to ten minutes, and then take the time to answer the homework questions that follow. The answers are in the back of the book for easy reference. God bless you, and God bless the church through which He made His wisdom known to all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10).

Lesson 1— Why Finding the Church Matters

The year is 33 A.D. A scribe from the local news network arrives on scene in downtown Jerusalem at the crossing of Straight and Narrow St. There is a bubbling audience gathered shoulder to shoulder (this was before coronavirus). The scribe Zacharias tries prying his way through the crowd but to no avail. Suddenly a man emerges from the crowd soaking wet! Zacharias is bewildered, especially as one man/woman after another comes out from the midst of the congested tumult, every one of them drenched head to toe. Pouring over with curiosity, Zacharias whips out the microphone recorder from his hip holster and begins questioning one of the wet witnesses. The conversation in Aramaic goes something like this—

Zacharias: “What is going on here?! Why are you and all these other people wet?!”

Wet Witness: “Didn’t you hear the sermon?”

Zacharias: “What sermon? Again, why are you wet?”

Wet Witness: “The sermon! Peter and the apostles of Jesus, the prophet who was crucified two months ago, they showed up in the temple this morning and preached the most gripping sermon I ever did hear! They were saying how Jesus was the Christ, raised from

the dead like everyone had been hearing rumored. He is the Son of David that Moses and the prophets wrote about! After explaining all that, Peter hollered out, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins!’ He made it very clear that if we would be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins, we would be added to the church! And so, that’s why I’m wet. I’m a member of the church!”

Zacharias: “What church are you talking about? What church did you become a member of?”

Wet Witness: “What do you mean, ‘What church?’ THE church! How many churches are there?”

THE END

Of course, this is an embellished account of the events that took place almost 2,000 years ago as recorded in Acts 2. However, this made-up interview is very accurate and telling of modern acclaimed Christianity. Zacharias represents people across the globe today, particularly Americans, who have lost touch with the historical reality of church beginnings. To say that you have been added to the church in 2021 is nothing short of confusing. Additional information is required today. Zacharias’ questions about “What church are you talking about?” and “What church did you become a member of?” are necessary questions today; whereas, they would have been silly questions in

the 1st century. There was no multiplicity of churches in the 1st century. No one would have even thought to ask Zacharias' questions to Peter, John, or Matthew. To stipulate, "the church" was enough for a Jew in the 1st century. Different kinds of churches (i.e., denominations) did not develop until innovations were brought into the church as early as the 2nd century. All of this should teach an important lesson.

An Important Lesson

Do not assume that all things are as they should be. The only time in history that all things were as intended was in Adam's day: "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good," (Gen. 1:31). Since Adam sinned, God's redemptive purposes have been to restore order, order as in the beginning. Nonetheless, that order has not been perfectly restored, and man continues to eat the forbidden fruit, as it were, perverting God's patterned order. The story does not change when it comes to the church. God planted the church with good seed (Matthew 13:24), but Satan polluted the soil very quickly (v. 25). Now, we wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ to open the world's eyes as to what His true church looks like (v. 36-43).

The church exists today. It is the same church of Acts 2:40-47 planted by the same good seed of Matthew 13:24, but there is something distorted about the modern concept of church. There is something amiss with denominationalism. The concept of denominations is foreign to the Bible. If someone has to ask the question, "Which church (denomination) are

you talking about?” that should be an immediate tip-off that Satan has polluted the soil somewhere. For if God’s patterned order existed without competition, no one would have to ask Zacharias’ question.

Why does this series matter?

This series of lessons about *How to Identify the Church* is of utmost importance, because God’s pattern has been corrupted as explained above. There is religious confusion with denominations on every corner. The confusion grows worse as denominations change their identifying name to something neutral such as Grace Church in order to hide their doctrinal affiliations. 1st century history, the teachings of Jesus, and the teachings of His authorized apostles insist that all these churches cannot be the church of the Bible. The fact that there is confusion means there has been compromise from the original church blueprint.

Homework

Read Matthew 28, Luke 24, and Acts 1-2. Write down specifically what Jesus told His disciples to do in each of these chapters. Underline every occurrence of the word “church” or “kingdom” in each text.

Lesson 2— Defining the Kingdom of God

The first lesson in this workbook—*How to Identify the Church*—showed just how relevant a study of the church is in the modern world. Now for the study itself; let's get to digging!

What is the Kingdom of God?

A family of three went to church one Sunday. The preacher stood up and said he was going to preach about the kingdom of God. The child envisioned a castle surrounded by expansive land as far as the eye could see. The father immediately thought back to a Sunday school lesson which taught about Christ coming back to earth, setting up His kingdom in Jerusalem, and reigning for 1,000 years. The mother simply supposed the preacher would teach about the church, nothing more and nothing less. Any three of these visions may come to the mind of people when they think of the kingdom concept, but without considering the integrity of any one of these views—stop. Back up. Consider the Bible.

The kingdom of God is a biblical concept with lost meaning. This phrase gets thrown around by the professor and the janitor so much so that few know what the kingdom of God really is. The “kingdom of God” finds itself first mentioned in the Bible in Matthew 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God...” Just prior to

this account, Matthew says that Jesus, “Began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,’” (Matthew 4:17). The phrasing in Matthew 4:17 is slightly different but the idea is the same. Some suppose that the kingdom finds its beginnings here in the first gospel with the phrase’s first occurrence. A strict word study of the subject would lead to this conclusion, but this shows how that word studies are not enough by themselves. Looking up every occurrence of a word or phrase can be helpful, but that alone does not make for understanding. Word studies are sometimes like a young boy in the weight room doing nothing but curls. Any athlete or strength coach will say, “Curls are for girls,” realizing that curls in isolation do little to strengthen the whole man. So, we will stop curling the phrase “kingdom of God” and start with a well-rounded exercise that will reveal the phrase’s wholesome meaning.

Back to the Basics

Psalm 103:19

The Lord has established His *throne* in heaven
And His *kingdom* rules over all.

Psalm 145:11

They shall speak of the glory of Your *kingdom*,
And talk of Your *power*

Psalm 145:13

Your kingdom is an everlasting *kingdom*,

And Your *dominion* endures throughout all generations.

All three of these psalms incorporate the use of synonymous parallelism. This is a very common, Hebrew literary device where the second line restates the first line in parallel terms.

The phrases—throne, power, dominion, and kingdom—all share the same idea. The prophet Daniel sums this idea up in one sentence when explaining Nebuchadnezzar’s

| |
|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Throne</i> <i>Power</i> <i>Dominion</i> <i>Kingdom</i></p> |
|--|

terrifying dream. Nebuchadnezzar was ruler of the entire known world. Every morning this king would look in the mirror and ask, “Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?” On this particular night the mirror (Daniel) said, “The Most High (God) rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men,” (Daniel 4:17).

The message for Nebuchadnezzar boiled down to this: “You only reign because the almighty God allows you to reign.”

The book of Daniel in general was written to remind Jews in Babylonian and Persian captivity that *God reigns*. In short, we learn this important definition from all of that:

Kingdom of God = Reign of God

This is the broadest definition of “kingdom of God.” There is a narrower definition given in scripture that will be examined in the next lesson, but learn this concept before going any further.

Features of God’s Reign

From beginning to end, the Bible reveals at least five features about the reign of God.

1. *God’s reign is supreme* (Isaiah 45:5). Apart from Yahweh there is no God. The earthly rulers that do exist only exist by the mercies of God.
2. *God’s reign is eternal* (Jeremiah 10:10). This is not a concept unique to the New Testament. Before time existed, God existed, and He reigned.
3. *God’s reign is universal* (Job 12:7-10). There is no one or thing, dead or alive, that can claim exemption from the rule of God. What do Osama Bin Laden, George Washington, and the girl next door have in common? God is the ruler of each one whether they submit to that rule or not.
4. *God’s reign is active* (Revelation 11:15-19). God reigns over you this very second just as much as He did Nebuchadnezzar. Remember this the next time you take the breath He gave you and use it to sin.

Just like Osama Bin Laden, you will remember it was God's breath the second your body dies.

5. *God's reign is delegated* (Genesis 1:26-28). In the creation, God told Adam to subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing. God delegated His authority to Adam. Subsequently, Paul reveals that the governing authorities of this world get their authority from God's allowance (Romans 13:1-4).

Conclusion

Perhaps your understanding of the kingdom of God has begun a transformation process with this brief lesson. Next, we will add some flesh to the bones and show how this concept leads into the church.

Homework Questions

1. Where has the Lord established His throne according to scripture? Cite the verse where you find your answer.
2. The kingdom of God equals the _____ of God.
3. What does it mean for us that God has delegated His authority?

Lesson 3— The Church: A Kingdom Within a Kingdom

If you learned one thing from the previous lesson, hopefully you learned that the “kingdom of God” means simply the “reign of God.” This is new revelation to many and not so much to others. If this definition prompts you to ask the question, “How do the kingdom of God and the church relate to one another?” then welcome to Lesson 3.

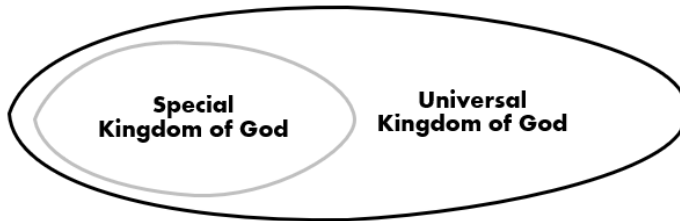
A Kingdom Within a Kingdom

God’s reign is eternal and universal. These are review concepts. However, not everyone submits to the reign of God. Because of this very truth, God cast Satan and his angels out of heaven, Adam and Eve out of Eden, and the Israelites out of Canaan. All three parties failed to recognize the universal authority of God. They sinned. Sin spread like a plague after Adam and Eve, and since that initial rebellious sin, there have been two classes of people:

- 1. People who defy God’s authority*
- 2. People who humbly submit to God’s authority*

The evil line of Cain (Gen. 4:16-24) and the righteous line of Seth (Gen. 5) preview these two classes. And so, we are introduced to the secondary definition of the “kingdom of God,” what will be referred to as the

“special kingdom of God.” This special kingdom is composed of the second class of individuals—those who humbly submit to God’s authority.



This picture illustrates the dual nature of God’s kingdom. The small circle represents God’s special kingdom, and the large circle represents God’s universal kingdom. Thus, the special kingdom of God is a kingdom within a kingdom. Everyone answers to God, but only some will submit to His rule: those in His special kingdom. Notice, this is not a New Testament phenomenon. God has always had a special kingdom within His universal kingdom, and He always will.

The Manifestations of the Kingdom

1. Israel

In the days of Noah, Abraham, and Job, God did not designate one class of people as his special kingdom people. The Bible simply reveals that God communicated directly with the fathers of each household (i.e., Abraham), and they were responsible for teaching their sons and daughters to fear the God of heaven, obeying God’s will as much as was communicated to them. It was during this age, what

has been dubbed as the patriarchal age, that God noticed Abraham. God did not take note of Abraham because he was white or black, rich or poor, Yankee or Southern. Abraham was exemplary in faith, worshiping God despite his father who bowed down to idols (Josh. 24:2-3). God told Abraham, "I will make you a great nation...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," (Gen. 12:2,3). God would remember this covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:24), eventually declaring the children of Israel (Jacob) His special kingdom people. "You shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is mine and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," (Exodus 19:5-6). The Mt. Sinai covenant between God and Israel marked the first time in history that God chose a select group of people to be a special kingdom to Him. This nation would act as a lamplight to the world, announcing to the world that Yahweh reigns on high. When heathen, immoral nations saw Israel's holy conduct, they were looking at a living billboard that read, "I am the Lord who brings you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy," (Lev. 11:45). Nonetheless, this was only the first manifestation of God's special kingdom to the world.

2. The Church

Israel failed to adequately broadcast God's kingdom to the world. For this reason, God gave them up to the heathen nations they were supposed to be influencing for good! Israel wasn't God's end goal in the grand

scheme of things anyway. Israel was the instrument God would use to facilitate Jesus Christ into the world, and Jesus would redeem man's sin. As the last lesson introduced, Jesus' ministry began with, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (Matthew 4:17). Wait a minute, though. I know what you are thinking: "Wasn't the kingdom of God already in existence in the form of Israel?" Yes. However, Jesus introduces the special kingdom of God as coming in a way not formerly experienced. It is direly important to understand the difference between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of God that Jesus professed. Israel was a physical kingdom with a physical king. Studying the 400 years of history between Malachi and Matthew will reveal that the Jews expected Messiah to come in Jesus' day, and they expected Messiah to set up yet another physical, temporal kingdom to deliver them from their heathen oppressors. But Jesus came preaching a new concept; He preached about a spiritual kingdom with a spiritual king. This is made clear in John 6:15, "Therefore, when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone." They had missed the point, but don't be too hard on this crowd. There are thousands today making the same mistake the crowd in John 6 made. Jesus did not come to reign on a physical throne in Jerusalem. He did not come to liberate the kingdoms of men from social injustices. He did not come to lead any sort of political campaign. No, He came to establish a special, spiritual kingdom that He called the church and the kingdom of

God. Notice how in the following verses and within the same immediate contexts, the word “church” and “kingdom” are used interchangeably.

Matthew 16:18-19

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My *church*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of *the kingdom of heaven*...”

Matthew 18:1,17

(v. 1) “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in *the kingdom of heaven*?’”

(v. 17) “And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to *the church*. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

Revelation 1:4,9

(v. 4) “John, to the seven *churches* which are in Asia...”

(v. 9) “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and *kingdom* and patience of Jesus Christ...”

The visible church is an outward expression of the kingdom: the reign of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. When the immoral world looks at the church, they should see a lamplight testifying to the fact that Jesus Christ reigns on high. In Christ’s inaugural address of the kingdom, He described the church’s purpose in this way:

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they
may see your good works and glorify your
Father in heaven.”*

(Matt. 5:16)

Conclusion

The church is the special kingdom of God that prophecy anticipated in Numbers 24, Isaiah 2, Ezekiel 34, Hosea 1, Micah 4, Zephaniah 3, Zechariah 9, Psalm 72, Psalm 110, Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and elsewhere. God exercises His rule through the church, and it is only in Christ’s church that anyone can be saved because of this. This last point is very important and will be a primary point of focus throughout the rest of the book.

Homework Questions

1. What two classes of people exist in the kingdom of God?
2. The era in which God communicated directly with the fathers of each household is referred to as the _____ Age.
3. What is the major difference between the first and second manifestations of the kingdom?

Lesson 4— One Reason There Is So Much Confusion About the Church

This workbook thus far has focused on clarifying difficult terms and concepts. Hopefully, the importance of these concepts has drowned out any dryness. Lesson 4 is one more lesson about terminology that plays a critical role in identifying the church of the Bible.

Gaining Some Clarity

One of the major reasons for confusion about this subject is due largely to a naivety of how the word “church” is used in the New Testament. The table below thoroughly explains this very fact.

The English word “church” comes from the Greek word *ἐκκλησία*. This word can be translated church, congregation, or assembly depending on the context. Just because the English Bible translation you read from always translates this Greek word as “church” doesn’t mean this is always the plainest translation. The word can take on any of the four meanings outlined in this table, depending on the context.

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <i>Matt. 16:18</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Matt. 18:17</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 2:47</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Acts 5:11</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 8:1</i> | | Church | | |
| <i>Acts 8:3</i> | | Church | | |
| <i>Acts 9:31</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Acts 11:22</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 11:26</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 12:1</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 12:5</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 13:1</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 14:23</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 14:27</i> | | | Church | |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <i>Acts 15:3</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 15:4</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 15:22</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 15:41</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Acts 16:5</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Acts 18:22</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 20:17</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Acts 20:28</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Romans 16:1</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Romans 16:4</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Romans 16:5</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Romans 16:16</i> | | Churches | | |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Romans</i> <i>16:23</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>1 Cor. 1:2</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>1 Cor. 4:17</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>1 Cor. 6:4</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>1 Cor. 7:17</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>1 Cor. 10:32</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>1 Cor. 11:16</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>1 Cor. 11:18</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Cor. 11:22</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>1 Cor. 12:28</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:4</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:5</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:12</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:19</i> | | | | Church |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <i>1 Cor. 14:23</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:28</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:33</i> | | | | Churches |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:34</i> | | | | Churches |
| <i>1 Cor. 14:35</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Cor. 15:9</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>1 Cor. 16:1</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>1 Cor. 16:19</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Cor. 1:1</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>2 Cor. 8:1</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Cor. 8:18</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Cor. 8:19</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Cor. 8:23</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Cor. 8:24</i> | | Churches | | |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <i>2 Cor. 11:8</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Cor. 11:28</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Cor. 12:13</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Galatians 1:2</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Galatians 1:13</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Galatians 1:22</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Ephesians 1:22</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Ephesians 3:10</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Ephesians 3:21</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Ephesians 5:23</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Ephesians 5:24</i> | Church | | | |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Ephesians</i> <i>5:25</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Ephesians</i> <i>5:27</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Ephesians</i> <i>5:29</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Ephesians</i> <i>5:32</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Phil. 3:6</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Phil. 4:15</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Colossians</i> <i>1:18</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Colossians</i> <i>1:24</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>Colossians</i> <i>4:15</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Colossians</i> <i>4:16</i> | | | | Church |
| <i>1 Thess. 1:1</i> | | | Church | |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>1 Thess. 2:14</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>2 Thess. 1:1</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>2 Thess. 1:4</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>1 Tim. 3:5</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>1 Tim. 3:15</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>1 Tim. 5:16</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Philemon 2</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Hebrews 2:12</i> | Congregation | | | |
| <i>Hebrews 12:23</i> | Church | | | |
| <i>James 5:14</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>3 John 6</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>3 John 9</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>3 John 10</i> | | | Church | |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <i>Rev. 1:4</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 1:11</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 1:20</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 2:1</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Rev. 2:7</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 2:8</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Rev. 2:11</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 2:12</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Rev. 2:17</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 2:18</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Rev. 2:23</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 2:29</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 3:1</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Rev. 3:6</i> | | Churches | | |

| | The Universal Church | A Group of Local Churches | A Specific Local Church | A Local Church Assembled |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <i>Rev. 3:7</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Rev. 3:13</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 3:14</i> | | | Church | |
| <i>Rev. 3:22</i> | | Churches | | |
| <i>Rev. 22:16</i> | | Churches | | |
| Total = 108 verses (qtd. in Getz 325-329) | | | | |

You may look at this table and think, “Okay, nice table, but it really doesn’t have much significance.” Unfortunately, many people speak of the church as if it’s something that exists only inside each individual and is divorced from any relationship with a local assembly of Christians. This view of Christianity has its own box on religious surveys: spiritual but not religious. It is this mindset, especially, that makes the above table so helpful. After reading about the word church used 108 times in four distinct ways, it’s easy to see how people might misconstrue such a complex subject. The way many people talk about church as a concept, you would never know it was a subject that deserved its own workbook with 15 lessons!

Conclusion

Keep the table in this lesson on standby. It will be very helpful going forward as your study of the Bible and the church expands. Just because a subject is difficult and complex doesn't mean it is beyond understanding. Now, with vocabulary lessons out of the way, it's time to start learning what the church of the Bible looks like!

Homework Questions

1. The lesson gives at least three ways the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* can be translated. What are they?

2. For each of the four meanings of the word "church" found in the table of this lesson, copy one of the associated Bible verses in the blank space below.

3. How do people identify who like the idea of a relationship with Jesus Christ, but they don't like to "go to church"?
4. Write down at least one thing that you learned from this lesson.

Lesson 5— The Church as the Body of Christ

There are many different facets to the kingdom of God: the church. In Lesson 5, we explain how the church is like a body and why this illustration by Paul is still important today.

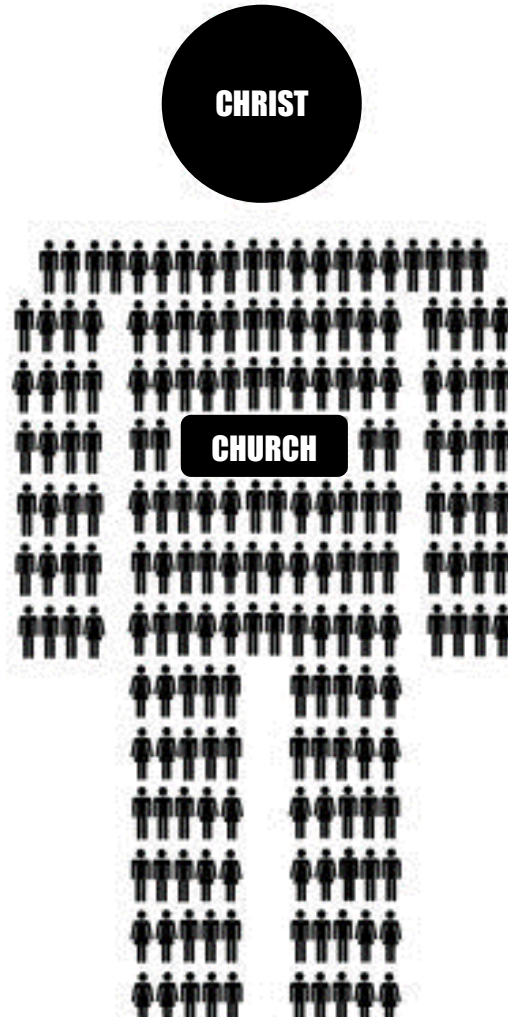
The Body Illustration

The congregation at Corinth was in shambles when Paul wrote his first epistle to the church. One of their many problems involved divisions over miraculous gifts. Some members thought speaking miraculously in a foreign language was more prestigious than miraculously translating that foreign language (1 Cor. 12:4-11,20-26). In an effort to unite the church, Paul compares it to a human body. Just as the arm and leg perform separate functions, yet both are vital and equally important, so is it the case with members of the church performing separate but vital functions within the body of Christ. Thus, Paul capstones this treatise with the statement, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

The Head Illustration

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of a great image in the form of a man. The image had a glorious head of gold, a chest of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron. Daniel interpreted the dream, explaining

ONE HEAD. ONE BODY.



that each metal represented a different world empire to come in the future. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, “You are this head of gold!” (Daniel 2:38). Daniel meant that Nebuchadnezzar, as the head of the kingdom of Babylon, represented the kingdom itself. To speak of

the head of a kingdom is to speak of the kingdom representatively: the two cannot be separated. In Paul's declaration about Christ in Colossians, he makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the head of the church (1:18), completing the illustration of the church being comparable to a body with a head. To speak of Christ is to speak of His body, and to speak of Christ's body is to speak of its head. There are several implied truths about the church that emerge from this illustration.

Four Truths about the Body of Christ

Truth #1- *Christ's head cannot be separated from His body.*

A body without a head is a dead body. When people start talking as if you can have a relationship with Christ without having a relationship with His body, they are decapitating Christ from His body. Many people have grown tired and weary with organized religion for various reasons. Consequently, people want to be Christian but not religious. However, the very illustration the Holy Spirit uses to describe the relationship of Christ to His body proves this ideology is wrong and degrading to Christ Himself. After all, to speak of Christ is to speak of His body. Not only is it degrading to Christ's own person when anyone speaks poorly of His church, it cheapens Christ's blood!

“Shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

(Acts 20:28)

To claim a union with Christ apart from His organized body, the church, is to unwittingly claim that Christ wasted His blood on the cross! Now, it is possible and even true that many churches have separated themselves from Christ being their head, by teaching and practicing things He did not authorize in scripture. These churches that have departed from Christ's pattern and headship are not Christ's body. That does not mean that organized religion is altogether flawed. It simply means that singular church is not Christ's body. Keep looking.

Truth #2– *Christ doesn't have multiple bodies.*

Just as there is only one human body for every human head; likewise, there is only one spiritual body (church) for the one spiritual head (Christ). Paul says as much when he definitively states, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling...” (Ephesians 4:4). As was already made clear, there was only one church in the first century. Denominations did not come until much later. If all denominations are Christ's body, then Christ has multiple bodies, and His body is divided. This does not fit into the illustration Paul gives, nor does it coincide

with Paul's rhetorical question elsewhere in Corinthians, "Is Christ divided?!" (1:13).

Truth#3- *Christ and the body wear the same name.*

It has become popular practice for modern churches to give themselves a new, generic name by which no one can identify their doctrinal affiliations from the street sign. Names like Grace Church or Elevation Church are so generic, no one can read the name and know whether said church teaches Baptist doctrine, Methodist doctrine, or Presbyterian doctrine. Christ's church is not ashamed to wear His name, a name that identifies the church with the never changing doctrines of Christ. Perhaps you think this is silly talk and insignificant. But suppose the church was called "The Church of Satan." Clearly, the name of the church says a lot about the church. So, we conclude that the church should wear the same name as Christ.

Truth #4- *Christ is the head of the body, meaning He has all authority.*

In Matthew 28:18 Christ announced, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." This is an important concept as it pertains to the doctrine of the church. The church has no right, whatsoever, to teach something that neither Christ nor His delegated apostles and prophets taught in scripture.

It is the exact point in time that a church begins proclaiming teachings and practices foreign to the New Testament that the church decapitates its head, rejecting its King.

Conclusion

A king without a kingdom is like a boy sitting in Burger King with a crown on his head. The same goes for a kingdom without a king. Think on these things. God's illustration of the body of Christ should help restore His church to its eternal purpose.

Note: The main points in this lesson were inspired by and borrowed from a sermon given by Nathan Battey in December 2013 entitled "The Way, The Truth, and the Life."

Homework Questions

1. Read Daniel chapter 2 and write down the object that strikes the great image in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. What does that object represent according to Daniel?
2. Who is the head of the church?
3. What does the head signify as a symbol?

4. Use your Bible or an online search engine to find at least three different names used in the New Testament for God's church.

Lesson 6— The Church: Is There Only One?

WARNING!

This lesson picks up where the previous lesson left off. Not every church actually respects Christ as their head. There are many churches that wear His name but do not do what He asks. In an effort to sort the goats from the sheep, dangerous scriptures will have to be cited. Hard questions will be asked. Your honesty and integrity will be tested.

Are there few who are saved?

The question of one church or many churches is married to another question, a question the disciples asked Jesus on one of their long walks.

And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?”

(Luke 13:22-23)

Are there few who are saved? That is a hard-hitting question. Jesus would answer by saying, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for

many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able,” (v. 24). He would go on to preach that on judgment day, many people who had worn His name and spoken in His name would be turned away, because they had not actually obeyed Him (v. 25-27). Jesus was very clear. Yes, only few will be saved.

If Jesus were walking down the streets of Nashville, TN today, the disciples might just as well ask Him, “Lord, are there few churches that are right?” The same logic would lead to the same answer Jesus gave in Luke 13:24. But this begs the question: how few is few? In terms of the almost 8 billion people in the world, does this mean only 1 billion are saved right now? Or are we talking about 1 million? In terms of hundreds of church denominations around the world, does this mean only 100 churches are right? Or are we talking about 10 churches? This line of questioning is reminiscent of Abraham asking God how many righteous people it would take for Him to spare the city of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 18:22-33). In that story, there were less than 10 righteous souls to be had in a whole city of thousands. This might give some indication of how few is few in Luke 13:22-24.

Is it even conceivable that there could be only one, single church that is teaching and practicing the truth? Immediately, people read this question and scoff, “That is so narrowminded! It’s so self-righteous to think there is only one

church that is right!” And yet, I suppose in the city of Sodom, there were quite a few salty scoffers who said more or less the same thing to Lot. Silly Lot! But Lot knew a lot more than people gave him credit.

People absolutely do not like the hint that thousands of professing Christians and thousands of churches are wrong and unsaved. It seems this very idea shook the disciples just like it does many today. Perhaps the disciples’ question was provoked by Jesus’ judgment teaching in the several parables and sermons that precede Luke 13:22. Whatever the case, surely there is a comforting explanation to all this. Right?

The Way, The Truth, and The Life

In John 13:36-14:6 Jesus is seated with His disciples in the famous upper room answering another of the disciples’ questions— “Lord, where are You going?” (13:36). After some words of assurance, Jesus drops a bomb that has been quoted more than any presidential inauguration speech: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” How comforting! What a relief! But hold on...Jesus didn’t stop there. The far less quoted addendum to Jesus’ tripart self-description is this: “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Again, this answer by Jesus is not what many might like to hear. His answer is quite exclusive. In fact, Jesus makes things flat out awkward. If Jesus’

statement holds true, what are the implications for thousands of people and churches today?

Five Billion People

The *PEW Research Center* is a polling service that tracks world religious and political views

approximately every 10 years. According to the 2010-2015 *PEW* polling, Muslims account for *1.6 billion (24%)* people in the world (Muslims). This is very pertinent to the question, “Are there few who are saved?” Muslims confess that Jesus was a good prophet, but an orthodox Muslim would be blaspheming to say that Jesus is equal to Allah and the only way to Allah. Similarly, neither Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, or any other group of people outside of Christianity agree with Jesus’ exclusive and unchanging statement, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Let’s put this into tangible numbers. In the same 2010-2015 poll there were approximately *2.3 billion (31%)* Christians that comprised the world population. The name “Christian” is a very loose term in this poll and simply describes a person who would agree with the fact that Jesus is the Son of God (maybe not even that). Ultimately, that adds up to 69% of the world population denying Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, unable to go to the Father at judgment. Even 69% is a grossly

Question

What percentage of the world population is Muslim?

conservative estimate. Remember what Jesus said about the 31% who claim to be Christian, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord...’ and then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:22-23). Between passages such as Matt. 7:13-26 and many others (*Luke 13:1-9; 13:22-30; John 6:26-66; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12; 4:11; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2 Peter 2:20-21; 1 John 2:3-4; 2 John 1:9; Rev. 2-3*), two things are very clear:

1. *Few people are going to be saved.*
2. *Less than 31% of the world population will be saved if Jesus returns right now.*

The Answer

The title of this lesson is “The church: is there only one?” Before answering this question, allow for a moment of self-examination. What major influencing factor has led you to answer this question one way or another? The engineering force behind the no judgment, tolerant, politically correct attitude in the world is Mother Culture who is married to Daddy Satan. They have been happily married for some time now with no end in sight. Culture paves a wide road for the masses (Matt. 7:13). Culture intimidates the child of God into compromising (Rev. 13:11-17). Culture calls good evil and evil good (Isaiah 5:20). But at the

end of God's book, culture loses (Rev. 18:21-19:5). Satan loses. Unfortunately, this wicked couple loses only after deceiving thousands and thousands (Revelation 20:8).

The answer to the question, "The church: is there only one?" is simple: yes. God has only one church. Lesson 5 soundly established that Christ has only one body (Eph. 4:4), that body is the church (Col. 1:18), and He is the Savior of that one body (Eph. 5:23). A sincere Bible reader cannot read from Matthew to Revelation and come to the conclusion that God has more than one church. God does not approve of denominationalism. This is a hard saying, but before anyone accuses anyone else of intolerance, hate, or any other pejoratives; think about something. Do you believe what Jesus said in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."? If you do believe this, then you also believe that more than 5 billion people are lost, because more than 5 billion people do not believe in Jesus. More than 5 billion people are currently walking the broad way to hell and need the gospel to be saved. If you believe this inevitable truth, then you are narrow minded and intolerant. That's right. But wait...Jesus was narrow minded (Matt. 7:14). Jesus was immovable in His doctrine and terms of salvation (Matt. 19:16-22). Holding to a narrow system of faith and being intolerant of false teachings are not moral pitfalls. This attitude is commanded over and over in scripture (i.e.,

Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 John v. 7-11). So, don't be surprised when the Holy Spirit says there is only one church to the exclusion of all others.

*“There is ONE body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.”
(Ephesians 4:4)*

*“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into ONE body...”
(1 Corinthians 12:13)*

The One Church

Which church is that one church of the Bible? It is the church that, “Continue(s) steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers,” (Acts 2:41). It is the church that, “Keep(s) the traditions (of Christ and His delegated apostles and prophets) just as I delivered them to you,” (1 Cor. 11:2). It is the church that resists the ease of caving into cultural compromise for the sake of peace and safety (Rev. 2:8-11). For more about what this kind of church looks like, read Lesson 14— “What the Church Looks Like in a Modern World.” For now, it will suffice to say that, if a church does not model the one church of the Bible, then Revelation 2-3 teaches it must quickly change things around. For if it does not teach and practice what Jesus and His apostles left for a pattern, the church has simply

become a denomination, and God does not approve of denominations. See the next lesson for more on this subject.

Conclusion

Thank you for your willingness to consider this difficult Bible question, and may it be the consensus opinion that the things written were conveyed in love so that all can be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). If more than 5 billion people in this world really are lost, then it does no good to keep the truth shut up deep inside so as to offend no one. We should always share this truth with a loving attitude and kindness (Eph. 4:15); nonetheless, some will still be grieved by it. Just remember what Jimmy Jividen said, “One of the most unloving acts that one could do – is nothing-when he knows that (anyone) is being overcome by sin,” (147).

Homework Questions

1. How many Muslims make up the world population?
2. Can Muslims go to heaven without becoming Christians? Explain your answer.

3. “I am the _____, the _____, and the _____. No one comes to the _____ except through _____.”
(John 14:6)
4. What is the only way to the Father?
5. Are all people that wear the name Christian going to heaven? Give a Bible verse to support your answer.

Lesson 7 — What Is a Denomination?

Just down from my house, there are two churches that sit directly across the street from each other. With just a skip and a hop you could jump from one service right into the other. The churches are in no way affiliated. In fact, the church on the East bound side of the road has a Methodist title on their sign, and the one on the West bound side of the road says “Baptist.” Why can’t these two churches worship together and become one? For that matter, why are there so many churches in general? People commonly refer to different types of churches as denominations. There is the Presbyterian denomination, the Baptist denomination, the Catholic denomination, and the list goes endlessly on. The popular thing now is to upstart what is called a non-denominational church, which is really just code lingo for “all-denominational.” But none of these names or the designation—denomination—amounts to a hill of beans if there is no understanding. This lesson will answer the question: “What is a denomination?” The lessons following will explain where all these different denominations came from to begin with.

To illustrate what a denomination is, it is helpful to look at a mouth-watering pie.



(Figure 1)

As you can see, this pie was originally whole, but someone has cut away a piece that looks to be about $\frac{1}{8}$ the size of the original pie. *Figure 2* shows what this looks like numerically.

| | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | (This number is called the numerator and represents how many parts of the denominator have been taken.) |
| <hr/> | |
| 8 | (This number is called the denominator and represents how many parts make up a whole.) |

(Figure 2)

The original pie was made up of eight parts, but someone has taken a fraction or denomination of the original pie. Now, if someone were to bring over just a single piece of pie as a kind gesture, no one would complain. But suppose someone sold you a chair, and suppose that when they brought the chair over, they only brought the legs of the chair. You would be flabbergasted if you were expecting the whole chair! No one wants part of a chair or most of a chair; they want the whole thing, undenominated! No one wants part of a car; they want the whole car!

Denominations & the Church

The same logic that applies to pies, chairs, and cars also applies to the church. The Bible reveals, in full, what the New Testament church taught and practiced; it reveals the undenominated church: 8 out of 8, no fractions. Any church today that teaches or practices anything different from what the New Testament church taught and practiced is a denomination of the original church.

“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

(Matthew 5:19)

Here, Jesus emphasizes two important things for all His future disciples to maintain:

1. *Teaching*
2. *Practice*

From heaven's perspective, a church denomination looks like the fellow who said he was bringing a chair over but brought only the legs. This church is Jesus' church in only 1/8 capacity. It teaches part of what Jesus taught but only a part. This church might preach that Jesus saves, and everyone says, "Amen!" but beyond preaching that Jesus saves, whatever they might mean by that, this church doesn't teach or practice anything reflecting the New Testament church in scripture. There may even be churches that model the New Testament church at 7/8 capacity, but this is still a denomination. And surely no one wants a church missing that 1/8 of truth any more than one wants a car without the steering wheel. Paul was no fan of a car without a steering wheel. He gave his two inspired cents about denominationalism when he said:

"Now I plead with you, brethren...that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no (denominations) among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

(1 Corinthians 1:10)

A Helpful Exercise

A great exercise to utilize in determining whether or not a church is a denomination or not is to remove the sign. Don't literally strap a rope to the church sign and pull it out with a truck. What I mean is, don't regard the name on the sign. The church sign might have God's name on it or something about truth, etc., but don't pay a lick of attention to the sign. Instead, go inside the church building and observe what they teach and practice there. While observing this, take notes, and then go home to compare what they taught with what you can read about in your Bible. If there is something that doesn't match up, it's a very good possibility that the church is a denomination.

The Seed Principle

Many people think that producing an undenominated church is wishful thinking. This may not be easy, but the Bible reveals that it is possible. Not only that, the Holy Spirit reveals that undenominated churches are to be expected of Jesus' disciples. The seed principle helps make this difficult task simple.

When God created the earth, He created seeds. Genesis 1 says. On day three of creation Moses says, "And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good," (Gen. 1:12). This is the seed principle. If you plant an apple seed, it will produce an apple tree. You cannot plant an orange seed and get an

apple tree: that is impossible. Jesus would use this same seed principle when teaching during His earthly ministry.

“Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit... Therefore, by their fruits you will know them (false teachers).”

(Matthew 7:17,20)

Jesus, the creator of the seed, ought to know this principle more than anyone else.

In the parable of the sower and the seed (Luke 8:4-15), the sower goes out and spreads seed on the ground. While interpreting what the seed represented in the parable, Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God,” (v. 11). It doesn’t get much more straightforward than that! God’s word is like a seed. God’s word is powerful; it is meant to be planted; and when it is planted, watered, and allowed to grow, it will produce only one kind of fruit. God’s seed, unless genetically tampered with, will not produce false doctrine. God’s seed will not produce contradicting teachings or practices. God’s seed is reproduceable in undenominated form as long as men have access to it. Therefore, when churches do not produce the proper fruit, it is not because the task is impossible; it is because they didn’t plant the right seed.

Conclusion

Why are there two different churches sitting directly across the road from one another just down from my house? This happens because they are not teaching and practicing the same thing. If they were teaching and practicing the same thing, then there would not be two, distinctly separate churches. This happens all the time. In cases like this, there are only two possible outcomes.: 1) Both churches are wrong, or 2) one of the churches is wrong and one of the churches is right. They can't possibly both be right while producing different fruit. Jesus said that's not how seeds work. Hopefully, there is no longer confusion about what a denomination is. The next few lessons will go into more detail explaining the reason for the explosion of denominations in today's world.

Homework Questions

1. What is a denomination?

2. This lesson explains a helpful exercise to use when trying to find a scriptural church. Explain the exercise in the space below.

3. What is the seed principle?

Lesson 8— The Church & Catholicism

Lesson 6 was entitled “The Church: Is There Only One?” The answered this question in the affirmative. However, if that is the case, then there is a lot of sorting to be done. To help expedite the sorting process, we will start an examination of the major denominational influencers in history. This starts with an examination of the Roman Catholic church.

Where to Start

Much could be spouted in this examination of Catholicism. We could pull back the covers of many different Catholic beliefs and practices, exposing their indecency. A few such Catholic dogma include the immaculate conception of Mary (how God preserved Christ from inheriting sin through the flesh), original sin, infant baptism, the perpetuated earthly priesthood, the forbidding of marriage among clergy, the veneration and prayer to deceased saints, sainthood, the imparting of grace by the seven sacraments, transubstantiation, justification by works of merit, the apostolic succession of Peter, and *ex cathedra*. That is a whopping list. Someone turn up the A/C; I worked up a sweat just typing all that! The nature of this workbook does not allow an examination of each of these doctrines, and so we shall confine our attention to the mighty, Catholic cornerstone which underlies and upholds each one of the dogmas just listed.

Apostolic Succession

The Catholic church boldly declares that Peter's authority was and is still transferred to each archbishop (pope) in succession. This single belief is what all Catholic dogma stands and falls on. Traditionally, this doctrine arises from a narrow interpretation of Matthew 16:13-20. All interpretations that would here have Jesus blessing Peter as the church's first holy pontiff is an interpretation that ignores Jesus' allusion to Himself in Old Testament prophecy of Daniel as the *Rock* and *Son of Man* on which the kingdom of heaven is founded. The Catholic church proposes that if this doctrine of apostolic succession is true, then God's full weight of authority and infallibility is levied upon the succeeding popes until the end of time. The offspring of this doctrine can be condensed to three main principles: authority, infallibility, and tradition.

1. Authority

“The pope is judged by nobody,”

says Ludwig Ott in his Catholic systematic theology *The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (qtd. in MacArther). This doctrinal statement is blasphemous, having given the Roman Catholic pontiff the uncontested power to slay hundreds and thousands of innocent men and women who refused to concede to this lie throughout history (see William Tyndale's burning at the stake, the approximate 300 protestants martyred during the

English Reformation, and the deadly Catholic inquisitions of the 13-15th centuries). More than once after the translation of the Bible into the common tongue, papal authority allowed Catholic bishops the power to burn such translations in effort to maintain the Catholic church's blinding influence among the masses (see Pope Martin V's burning of the Wycliffe Bible in 1428 and the Catholic Bishop of London's burning of the Tyndale New Testament in 1526). Such examples of tyranny are enough to refute the authority invested to the pope by their straw man interpretation of Matthew 16. There is a valid reason Jesus Christ commissioned His authority to twelve men and not a singular individual. Even then, God saw fit that divine revelation and authority should eventually rest in nothing other than His Holy Word, written by hands led by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 3:1-5; 4:7-13; Jude v. 3). Certainly, God saw the terrible tragedies that would result should He invest His authority into a single, unopposed, human being.

2. Infallibility

After the Council of Trent, in which all who denied Peter's apostolic succession were cursed as anathema, the First Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1869-1870) officially pronounced *ex cathedra* as Catholic dogma. *Ex Cathedra* is the belief that when the pope speaks in the exercise of his office, and not necessarily in routine daily affairs, that he possesses infallibility in concern to doctrines of faith and morals (Decrees of the

First Vatican Council). Ludwig Ott, defines this doctrine as follows:

The pope is infallible when he speaks *ex-cathedra*. Definitions of the Roman pontiff are irreformable. The source of his infallibility is the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost who protects the supreme teacher from error. God in heaven will confirm the pope's judgment. He is preserved from error (qtd. in MacArthur).

Again, this doctrine is predicated on the Catholic interpretation of Matt. 16:13-20, and we place this in the same flame of fire as apostolic succession. This doctrine is unfounded by Scripture and receives the curse of Paul, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed," (Gal. 1:8 NKJV).

3. Tradition

This point requires mentioning for the sake of comprehensiveness. Needless to say, the doctrines of apostolic succession and papal infallibility have created a slew of Catholic traditions, several mentioned at the very beginning of this lesson. Faithful Catholics emphasize again and again the supremacy and invaluable nature of Catholic tradition. Yet, for being so invaluable, the supplemental claim is that nothing in Catholic tradition contradicts Scripture. A Catholic Christian will most often admit, "Yes, you can be saved by following nothing other than what is found in

Scripture.” And even though the Council of Trent declared anathema upon anyone denying Peter’s primacy, the Catholic Church still believes that any Christian, regardless of denominational affinity, is a saved child of God. Pope Francis espoused that all one has to do is obey his conscience, that is all (Day). The plea for tradition seems weak...because it is. Human tradition is, in fact, the only thing supporting the Catholic church and its power structure.

Conclusion

Why does the Catholic Church fail the test? How do we know it is not the one true church of the Bible? Because it is built on a false premise and man-made traditions. History has established this fact very well. I am very passionate about the heresy that is Catholicism. At the same time, I have several Catholic friends and acquaintances. Exposing the Catholic Church hierarchy and system of faith as blasphemous is not a personal attack on anyone that is Catholic. There are certainly many a sincere Catholic, for I have met them. Unfortunately, sincerity and truth are not married (i.e. 1 Sam. 13:12), and to all of the Catholic persuasion, I do lovingly plead for repentance, salvation, and an appeal to the church of Jesus Christ.

Homework Questions

1. When Jesus makes mention of the *Rock* and *Son of Man* in Matthew 16:13-20, what Old Testament book of prophecy was He alluding to? Who is the *Rock* and *Son of Man* referring to in this Old Testament book of prophecy?
2. The Catholic church believes _____ authority has been transferred to each pope.
3. Jesus Christ commissioned His authority to how many men?
4. List at least two examples of tyranny by the Catholic Church mentioned in this lesson.

Lesson 9— The Church & the Protestant Reformation

The previous lesson briefly analyzed how that the Catholic Church fails to identify as the one true church Jesus said He would build. In our pursuit of finding the church of the Bible, the one described in Lessons 1-6 of this series, we now arrive at an examination of the denominations that sprang up from what is called the Protestant Reformation. In this study we must travel back in time to the early 1500s.

What was the Protestant Reformation?

It's all in the name. The Protestant Reformation was a religious movement that spread across every sector of Europe around the same time the Bible was being translated into the common person's tongue. Up until the 1500s, Bibles were scarce and only the educated could read Latin, the popular language of the Bible at that time. Then came along a Dutch Catholic priest named Desiderius Erasmus, a German Catholic monk named Martin Luther, and an English Catholic priest named William Tyndale. Luther and Tyndale took Erasmus' recently composed transcript of the Greek New Testament, (the New Testament was originally written in Greek, not Latin) and these two men translated the Holy Scripture into the language of the farmer, storekeeper, and servant: Luther translated it into German and Tyndale into English. For the first

time in over 800 years the Bible could be read and understood by someone other than a Catholic bishop, king, or priest. What people discovered from reading the Bible for themselves is the very thing that ignited protests against the Roman Catholic Church and efforts to reform it. This is where the name “Protestant Reformation” comes from. The mother church had been exposed, and its effect would be more than felt.

What Needed Reforming?

What needed reforming? There were many Catholic traditions that readers of Tyndale’s New Testament found to be heretical and utterly detestable: most popularly being the doctrines of transubstantiation, purgatory, and the ascribed supremacy of papal authority over Scripture itself. Perhaps the corruption of the Catholic Church from this period is best illustrated in the life of John Bainham, a knight of Gloucestershire, England. Bainham got his hands on a Tyndale New Testament, or maybe it’s more accurate to say the New Testament got its hands on Bainham. He was so taken by what he read and outraged by what he saw from the church in light of Scripture. Bainham openly denied the Catholic doctrines of purgatory, praying to saints, confession to priests, and the pope’s authority being placed above Scripture. For this “heresy” he was arrested and made to suffer until he recanted his beliefs and teachings. David Teems, in his book on Tyndale, says that Bainham was treated so severely in the Tower of London that he was left lame (Teems 143). Finally, under much duress, Bainham

was suffered to sign a document stating the rejection of his beliefs (Ibid. 144). But this lasted less than a month. Bainham was too conscientious and quickly thereafter faced burning at the stake for heresy. He embraced the stake and confessed,

“First I say it is lawful for every man and woman to have God’s book in their mother tongue. Second, that the bishop of Rome is Antichrist...there is no purgatory...for our souls immediately go to heaven and rest with Jesus Christ forever,” (Ibid. 146).

Hundreds of men and women would burn or be beheaded during this century for the same (see the executions of Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, William Tyndale, and John Tewkesbury for other similar accounts).

The Fallout

The beast that was Rome and its attempt to extinguish all opposition did little more than fan the flame of the Reformers. One of the most obvious marks of error in Roman Catholicism noted by the likes of Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Tyndale, and Ulrich Zwingli was the Catholic teaching and practice of justification by works of merit: the teaching that if a man does enough “good” works (i.e., prayers to enshrined saints, confessions to priests, self-mutilation, etc.) he can overcome committed sin and merit God’s grace. This

idea was seen as outrageous. In fact, it was so outrageous to the men listed above, they went to the polar opposite end of the justification spectrum. Instead of something earned, Luther famously taught there is absolutely nothing, whatsoever a man does to be justified outside of having faith towards God. Michael Reeves sums it up, “From the moment Luther understood from Romans 1 that God’s righteousness is an entirely unmerited gift, justification was the matter of the Reformation...justification was what made the Reformation the Reformation,” (Reeves 177). Luther was entirely convinced that ALL works were by nature meritorious. John Calvin went so far as to teach that

*“You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”
(James 2:24)*

God must give faith to the individual since man is so depraved, unable to do anything towards his own salvation, also known as the doctrine irresistible grace (Ibid. 106).

Conclusion

What’s wrong with what the Reformers were teaching? Let me start by making a disclaimer; Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and especially Tyndale were brave, stalwart men. They did not teach and oppose Catholicism because it was the popular thing to do. There were times when it was indeed popular, but these men opposed the mother church when it meant life and death. Tyndale indeed did die for his beliefs on this matter. Nonetheless, sincerity is not the measure of

truth or character. We will leave the judgment of these men's souls in the hands of a Just Judge. In the mean time, we must approach an important question with honest hearts and open minds: "Did the Reformers go too far in their attempts to reform the Roman Catholic church?"

Homework Questions

1. What did Desiderius Erasmus do that was so important?
2. In what century did the Protestant Reformation start?
3. Who was the first person to translate the Bible into English?
4. What was/is one of the most obvious doctrinal errors taught by the Catholic church?

5. Fill in the Blank

“You see then that man is justified by _____, and not by _____ only.” (James 2:24)

Lesson 10— An Overreaction to the Catholic Church

The expression “don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater” is often used for people that overreact to something. The previous lesson ended on the question, “Did the Reformers go too far in their attempts to reform the Roman Catholic church?” Upon close examination of scripture, it would appear the answer is yes. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and many other leaders in the Protestant Reformation overreacted. They threw out the innocent baby (works done with faith in God) with the Catholic bathwater (works done with faith in man). Here, we will seek to re-establish the scripture’s faithful teaching about works of faith as a condition for salvation. Before establishing what the scripture says about works of faith, we need to verify the Catholic doctrine of salvation by works of merit.

Do Catholics Really Believe in Salvation by Works of Merit?

It would be a difficult mission to find a Catholic priest or church member who would say, “Yes, I believe that man is saved by the power of performing select, special, good works.” Devout Catholics deny this through and through. It would be nice to have some type of official Catholic dogma on the subject. The Catholic Council of Trent in the 1500s fits the bill.

The Council of Trent was a council of Catholic bishops, cardinals, and the pope, convened specially to write up an official, Catholic refutation of Protestant doctrines that were taking Europe by storm at the time. Here is a quote from this council:

The good works of a justified person are the gifts of God, not to the exclusion of merits of the justified person. And he being justified by the good works performed by him, though the grace of God and merits of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, *does truly merit the increase of grace and eternal life,*” (emphasis mine, “The Council of Trent”).

Re-read this quote a couple of times to let it sink in. Afterward, it should be very obvious that the words “grace,” “God,” and “Jesus Christ,” are sprinkled in like salt and pepper to make the underlying false doctrine of salvation by meritorious works taste like the truth. The salt and pepper tactic is nothing new now, and it wasn’t new then in the 1500s.

Various Catholic doctrines bare evidence that the Protestant assault was justified. The doctrine of sainthood teaches that some men and women have done so many good works throughout their lives that they deserve the honorary status of saint. Other Catholic doctrines—transubstantiation, monasticism, indulgences, the sacraments, praying to saints—reinforce the Council of Trent dogma that a person can “truly merit the increase of grace and eternal life.” All

these man-made doctrines profess that there is some power within an act itself (i.e., depriving self of pleasure) that incurs the grace of God. As a result, these claims circumvent the necessity and all-sufficiency of Jesus' redemptive act on the cross.

The Protestant's Overreaction

Yes, the Catholic church did teach and still teaches the doctrine of salvation by works of merit, which brings up the Protestant overreaction. The Protestants overreacted to these Catholic heresies by deciding on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, without any works whatsoever. To prove that Luther and others taught this, read the following quotation from Michael Reeves book *The Unquenchable Flame*. "In the Reformation mind-set, salvation is a gift of God's grace alone, found, not in any pope or Mass, but in Christ alone, and received by simple faith alone," (Reeves 106). "Luther and Calvin were emphatic that true saving faith would always produce such works of love, they were equally emphatic that such works were the consequence, and not the cause of justification," (Reeves 180). This last statement translates out to the popular Calvinistic equation that man is not saved because of works, but a saved man will want to do good works. It's all the same. Continuing, Reeves says about Luther, "(He) took against the book of James for exactly this reason; he felt it was not full enough of Christ. One Sunday, when the set Bible passage for the day was from James, he just read the text, and then told the congregation, 'I don't want to preach on this,' and went

on to preach on something else,” (Reeves 63). Luther didn’t want to teach on James, because James 2:14-26 teaches the exact opposite of what Luther and likeminded preachers were advocating. One last quote directly from Luther himself removes any doubt about the Protestant doctrine of grace, faith, and works. “Be a sinner and sin boldly...no sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day. Do you think that the purchase price that was paid for the redemption of our sins by so great a Lamb is too small?” (Reeves 55). Bold sinning is one sad consequence of the well-intentioned but false doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, without any works whatsoever.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, neither the Catholic nor Protestant doctrines of salvation match the blueprint of scripture. In the next lesson, we will attempt to resuscitate the baby that the Protestants threw out with the bathwater. Salvation involves grace and faith, no doubt, but it also involves a special kind of working on man’s part.

Homework Questions

1. What is the doctrine of sainthood?

Lesson 11— Getting Saving Faith Right

The previous lesson ended on a note of false doctrine. At least that's what most people would think when they read, "Salvation involves...a special kind of working on man's part." Didn't we already address this when talking about the Catholic doctrine of salvation by works of merit? Don't get the cart before the horse, as the old saying goes. No, humans can merit salvation. But an old preacher friend of mine also said—"Don't put all your works in one basket." Hopefully, all the carts and baskets will be in their place by the end of this lesson.

Getting Faith Right

Think about the concept of faith momentarily. Faith is a word that gets passed around like a baby in church; however, rarely does anyone define faith. It's never good to assume things, and assuming a biblical understanding of faith is no different. So, let's do just that and define faith biblically.

Analyze *Figure 1* before reading any further.

(Figure 1)



This chart is supposed to convey how that faith and doubt are opposites of one another. At the same time, the chart should reflect the idea that faith and doubt form a continuum. In other words, a person can have a tiny bit of faith, a moderate amount of faith, or a whole lot of faith! The same can be said about doubt. This is reflected in the disciples' request of Jesus in Luke 17:5, "Increase our faith." The disciples realized they had some faith, but they felt a need for more of this good stuff. Already in scripture, the implication is being left that a person can have some faith and still be lost in sin. That's the biscuit; now let's add a little gravy.

4 Criteria of a Saving Faith

A distinction needs to be made between faith and saving faith. Anyone can have a teensy, weensy bit of faith, but at what point does a person have enough faith to be saved? At what point does a person's faith in Jesus outweigh their doubt about Jesus? Surely a sinner needs more than a teensy, weensy amount of faith to be saved.

1. Knowledge

This is a simple and straightforward dynamic of faith. There has to be something to believe in. When Paul says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," (Romans 10:17), the word of God represents the knowledge in the faith equation. In other words, the word of God is the thing being believed in. Jesus would ask Peter in Matthew 16:13, "Who do men say

that I, the Son of Man, am?” Peter would ultimately say, “You are the Christ,” (v. 16). That Jesus is the Christ was the knowledge to be doubted or believed in by Peter.

2. *Mental Agreement*

Jesus is the Christ whether John Doe thinks so or not, but when John Doe agrees with that knowledge in his mind, he is one step closer to saving faith. Nonetheless, mental agreement with the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is not enough to save the lost soul. James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” Are demons saved by their agreement in the fact that Jesus is God? Demons even worship Jesus at times (see Luke 8:26-28), but they still remain lost demons. Clearly, this amount of faith is not enough to save a lost soul.

3. *Trust*

The intrinsic criterion of trust is where most minds go when the word “faith” comes up. If the concept of faith could be boiled down to one word, trust would be that word, but again, trust is on a continuum. How much trust does the person have who says he believes in Jesus? That is the question.

Several times in the gospels, Peter’s trust in Jesus is mentioned. When the masses turn away from Jesus in John 6, Peter speaks for the twelve disciples, reassuring Jesus that they will not forsake Him. In this speech Peter says, “We have come to believe and know

that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” (John 6:69). Even on the night of Jesus’ betrayal, Peter says, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” (Matthew 26:35). But only a few hours later, Peter’s affiliation with Jesus is under investigation, and he gives a starkly different reply—“Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man!’” (v. 74). Was it that Peter didn’t have any faith to begin with? Certainly not. It goes back to what we have been saying this entire lesson: faith is a continuum. Salvation hangs on the question of how much faith a person has. There is only one, objective, scriptural way to determine how much faith John Doe or Peter have.

4. Obedience

Knowledge, mental agreement with that knowledge, and trust in that knowledge are all very important factors to a saving faith, but...all of these without obedience will not save the lost soul. Obedience by its very nature involves working. Some try to reconcile the work of baptism with their understanding of grace, faith, and works by saying baptism is not a work. This is silliness. A work is something you do. Baptism is something you do; therefore, baptism is a work. Does a person have to get baptized? Does a person have to show through observable works the characteristics of the new man: tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forgiveness, love, and thankfulness (Colossians 3:12-15)? Absolutely. Jesus would go so far as to say, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good *works* and glorify

your Father in heaven,” (Matthew 5:16). The question is not about whether or not obedience involves works, or whether works are essential to salvation. The Holy Spirit makes it very clear that obedient works are essential. The issue is really with people mishandling works like they mishandle faith.

Not all works are the same; not all obedience is the same. Refer back to the memorable little quip, “Don’t put all your works in one basket.” In trying to harmonize scriptures like “For by grace you have been saved...and not of works” (Eph. 2:8-9) with scriptures like “You see then that a man is justified by works...” (James 2:24), people have done a great injustice to scripture. No scripture contradicts itself, and these passages about works are no exception. Instead of putting all works in a single basket, it is essential to understand that not all works are of the same nature.

Two Types of Works

Think about a child who is asked to take out the trash. Some children, when commanded to take out the trash, do not hesitate, but say, “Yes sir,” and proceed immediately to take out the trash. It might be over the top to say the child is smiling, but I suppose there are odd children out there who even smile as they obey this frequent command from their father or mother. The majority of children when asked to take out the trash, procrastinate, and only after several promptings do they finally obey the command to take out the trash, all the while frowning, moaning, and complaining while they do it. Both children obeyed the command, but

there is an essential ingredient of difference between the two: attitude. Attitude makes all the difference in the world. It is no different when God's children obey His commands.

1. Works of Merit

Works of merit were discussed in the last lesson. To review, works of merit place trust in self as opposed to God. It's an attitude problem. The scribes and Pharisees had this problem according to Jesus, "But all their works they do to be seen by men," (Matthew 23:5). This prideful attitude assumes that there is something in the works themselves that make men holy and give reason to boast.

2. Works of Faith

Works of faith are still works, but these works place trust in God. These kinds of works are illustrated in Luke 17:10, "When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" This unprofitable servant sounds a lot like the child that took the trash out immediately with a smile on his face. He doesn't expect a reward, because he knows he doesn't deserve a reward. He simply did his duty. This humble attitude places faith in God while doing what He commands, hence, why these are called works of faith.

There is no getting around the fact that works are essential to salvation. The rich young ruler had obeyed all God's commandments except one, and because he didn't trust God enough to obey in everything, abandoning his wealth to follow Jesus, he could not be saved (Matthew 19:16-22). Many of the Jewish rulers believed in Jesus, but because they feared their peers more than they feared God, they were not able to convert their small amount of faith into a large amount of faith and confess Jesus for who He was (John 12:42-43). Even demons believe in Jesus but not enough to obey Him and be saved (James 2:19). The answer to the question, "What amount of faith is enough to save a lost soul?" is this: faith that leads to obedience. When someone has enough faith in Jesus that they are willing to step out on the water and obey Him, they can be saved. The faith that obeys is the faith that saves.

Conclusion

Many people profess faith in Jesus, but few have the guts to put it all on the line for Him. Few have the guts to put anything on the line for Him honestly. But when the rubber meets the road, the person whose faith outweighs their doubt will always obey. And when he does obey, he will say, "I am an unprofitable servant, I have only done what was my duty to do." Anything short of this is lip service. Anything more than this is a work of merit, trusting in self. The Reformers got a lot of stuff right, but in their zeal to reform Catholicism, they went too far. They put all their works in one basket. They got the cart before the horse. They threw

out the baby with the bathwater. Thankfully, a different religious movement would catch fire in America some 300 years later. Keep on reading to find out what that movement was.

Homework Questions

1. Fill in the Blank

“Faith and doubt form a _____.”

2. What are the four criteria of a saving faith according to the scriptures?

3. Which criterion of faith do people usually have in mind when the subject comes up?

4. James 2:19 says demons have faith. Why are demons not saved by their faith?

5. What are the two types of works in the Bible?

6. Fill in the Blank

“When you have _____ all those things which you are _____, say, ‘We are _____ servants. We have _____ what was our duty to _____,’” (Luke 17:10)

Lesson 12— The Church & the Restoration Movement

The last several lessons in this series covered the Protestant Reformation, a very influential religious movement that spanned roughly 100 years (1500-1600s). While the Reformation Movement was remarkable, it failed in regaining what was lost by the Catholic Church. Where men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and others fell short in going all the way back to the Bible for church doctrine and practice, there would be men who came along in the early 1800s to complete this mission. This effort became dubbed the Restoration Movement and took place in early America.

An Explosion of Churches

One product of the Reformation Movement overlooked in the last three lessons was the resulting explosion of denominations. Figures 1 & 2 on the following pages give visuals to help conceptualize the origins of some of those denominations.

(Figure 1)

Mennonite Church-Zurich, Switzerland, est. 1525

Lutheran Church-Augsburg, Germany, est. 1530 by
Martin Luther

Church of England-England, est. 1535 by King
Henry VIII

Presbyterian Church-Switzerland, est. 1535 by
John Calvin

Dutch Reformed Church-Holland, est. 1560

Baptist Church-London, England, est. 1607 by John
Smyth

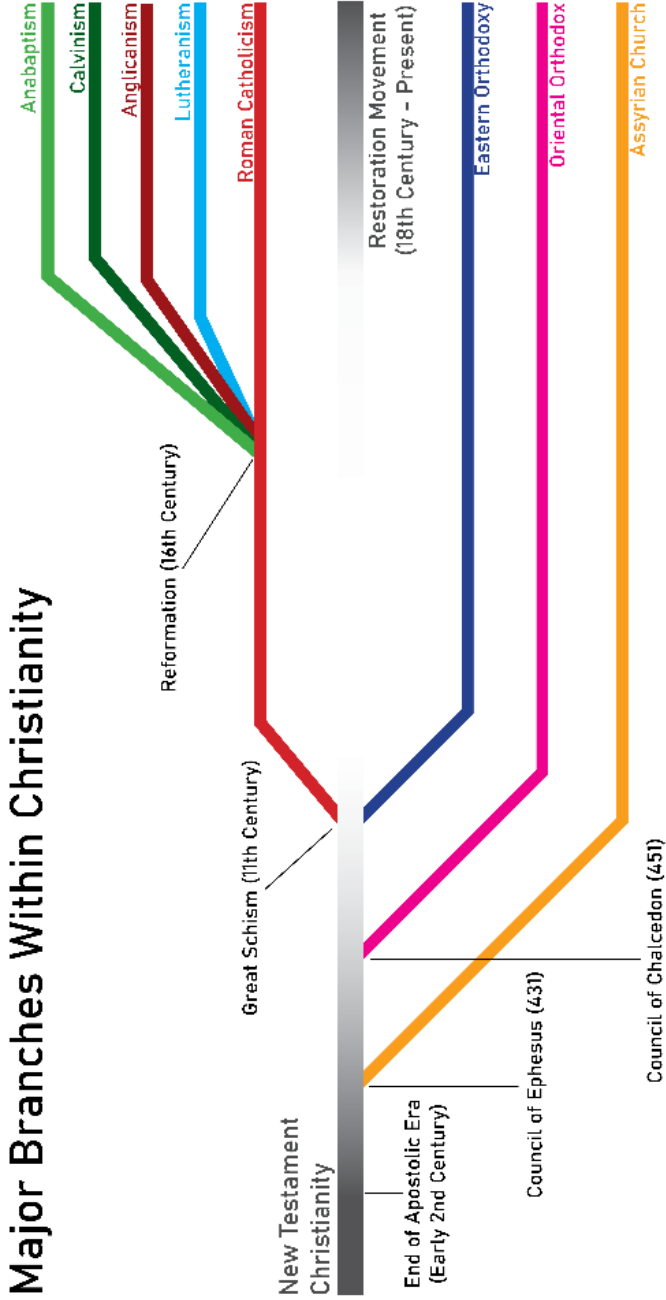
American Baptist-Providence, Rhode Island, est.
1639 by Roger Williams

Quakers-England, est. 1650 by George Fox

Brethren (Dunkards)-Schwarzenau, Germany,
est. 1708 by Hochmann & Mack

Methodist Church-London, England, est. 1729 by
John Wesley

(Figure 2)



(Source: Howard, Noah. "Major Divisions Within Christianity." 2020. PNG file, Accessed on 28 April 2020.)

All of these churches were established on two basic principles: they opposed the Catholic Church, and the church founder disagreed on some teaching or practice with all the other churches in existence. The number of churches would grow exponentially more in the late 1800', but between this and that lies the Restoration Movement in America.

The Beginnings of Restoration

The essence of the Restoration Movement is in the name. Men were diligent in studying their Bibles at this time as the Bible was now in the hands of the general populace. Deep thinkers from humble beginnings, raised in the denominations listed above, started comparing what they read in the Bible with what they saw being practiced in their churches. Like the Reformers 150 years before, they saw a disparity between the two and began the process of change. One example of such change is found in the Methodist Church circa 1794. In Surry County, Virginia members of the Republican Methodist Church gathered together to discuss matters of faith and practice (Hailey 40). This group had recently broken off from the Methodist Episcopal Church over matters of unscriptural church government (Ibid. 40). The conclusions of this meeting were as follows:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church (as opposed to a pope or other bishop).

The name for members of Christ's church is "Christian," excluding all party and sectarian names (i.e., Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc.)

The Holy Bible, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only creed, and a sufficient rule of faith and practice (as opposed to church creeds such as the Augsburg Confession of Faith).

Christian character is the only test of church fellowship and membership.

The right of private judgment, and the liberty of conscience is the privilege and duty of all (as opposed to a general church council), (Ibid. 41).

Whether right or wrong in their conclusions of faith and practice, the conclusions of this meeting illustrate the spirit of the Restoration Movement. It was a religious movement that ushered restoring the church to its 1st century beginnings. With the Bible as the only rule, the church could be restored to how Christ originally intended.

Stone & Campbell

Three individuals were especially instrumental in the Restoration Movement—Barton W. Stone, Alexander Campbell, and Walter Scott. Each of these men were

from different regions of the United States, but all three shared the same rule for interpreting scripture. Barton W. Stone was a member of the Presbyterian Church originally. He and a few other fellows departed from this denominational network of churches, recognizing the practice of general church councils and man-made creeds of faith to be foreign to scripture (Ibid. 44). They started meeting under the name of the Springfield Presbytery, but after much deliberation they finally concluded to abandon this name and drew up what they called *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* (Ibid. 44). Within this document were two statements of faith that reflect very well the spirit of restorationism.

We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven (Ibid. 45).

The spirit of this *Last Will and Testament* was essentially: the Bible is our authority and the Bible alone. Alexander Campbell's father—Thomas Campbell--shortly after the *Last Will and Testament* was published, made a similar statement about determining faith and practice. Thomas Campbell said,

*“Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and
where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent,”
(Ibid. 52)*

Alexander Campbell would pick up where his father left off and become perhaps the most influential man within this movement of Christians seeking to restore New Testament Christianity in all its simplicity. Stone and Campbell would be so influential, in fact, that many today call this movement the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Conclusion

This lesson introduced what the Restoration Movement was essentially about. The next lesson will identify more specifically what these men found to be New Testament Christianity upon studying the Scriptures. What teaching and practices did they abandon?

Homework Questions

1. What two principles defined the churches that arose from the Protestant Reformation?

2. When and by whom was the Baptist church founded?

3. Who were three influential names during the Restoration Movement?

4. Fill in the Blank

“Where the Scriptures _____, we _____;
and where the Scriptures are _____, we are
_____.”

Lesson 13— Byproducts of the Restoration Movement

The Church and the Restoration Movement ended with the question: “What teaching and practice did the leaders of this movement abandon?” These men—Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and others—began slowly to separate from the existing denominations (i.e., Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, etc.) concluding that all man-made denominations had departed from the original church pattern in one or more teachings/practices. If a church practice could not be found in scripture, it was aptly termed “unscriptural.” And if a given church was unwilling to correct this practice in conformity to scripture, the undesirable yet necessary conclusion was to separate from that church. Eventually, these men separated themselves from all man-made denominations and took on the simple name given to Christians in the New Testament—disciples. This transition did not take place overnight. Rather, the Restoration Movement spanned the 100-year period that was the 1800’s, and this spirit of restorationism continues into the 21st century today.

Unscriptural Teaching

There were many denominational teachings that were marked as unscriptural, but here we will review just a few.

1. Calvinism

Barton W. Stone did not agree with the Methodist teaching commonly termed Calvinism. Calvinism is a five-part doctrine teaching:

- 1) Man is born a sinner, depraved and condemned from birth (total depravity).

- 2) Man must have this sinful nature supernaturally transformed by the irresistible force of the Holy Spirit (irresistible grace).

- 3) God has predetermined whom He will transform and who He will not (unconditional election).

- 4) Jesus' blood was only shed for those whom God predetermined to be saved (limited atonement).

- 5) Those transformed by God's grace cannot and will not lose their salvation (perseverance of the saints).

You can listen to an examination of this five-part doctrine on the Chapel Grove Church of Christ website (Battey). Stone was simultaneously dismissed and resigned himself from the Methodist Episcopal Church for claiming that, "Calvinism is among the heaviest clogs on Christianity...discouraging...sinners from seeking the kingdom of God," (Finke and Stark 99).

2. Baptism

Baptism eventually became the principal teaching and practice that distinguished these preachers of the Restoration Movement from their denominational counterparts. This distinction was two-fold. First, the likes of Alexander Campbell concluded that infant baptism (a byproduct of Calvinism) was not only unnecessary but altogether unscriptural. Campbell initially disassociated himself from the Presbyterian churches because of this discovery. He taught, using scripture as his burden of proof, that baptism was only for those who could intelligently believe and obey the command to be immersed in water. Second, Campbell eventually concluded that baptism was for the express purpose of remitting sins or washing sins away (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Campbell's early stance against infant baptism brought him into the good graces of the Baptist churches in his area; however, as Campbell pursued the scriptural teaching that baptism was the point in time when a sinner becomes a Christian, having his sins washed away, he soon found himself at odds with the Baptist association as well. As Campbell, Stone, Scott, and others began preaching that baptism was for understanding adults and for the remission of sins, droves of people came forward to be baptized, and literally hundreds began leaving man-made denominations to be joined with the *disciples*.

Tolbert Fanning

In 1831 a young preacher by the name of Tolbert Fanning began preaching in Tennessee and Alabama. He would eventually travel with and learn from Alexander Campbell, but in 1831 he did something that very well captured the spirit of the Restoration Movement regarding false teaching and practice. James Wilburn describes the event like this: “Once, he had gone to preach...and he found a warm camp meeting in progress where he was scheduled to participate. There was straw on the ground around the ‘mourner’s bench.’ During a recess and before the time for Fanning to speak, he secured some help and gathered up the straw and accessories to the mourner’s bench and carried them off to throw them down a nearby hill... Fanning sat silently while the zealous members condemned the dastardly deed. When his turn to preach arrived, he delivered a sermon on the evils of the mourner’s bench system, and the church there never used the method again,” (Wilburn 25). For anyone naive to the “mourner’s bench” system, it was the practice of preachers calling sinners to a bench at the front of an assembly where they could pray and ask Jesus into their heart. Fanning discovered this practice to be foreign to scripture and outright misleading. Some might question his tactics, but the results of his determination and preaching speak for themselves.

Unscriptural Practice

There were many other practices that Disciples found unscriptural and began to discuss publicly as they made attempt at restoring the New Testament church pattern. Issues such as the one-man-pastor system, church government by councils and associations, the existence of church creeds to determine faith and practice, parachurch organizations such as missionary societies, and many others became hotly contested items during the 1800s and extending into the 1900s.

Conclusion

The Disciples of the Restoration Movement eventually took on the name Church of Christ. The Church of Christ is widespread across the United States today, though mostly including the Midwestern and Eastern states. In the 1900s there were several churches which became disassociated with those that still go by the name Church of Christ. Their differences center mainly on issues such as: how to interpret scripture, the use of instrumental music in worship, individual cups and loaves in the Lord's Supper, the use of church funds, and the existence of church organizations larger than the local church.

Homework Questions

1. Name the five core doctrines of Calvinism:

2. What became the principal teaching of the Restoration Movement?
3. What is the 'mourner's bench' and why did Tolbert Fanning get rid of it?
4. What name did the participants of the Restoration Movement take for themselves?

Lesson 14— What the Church Looks Like in a Modern World

The result of the Restoration Movement overviewed in Lessons 11 & 12 was the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ is established on the principle: teach and practice only what the church of the Bible taught and practiced. The name “Church of Christ” is found in Romans 16:16 and was chosen by leaders of the Restoration Movement to be a scriptural name for those churches that lived by the above biblical principle. Now, just because I say I’m a good person doesn’t mean I am in fact a good person. Liars usually swear they are telling the truth. Likewise, just because churches say they are the Church of Christ, following the teaching and practice of the primitive church in the 1st century scripture, doesn’t mean they are. Recall the simple experiment from Lesson 7 to help distinguish churches. Disregard the name of the church momentarily and observe what the church is teaching and practicing. God’s revelation through written Scripture has not changed for 2,000 years making it possible for the church of the Bible to be alive today. This is not possible by tracing some physical, unbroken lineage of churches all the way back to the first century church (see Catholicism). Transportation, communication, and many other things have changed in 2,000 years, but simple worship, leadership, evangelism, and other identifying marks of the church in the book of Acts are still easily replicated. With this in mind, we ask the

question, “What does the church of Jesus Christ look like in this modern world?”

Simple Church

The one word that could be used to describe the church you read about in the Bible is “simple.” This was by the design of God because people of all ages, abilities, social climate, and geography must have equal opportunity and ability to reproduce the church of the Bible regardless of who they are and where they are at. When you read the way Luke summarizes the church of the 1st century in its earliest stages, this quality of simplicity becomes very clear.

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’
doctrine (teaching) and fellowship, in the
breaking of bread, and in prayers
(Acts 2:42)*

This brief description of the church’s activity is obviously short of exhaustive, much the same as when the gospel is simplified to just the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. There is more to the gospel than just six words, and there is more to the church than just four activities. Acts 2:42 captures in one, simple verse a snapshot of what the church looked like from the outside looking in. When any John Doe searches the book of Acts and the epistles, he will be able to flesh out the skeleton left in Acts 2:42 and compare this with the modern church he attends.

Professionalized Church

The flip side of a simple church pattern is a professionalized and complex church pattern. The craze today is the community church model. This model specializes and professionalizes church to the point that a member of the church must hold a degree in music, theology, counseling, or youth ministry in order to serve meaningfully in the church. Such professionalization has strayed from the simple church pattern of Acts. As a result, specialized ministries have stunted the development of fathers, mothers, children, and church membership in general. Allow for a short example focusing on fathers.

Example: Fathers

Youth ministry, a concept not found in the New Testament church, has stripped fathers from the sense of responsibility they have in training their children in the Lord. In Ephesians 6:4, Paul instructs fathers to instruct their children in spiritual and physical matters. Youth ministry teaches fathers to “Leave the spiritual instruction of children to the professionals.” No youth ministry program has a sign with those words printed front and center, but this is the message of youth ministry. As a result, fathers largely play no part in their children’s spiritual development. This, in combination with other factors, find youth departing from churches in droves. According to two reports in 2001 and 2002 respectively, 70-88% of Christian youth

leave the church by their sophomore year of college (qtd. in Baucham 12). Religious researcher George Barna reported in 2003 that 85 percent of “born again teens” do not believe in the existence of absolute truth,” (*ibid.*). I re-emphasize the point that many factors play a part in this, but I am more than convinced that modern youth ministry, ironically, is a major player in this poor attrition rate of youth in evangelicalism. Fathers drop their children off at Bible class, day care, etc., and believe they have fulfilled the Pauline mandate in Ephesians 6:4. Blame falls equally on the fathers and the modern youth ministry construct, something completely foreign to the New Testament church as found in the book of Acts, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, etc.

Conclusion

As was stated previously in this lesson, a biblical church is a simple church. That is a memorable statement that will prove practical as you go out into this religiously chaotic world to find the church that Jesus bought with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Look for the simple church. Of course, that alone will not ensure success. Keep on reading for more practical pointers in your quest to identify the church of scripture.

Homework Questions

1. What is one of the first things you should look for in a church to determine whether or not it is a biblical church?
2. Why is the church designed to be “simple”?
3. List the four items Acts 2:42 describes as identifying marks of the early church?

4. What is at least one sad consequence of professionalized church?

Lesson 15— Nine Teachings & Practices that Identified the New Testament Church

In Lesson 7, teaching and practice were both identified as keys in distinguishing a denomination from the New Testament church. It's time to put New Testament church teachings and practices under a magnifying glass. To this point you should have learned at least two things about that church: 1) it was not a denomination, and 2) it was simple.

The New Testament Church

In Acts 2, the church that Jesus Christ promised to build (Matthew 16:18) was finally established. Christ put plenty of sweat and tears into the planning and building of this glorious institution, as anyone would if it meant having to spill your own blood to accomplish the task (Acts 20:28). Paul says that the planning process started before the earth was even created (Ephesians

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (teaching) and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
(Acts 2:42)

3:8-10). So, it comes as no surprise that Jesus would organize the church and provide a pattern for perpetual

generations to follow in His absence. In fact, Jesus started revealing the pattern for church teaching and

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

practice to the apostles no later than Matthew 18:15-20. He then delegated the apostles to set the church in order after its arrival in His absence (John 16:13). The pattern Jesus revealed is readable and understandable.

That pattern is found in scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17),

and it is the purpose of this lesson to concisely reveal the pattern for the church’s teaching and practice as laid out in the New Testament.

1. Assembly

The church in the New Testament assembled together on a regular basis so as to worship God and edify one another (Acts 4:23-31; 5:12; 20:7; Hebrews 10:24-25). There might have been multiple churches (congregations) in a single city as reflected in 1 Corinthians 16:3-16, but the members of each, individual congregation would assemble together on a regular basis. When they assembled, they would come

together, undivided, men, women, and children alike (1 Corinthians 11:17-20; 14:23)

It was not until the 1780s that the practice of dividing the assembly by the use of Sunday School (i.e.- Bible classes) came into existence. However, dividing the assembly into different groups for any reason is never found in the scriptures.

2. Teaching (*content and methods*)

The church in the New Testament engaged in regular study and teaching of God's word. While this was the practice in individual Christian life, teaching was expected to take place when the church came together in one place to worship. The Bible directs this teaching accordingly:

- Men performed the public teaching of the church.
(1 Corinthians 14:34-37)
- Speaking was done one man at a time.
(1 Corinthians 14:31)
- Teaching was from the Bible and did not go beyond what the Bible teaches.
(Acts 17:2-3; 17:10-11; 20:27; 1 Timothy 1:3; 4:6-7; 4:15-16; Titus 1:10-14; Galatians 1:6-9)
- Teaching was to be edifying as much as possible.
(1 Cor. 14:26)

3. The Lord's Supper (Communion)

The church in the New Testament observed weekly communion during their assemblies. This weekly

communion meal was conducted according to Jesus' instruction to His apostles which was given the night He was betrayed (see Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22). From reading Jesus' and Paul's instruction on this practice, we come to the following inevitable conclusions about how the church in the New Testament observed this ceremony.

- The communion was observed in memory of the Lord's death and what that accomplished.
(1 Corinthians 11:27-29)
- It was observed exactly as the Lord gave instruction.
(1 Corinthians 11:2,24-25)
- It was observed on the first day of the week.
(Acts 20:7)
- It was observed every first day of the week.
(Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Hebrews 10:25)
- It was observed using one cup.
(Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25,27,28)
- It was observed using one loaf.
(1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23)

One cup and one loaf in the Lord's Supper was the regular practice of all churches for centuries, as this is the New Testament teaching and practice. It was not until 1891 at the Scovill Avenue Methodist Church of Cleveland, Ohio that individual cups were introduced to the communion service (De France 32).

4. Prayer

The church in the New Testament would pray in their assemblies (Acts 1:14; 4:23-31; 12:5; 1 Cor. 14:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer played an important function in praising God and asking for His blessings.

5. Singing

The church in the New Testament would sing in their assemblies (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). This was done without the aid of instruments. There is no scripture in the New Testament authorizing instrument use in worship; it is neither explicit or implicit in scripture. History verifies that instruments were not introduced to church worship until 670 A.D.

6. Collection

The church is an organization. And though it is not like human organizations, it does consist of humans. Naturally, the members of the church will fall into need occasionally. Beyond this, the gospel must be taken to all the world (Matthew 28:18). For the purpose of fulfilling the physical needs of members and the call to spread the gospel, the church in the New Testament took up a weekly collection from the members (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7). The collecting of money implies the existence of a treasury where the money would reside until needed for use. How this

collection was performed and exactly how the collected monies were used is described by the following list:

- The common collection was the duty of every church member.
(1 Corinthians 16:2)
- It was performed every first day of the week.
(1 Corinthians 16:2, ESV, NASB, NIV)
- It was only meant for Christians.
(1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8:24; 9:1)
- It was to be used for needy Christians.
(2 Corinthians 9:12)
- It was to be used for supporting preachers of the gospel.
(1 Corinthians 9:1-11; Philippians 4:15)
- It was to be used for supporting elders of the church.
(1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- It was to be used for supporting widows in need.
(1 Timothy 5:1-16)
- It was to be used for supporting the work of the church (*implied by the support of preachers and elders*).

7. Leadership

The church in the New Testament had structure and government. Naturally, if there was no government in the church, there would be anarchy and chaos. To prevent chaos and to ensure the church was spiritually and physically cared for, God gave instructions for the existence of leadership in the church.

- A church was not mature until it had established biblically qualified men to the office of leadership called elder (*aka: bishop, presbyter, pastor, shepherd, overseer*).
(Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)
- Elders must meet certain qualifications.
(1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9)
- There is always more than one elder.
(Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2-6; 16:4; 20:7; 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5)

While biblically qualified eldership was the ultimate mark of a church with mature leadership, there were other offices of leadership found in the New Testament church such as evangelists and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

On the other hand, the scriptures do not leave any hint that the early church had priests, archbishops, or even local churches governed by a single man such as is prevalent in the one-man-pastor-system. It was not until 606 A.D. that the Catholic Church officially appointed their first pope, Boniface III.

The scriptures do not leave any hint that any man, group of men, or church council presided over or governed multiple churches. It will be noticed that each local church was self-governing and autonomous upon reading the New Testament.

8. Evangelism

The church in the New Testament was evangelistic, meaning that the members of the local church engaged

in spreading the gospel. This was the commission of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20, and this is exactly what the early church did (Acts 5:14,42; 8:4-6,25).

9. Fellowship

The church in the New Testament had regular fellowship; in other words, the members of the church shared time together outside the worship of the church. They were a part of each other's lives (Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:42; 2:44; 4:32-35; 12:12; 16:14-15; 16:33-34; 21:8-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:8). This relationship fosters an atmosphere of love and caring for each other as family members and equally valuable members of the body of Christ.

Conclusion

The New Testament church obviously had more than nine identifying marks. The only way to be completely comprehensive in scope is to say, "Read your New Testament." But if you do the following, you should be well on your way to identifying the New Testament church reproduced in your day and time.

- 1) When you examine a church, don't pay attention to the name on the sign (see *Lesson 7*).
- 2) Look for a simple church to start with.
- 3) Use the nine identifying marks from this lesson as a quick guide to rule out many churches rather quickly.

- 4) Go home and read your New Testament to further verify that the church you are looking at is indeed the church that can be read about in the Bible.

Homework Questions

1. List the nine identifying marks of the New Testament church on the lines below.

2. In what decade was the practice of Sunday School introduced?

3. When and where were the first individual communion cups introduced to the Lord's Supper?

4. When were instruments introduced to the worship of the church?

5. Who was the first Catholic pope and when did he take office?

6. Do the above dates tell you anything about the church innovations associated with them? Explain your answer.

Conclusion

Very early in the book, I made the statement that only through Christ's church can anyone be saved. If this is true, and I feel as though everything to this point has proven it is, then you need to seriously consider becoming a part of the Lord's church.

With that said, aren't there saved people in every church? Does it really matter what church you go to? I believe there are many quote, unquote "good" people in different denominations, but if the Rich Young Ruler taught us anything, he taught us that "good" doesn't cut it (Matthew 19:16-22). There are many sincere people in different denominations, but the story of Uzzah teaches us that sincerity doesn't cut it either (2 Samuel 6:1-7). Doing good works, sincerely, and for the glory of God are important (Matthew 5:14-16); I am not negating this principle. However, to have all the Good Samaritan's qualities while going to a church that does not follow the church blueprint found in scripture is a waste of time. Jesus died for *His* church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23), and yet men have relegated Jesus and His bride to fanciful clay, molded in man's image. You don't want to worship every first day of the week? No worries! I know the church just for you! You want a female pastor to keep with the times? No worries! There's a church for that, too! Perhaps meeting in person is too unsanitary. Whatever you want or don't want, there is a church for you! No. Jesus didn't die for churches made in man's image. He died for one church;

He died for His church that honors and submits to Him in everything (Colossians 3:17).

To this point in the book. I have tried my best to be reserved about what church I attend. I have set forth all the tools that a person will need to identify the church of the Bible without trying to manipulate a conclusion from the reader. Now, it's time for me to come clean. I am a member of the Church of Christ. To be more specific, I am a member of the churches of Christ that worship every first day of the week, use one cup and one loaf in the Lord's supper, use the treasury of the church strictly for the preaching of the gospel and ministering to needy Christians, have strictly male leadership, pursue mature leadership in the form of scripturally qualified elders and deacons, have singing without the accompaniment of instrumental music, and teach and practice everything else by speaking only where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent. Whew! That was a mouthful. There are many churches of Christ that do not teach and practice these things. I believe any church that goes beyond scripture in any of the tenets just listed or others is not the church of Jesus Christ. Putting God's name on a sign doesn't make a church the church of Jesus Christ. The church where I attend chooses to go by the name "Church of Christ" because this is a scriptural name (Romans 16:16) and not because there is some sacramental power in putting this name on a sign. A church is only the church that Christ built when it teaches and practices what Christ taught and practiced.

No doubt, the last paragraph will lose some readers. The politically correct (PC), cancel culture of America demands an apology for the things I just penned. This PC culture has devoured religion at the same time. Anything or anyone that excludes is to be excluded. I'm not trying to be tacky. I'm not trying to hurt anyone's feelings. Believe me. The hardest conversations I have are the ones where I have to tell an individual that they are lost according to the Bible, and they need to become a member of the Lord's church. These are hard conversations, not because the words are difficult to understand, but because the message is difficult to accept. Such was the case with Jesus' sermon in John 6 when He pulled off the kid gloves and told the masses they were only following Him for the food (John 6:26,66).

Seriously consider becoming a member of Christ's church. In order to do this, you have to have some knowledge of God's word on the subject, and that knowledge should lead you to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:14-17; Hebrews 11:6). A saving faith is a confessing faith. If you believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior enough, you will confess His name (Acts 8:36-37; Romans 10:9-10). Likewise, if you believe in Jesus enough, you will repent of all sin in your life. Repentance entails sorrow for sin committed, a change of mind to obey God as opposed to fleshly lusts, and a 180-

Repentance

- 1. Sorrow*
- 2. Change of Mind*
- 3. Change of Lifestyle*

degree life change from a worldly lifestyle to a repentant, God-glorifying lifestyle (Acts 3:19; 26:19-20; 2 Corinthians 7:8-10). And then, after all of that, the would-be follower of Jesus has to submit to the simple act of baptism. Few denominations flinch at this last step until the label “for remission of sins” is dropped. That’s right, baptism is not just getting wet. Baptism is not an afterthought: something that takes place after the point of salvation. Baptism is not an outward sign of some mysterious, inward, salvation experience. Baptism is the point in time when the sinner’s sins are washed away by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

(Acts 22:16)

This is one teaching that separates a lot of churches from the church that Jesus built. The book of Acts is riddled with conversion accounts, every single one of them incorporating the act of baptism as an essential element of the salvation process—Acts 2:37-42; 8:9-13; 8:26-39; 9:1-19; Ch. 10; 16:11-15; 16:16-34; 19:1-7. At the point of arising from the baptismal waters, the Bible says this:

(41) “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

(47) *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*

(Acts 2:41,47)

The moment of baptism is the moment that the soul of the born-again Christian is added to the universal kingdom of God (the church).

Don't think that the whole salvation experience ends with a bath. Many people are looking for just that: a salvation experience. They want the experience; they want the all the feelings, but they don't want the responsibility that follows. But the New Testament lays out a tidy example of what should follow. After Paul was baptized for the remission of sins, Luke records:

(26) *“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples...”*

(28) *“So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.”*

(Acts 9:26,28)

In a nutshell, Acts 9 is saying that Paul took up membership with the local church. As Lesson 1 illustrated, in the 1st century, there was only one church. Paul didn't have to filter through all the different denominations to find the right one. There was only one! Now, the church finding process of Acts 9 might take a few months! For many people, there may not be a church locally that teaches and practices scripturally. A person in this situation might find themselves

needing to jumpstart a scriptural church or moving somewhere else. Whatever the case, there must be church membership in order for the New Testament church to exist.

Finally, the born-again Christian, with His mind made up to do what is right (repentance), trusts in God with all his heart to live faithfully unto death. Jesus told the church of Christ in Smyrna, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life,” (Revelation 2:10). This implies that the opposite is also true. The salvation process is not “one and done” as the saying goes. The Christian life in the church of Jesus Christ is a difficult life of faithfulness, but not to worry. For Paul says, “This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself,” (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

If you are seriously interested in studying the gospel plan of salvation further, please contact myself, Aaron Battey, through fiveminutebiblestudy.com and a study can be easily arranged either in person, by phone or through other available outlets. Obeying the gospel and becoming a member of the body of Christ is the greatest decision anyone can ever make.

Appendix— The Church & Its Relationship to Israel

In the original Five Minute Bible Study series about *How to Identify the Church*, there was a lesson entitled “The Church as the New Israel.” While this special study about the relationship between the nation of Israel and the New Testament church provides a very interesting subject, the nature of this study serves better as an appendix in this workbook.

Settling a Common Misunderstanding

This may blow the minds of some readers, but Israel is no longer God’s special people. Did I really just say that? Yes. The majority of U.S. politicians and evangelicals still espouse that Israel is God’s special people, but this agenda is not in harmony with the Bible. If Israel is still God’s special, chosen people, then the following three points must be true: a) God did not fulfill His covenant promises to Israel under the Old Testament, b) Israel was chosen primarily for salvation, and c) the church did not replace Israel in the divine scheme of redemption. The rest of this lesson will be dedicated to proving from scripture that these three doctrines are absolutely false, even in the face of widespread agreement otherwise.

A. God *did* indeed fulfill His covenant promises to Israel under the Old Testament.

Consider two proof passages. The first passage is Joshua 21:43-45. Understand beforehand, when God entered into covenant with Israel in Exodus 23, He promised to give the nation land (v. 30-

“So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers.”

31) and protection from enemies (v. 31). So, in Joshua 21:43-45, He says, “So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their land. Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.” The second proof is a combination of two passages, Exodus 23:31 and 1 Kings 4:21. In Exodus 23, again, God is verbalizing the land promise of His covenant with Israel saying, “And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the Euphrates River,” (v. 31). Many years later, at the height of Solomon’s reign and after he had conquered all the land of Canaan, the Bible says, “So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt,” (1 Kings 4:21). Clearly, God proved good on His

promise of land giving. Together, these two passages form a solid one-two punch to those who would claim God did not fulfill His covenant promises to Israel under the Old Testament. The fact that there is currently a Muslim mosque sitting on the site of the Davidic temple does not prove God unfaithful to His word. The promise of physical land was not one of eternal perpetuity. Rather, the promise was conditional (Exodus 23:31-33). The eventual subjugation of Israel to heathen empires and the current desecration of Israel's holy place proves God good on His word for punishing Israel should they break the covenant on their part, which they did (Jeremiah 11:1-17 & Matthew 23:31-39).

B. Israel was *not* chosen for salvation.

This point cannot be stressed enough. God did not arbitrarily select Israel from among all the nations of the world so that they could have complete immunity. The entirety of Romans 9-11 deals with this issue. One verse that sums this truth up well is Romans 10:1. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." Paul makes this prayer because as he assesses the current state of national Israel in His day, he realizes that for a large part, Israel has rejected God's plan for saving them. In Galatians, Paul makes it equally clear that Israelites have no advantage over Gentiles in regards to salvation. "There is neither Jew nor Greek...for you are all one in Christ Jesus," (Gal. 3:28). "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but

faith working through love,” (Gal. 5:6). The only reason God chose Israel as a special people, was because of the promise He made to the forefathers of Israel in order to bring Messiah into the world (see Genesis 22:18, Jeremiah 11:2-5 & Romans 9:3-5).

C. The church *did* replace Israel in the divine scheme of redemption.

Many clues in the New Testament scriptures prove the church to be what shall be dubbed the new Israel of God. The most explicit passage describing the church in this way is Galatians 6:16. After opening the letter addressed, “to the churches of Galatia,” Paul ends with, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God,” (6:16). While 1 Peter 2:4-10 is less explicit, it goes further in proving the church is God’s new Israel. There Peter calls the church a) a chosen generation, b) a royal priesthood, c) a holy nation, d) His own special people (2:9). Compare this description of the church with God’s description of Israel when He entered into covenant with them at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6) and the parallel between the two groups is very clear. Several more clues prove the point but would take too long to explain here. In place of a detailed explanation, answer these questions. Why does James call his church audience “the twelve tribes scattered abroad?” Why do the apostles find it necessary to replace Judas and restore the number of apostles to 12? Why does

Samaria (the capital of Israel) receive special mention in the gospel program of Acts 1:8?

Conclusion

This study should accomplish several goals. Hopefully, it has cast doubt on a false and detrimental hope that Jews are still God's people, not needing the gospel of Christ, when they very much need the gospel. Beyond that, this study was intended to give people an appreciation for the kingdom of God: the church. The nation of Israel was not an end within itself. Israel was a type of God's church. The nation brought the Messiah into the world and manifested the special, loving relationship that God has for His kingdom people of all ages.

Answer Key

Lesson 1

The Commands of Jesus:

“Rejoice” (Mt. 28:9)

“Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee...” (Mt. 28:10)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mt. 28:18-20)

“Handle me” (Luke 24:39)

“Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:47)

“He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father...” (Acts 1:4)

Occurrences of the words “church” and “kingdom”:

“church” (Acts 2:47)

“kingdom” (Acts 1:3,6)

Lesson 2

1. Heaven; Psalm 103:19
2. Reign
3. It means there are men who exercise authority that is given them by God. An example is local governing authorities. Men that have delegated

authority from God such as this deserve the respect that comes with that authority. Other examples are fathers and church leaders. These all exercise delegated authority from the sovereign God Almighty.

Lesson 3

1. People who defy God's authority and people who humbly submit to God's authority.
2. Patriarchal
3. Israel was a physical kingdom with a physical king, but the church is a spiritual kingdom with a spiritual king. Jesus did not come to reign on a physical throne in Jerusalem. He came to establish a special, spiritual kingdom that He called the church and the kingdom of God. Many problems arise when Christians try to apply the functions of physical kingdoms with the spiritual kingdom of God. The church is not a theocracy like Israel was.

Lesson 4

1. church; congregation; assembly
2. 1 Cor. 6:4; 1 Cor. 10:32; 1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Cor. 11:18

1 Cor. 6:4 (a specific local church, Corinth)

“If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?”

1 Cor. 10:32 (the universal church)

“Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.”

1 Cor. 11:16 (a group of local churches)

“But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.”

1 Cor. 11:18 (a local church assembled, Corinth)

“For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.”

3. “spiritual but not religious”
4. *Answers may vary*

Lesson 5

1. a small stone (Dan. 2:34-35); the stone represented the kingdom of God (Dan. 2:44)
2. Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18)
3. authority (Matt. 28:18)
4. church of God (1 Cor. 1:2); church of Christ (Rom. 16:16); body of Christ (Col. 1:18); flock of God (1 Peter 5:1); household of God (Gal. 6:10); temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16); bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7); *other answers apply*

Lesson 6

1. appx. 1.6 billion
2. No; because while Muslims believe Jesus Christ was a good prophet, they do not

believe He is deity (God), and Jesus said He is the only way to the Father, implying that belief in His divinity and sacrificial atonement are absolutely necessary for all men everywhere to be saved.

3. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)
4. through Jesus Christ
5. No; Matthew 7:21-23 says that on the day of judgment, many people will appeal to Christ on the basis that they wore His name (Christian) and performed many religious acts while giving Him the credit, but Jesus says this is missing the mark.

Lesson 7

1. A denomination is a fraction of the whole or a part of the original. In terms of churches, a denomination, by the very nature of the word, means a fraction of the original church. To be more specific, a true denomination is a church that differs in some teaching(s) or practice(s) from the original church found in scripture.
2. Disregard the name on the sign of a church. Rather, observe what the church teaches and practices. Compare your findings with what you can read in the Bible that the New Testament church taught and practiced. If something

doesn't match up, then you have found a denomination.

3. The seed principle is a law of nature that seeds produce after their kind (i.e., an apple seed will produce an apple seed). With regard to religion, the seed principle is this: if you plant the seed of God (written word of God) then you will get the church of God that this seed produces.

Lesson 8

1. He is alluding to the book of Daniel, specifically Daniel 2 & 7. In Daniel 2 the kingdom of God is compared to a stone that overthrows the kingdoms of men. In Daniel 7 the same kingdom of God is given to the Son of Man in a vision, and the Son of Man rules the kingdom of God eternally. The stone of Daniel 2 corresponds to the Son of Man in Daniel 7; both the stone and the Son of Man in Daniel's prophecy correspond to Jesus Christ. Therefore, when Jesus takes on the title "Son of Man" in Matthew 16:13 and says that He the kingdom of God will be built on "this rock," He is undoubtedly referring to Himself. Christ, the Son of Man and the solid rock is the foundation on which the church is built. This is the point of Matthew 16:18.
2. apostolic
3. 12; technically, in Matthew 28:18 there were only 11 men since Judas had committed suicide, but in Acts 1 the number is restored to 12, and it was to

these apostles that Jesus delegated authority in Matthew 28:18-20.

4. William Tyndale's burning at the stake; the approximate 300 protestants martyred during the English Reformation; the deadly Catholic inquisitions of the 13-15th centuries; Pope Martin V's burning of the Wycliffe Bible in 1428; the Catholic Bishop of London's burning of the Tyndale New Testament in 1526

Lesson 9

1. Desiderius Erasmus composed an excellent Greek manuscript from which the Greek New Testament could be translated into other languages.
2. 1500's
3. William Tyndale
4. justification by works of merit
5. "You see then that man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24)

Lesson 10

1. The doctrine of sainthood teaches that some men and women have done so many good works throughout their lives that they deserve the honorary status of saint.
2. transubstantiation, monasticism, indulgences, the sacraments, and praying to saints
3. James 2; Luther did not want to preach from James 2, because James 2 plainly says that working on man's part in some capacity is

necessary for salvation, and Luther was completely convinced that to be saved by grace through faith was to completely do away with works altogether on man's part.

4. Yes; as Martin Luther's quote toward the end of the lesson shows, if man is saved entirely by God's irresistible grace operating on the him, then man has no real responsibility, and he can sin boldly. After all, he is saved unconditionally by the grace of God, and no sin can separate Him from that grace, so why not sin boldly? Many Calvinists would deny this as true, but these are the natural conclusions of such a doctrine. Of course, regardless of the consequences of a doctrine otherwise, if it is not found in scripture, it is a dangerous doctrine by nature of this alone.

Lesson 11

1. "Faith and doubt form a continuum."
2. Knowledge; Mental Agreement; Trust; Obedience
3. mental agreement with knowledge that Jesus is the Christ
4. Because their faith is simply mental agreement with the fact that Jesus is the Christ. They do not believe enough to obey Him as the Christ; therefore, their faith is not a saving faith. This illustrates that faith alone, as many people think of it, is not enough to save.
5. Works of Merit; Works of Faith

6. “When you have done all those things which you are commanded say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” (Luke 17:10)

Lesson 12

1. They opposed the Catholic Church, and the church founder disagreed on some teaching or practice with all the other churches in existence.
2. The Baptist church was established in 1607 by John Smyth.
3. Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and Walter Scott
4. “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.

Lesson 13

1. Total Hereditary Depravity; Unconditional Election; Limited Atonement; Irresistible Grace; Perseverance of the Saints; altogether these form the acronym TULIP
2. baptism for the remission of sins
3. The mourner’s bench was the practice of preachers calling sinners to a bench at the front of an assembly where they could pray and ask Jesus into their heart. Fanning discovered this practice to be foreign to scripture and outright misleading, and so he did away with it.
4. Disciples

Lesson 14

1. simplicity
2. Simplicity was by the design of God because people of all ages, abilities, social climate, and geography must have equal opportunity and ability to reproduce the church of the Bible regardless of who they are and where they are at.
3. The apostles' doctrine (teaching), fellowship, breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), and prayers
4. Professionalized church and its specialized ministries have stunted the development of fathers, mothers, children, and church membership in general.

Lesson 15

1. Assembly; Teaching; the Lord's Supper; Prayer; Singing; Collection; Leadership; Evangelism; Fellowship
2. 1780
3. In 1891 at the Scovill Avenue Methodist Church of Cleveland, Ohio
4. 670 A.D.
5. Pope Boniface III, 606 A.D.
6. While the historical origins of a teaching or practice do not validate or invalidate the doctrine, these origins give a strong indication as to whether the thing came from the truthful teaching of scripture or by man's invention. It is this author's observation that the teachings and

practices in association with the above dates are man's invention and not scriptural in origin.

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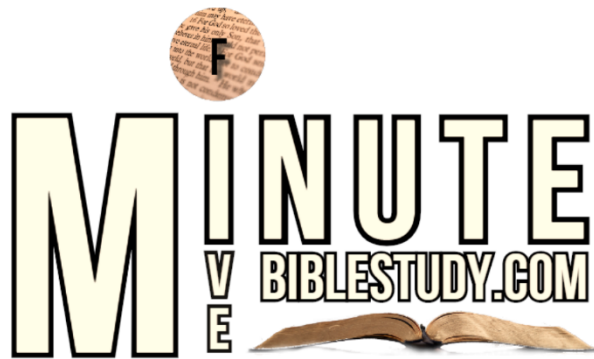
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