

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

The Church of Christ

1. Planned Before Creation
2. Foretold by the Prophets
3. Jesus' Promise to Build
4. Jesus is King over the Church
(Kingdom)
5. Made up of the Saved
6. A Glorious Hope

Prepared by:
Paul E. Cantrell
84 Northview Dr.
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

2006

Lesson One

"Planned Before Creation"

The church is vitally important! This study is designed to show and emphasize this great truth! Each lesson is built around a Scripture phrase that deals with the church. This lesson will show that the church did not come from the mind of man but from the mind of God, Himself. It is the product of the infinite and infallible wisdom of the eternal God of the universe. It is therefore perfect in its design and function. It should not be changed or altered to suit the whims and wishes of men; for in so doing, they will destroy the purpose for which God designed the church. The church must not be taken lightly, for it is through the church that God's great wisdom is made known among men (Ephesians 3:10).

THE CHURCH IN GOD'S MIND BEFORE CREATION

There are two sets of Scriptures that emphasize that God planned the church or the kingdom. One set points out that these plans were made **before** God created the universe, or before Time began; the other set points out that these plans were already made when the foundations were laid. The following Scriptures indicate that the church was planned before creation or before Time began.

Ephesians 1:4—God's redeemed people at Ephesus were chosen or elected to be such **before the foundation of the world**. "Before" is "**Pro**" in the Greek, and "world" is "**Kosmos**" in the Greek and has reference to an orderly world or universe. The TCNT translates this phrase as follows: *"before the Creation of the universe."*

1 Peter 1:19-20—Jesus Christ was foreordained **before the foundation of the world** to shed His blood to redeem these Christians. But this was determined in the mind of God before He created all things. Weymouth translates this phrase as follows: *"even before the creation of the world."*

1 Corinthians 2:7—God's wisdom that had planned the redemption of lost sinners through Christ was hidden from man until the time came to reveal it. But it was hidden in the mind of God **before the world**. The Greek word for "world" here is "**Aionios**" which can be translated by the word, "**ages**." The **New Translation (New Testament)** translates this phrase as follows: *"before time began."*

2 Timothy 1:9—The church's salvation was given in Christ Jesus, but was planned for **before the world began**. Again the Greek word for "world" is "**Aionios**." The Monmouth New Testament translates this phrase as follows: *"before the beginning of time."*

Titus 1:2—God promised eternal life to His people, but He did it in His mind **before the world began**. The TCNT translates this phrase as follows: "*before the ages began.*" Or another has put it: "*before the ages of time.*"

All five of the above Scriptures clearly indicate the planning on God's part for man's redemption in Christ before He even created the world or before time began.

THE CHURCH—A MYSTERY FROM CREATION

The next set of Scriptures will indicate that God's plan for the redemption of mankind in Christ was known by God from the beginning of time and was gradually being revealed by His Holy Prophets through the ages—up until the time of the arrival of the Messiah. But what was revealed was not clear (it remained a mystery) until it was fulfilled in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Then, it was fully made known unto the sons of men through the preaching of the gospel. The following Scriptures indicate this!

Ephesians 3:9-11—God's mystery was hid **from the beginning of the world**. "Apo" in the Greek is translated "from." "Aionios" is translated "age." "From" indicates a starting point from something. It infers that something was hid "*from the beginning of the ages.*" The TCNT translates this phrase as follows: "*Which from the first.*" Taylor's translation states: "*from the very beginning.*"

Matthew 13:35—This passage quotes Psalm 78:2. It speaks of things that have been kept a secret **from the foundation of the world**. "Kataboles" is translated "foundation," which infers a beginning. "Kosmos" is translated "world." Williams' translation puts it simply: "*since creation.*"

Revelation 13:8—This passage speaks of the Lamb that was slain **from the foundation of the world**. This phrase is the same as Matthew 13:35. The ASV renders this: "*from the foundation of the world*" as the KJV does. But it obviously has the connotation of: "*from the beginning of the ages.*"

Matthew 25:34—God's new kingdom was prepared for men so that they could inherit it **from the foundation of the world**. Again, this phrase is similar to the two passages above. GSPD translates this phrase as: "*from the creation of the world.*"

Luke 1:70—Holy Prophets had spoken of a Savior for mankind **since the world**

began. "Ton" in the Greek is translated "**since.**" "**AP**" is translated "**time.**" "**Aionios**" is translated "**age.**" The literal idea is: "*since time began.*" The RSV renders it: "*from of old.*"

Acts 3:21—God's Prophets had spoken about Jesus **since the world began.** The RSV renders this: "*that have been from of old.*"

Acts 15:18—God knows all about His works that were involved in man's redemption **from the beginning of the world.** Literally, "*from ages*" in the Greek. **Berkeley** renders this: "*from eternity.*"

Romans 16:25—The mystery about Jesus Christ was kept secret **since the world began.** "**Kronos**" is "**time.**" "**Aionios**" is "**age.**" Literally, "*since the beginning of time.*" The ASV renders this: "*through the times eternal.*"

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Thus, from these two sets of Scriptures, it can be seen that God not only planned for mankind's redemption in Christ before the creation of our universe, but also had revealed His plan through the Holy Prophets from the beginning of time. These continued revelations were more of a gradual unfolding of God's plan, but keeping it a mystery until He was ready for Jesus to come as man's redeemer.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What Parable did Jesus use to illustrate the great value of the church or kingdom? (Matt. 13:45-46).

2. The church was planned by God:
___ a) Before He created the world;
___ b) After He created the world;
___ c) After man sinned.

3. Define the following phrases:
a) Before the foundation of the world—

b) From the beginning of the world—

c) Since the beginning of time—

4. How could God plan to redeem man in the church before man ever sinned?

5. In what sense was the church a mystery?

6. What is the value of knowing that God planned the church?

7. Why is it important for the church not to be changed by men?

8. Who and what was involved in the planning of the church?

Lesson Two

"Foretold by the Prophets"

The Old Testament Prophets recorded the prophetic foretelling of the coming kingdom/church. There are passages in the Old Testament that not only show that God planned for the church, but that it was an integral part of His eternal purpose with reference to the redemption and ultimate glorification of man. The church exists today as a living witness to the infinite and eternal wisdom of Jehovah (Ephesians 3:9-11), which was a mystery (secret) through the ages until the "*fullness of time*" came for Jesus to come to earth among men to reveal God's great mystery to man. Five things are closely tied together in the revealing of the great mystery of God.

The Promise of a Coming Redeemer. Because of man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden it was necessary for man to have redemption provided for him since he was unable to save himself. That redemption was planned in the mind of God even before man was created and put on the earth (Ephesians 1:4). It was God's Will that Jesus should die for the sins of mankind (Revelation 13:8) and thus provide a just means of his redemption (Romans 3:26). The following Scriptures show the intent of God from the beginning:

1. **Genesis 3:15**—The **seed of the woman** is to **bruise the head of the serpent**. That is, He is to deal a deathblow to Satan's power over man. Hebrews 2:14 tells of the completion of this work in Christ.
2. **Isaiah 53:1-12**—This prophecy was given about B.C. 690. While many prophecies were given of the coming Messiah (the anointed one of God), this passage in Isaiah is the most revealing.
53:5—"*wounded for our transgressions*"
53:6—"*Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*"
53:8—"*for the transgression of my people was he stricken*"
53:10—"*made his soul an offering for sin*"
53:11—"*he shall bear their iniquities*"
53:12—"*he bore the sin of many*"
3. **Matthew 1:21**—At the birth of Jesus (B.C. 4)* an angel appeared to Joseph and stated that the child's name shall be called **Jesus** because he will save His people from their sins!
** This date, B.C. 4, is the new system of dating and does make an allowance for the approximate 4-year discrepancy in the calendar.*

The Promise of a Coming King and Kingdom. God allowed the Jews

to set up an earthly kingdom to rule and govern His people under the Covenant that God gave to them at Mount Sinai through Moses. But He planned to set up another kingdom that would be different from the first one. This kingdom was to be special in several ways.

1. **2 Samuel 7:12-16**—God is speaking to David and making a promise in regards to a successor for his throne. While some of these promises in this passage were fulfilled in Solomon, there is something about the promises that look to the future. David's seed (Solomon) was set upon David's throne. But Jesus was also a seed of David and was set upon David's throne (Acts 2:30; Luke 1:32-33). It was said of David's seed that he would build a house for the Lord. Solomon did build the Temple that served for the worship of God under the Old Covenant. But Jesus also built a house for the Lord (Hebrews 3:3-6), the church! But the one promise that has to be looked at closely here is the promise of God establishing the throne of his kingdom forever. The old kingdom ended with the Babylonian captivity. The only possible fulfillment would be through Christ being placed on the throne of David to rule over this new kingdom of God (Luke 1:32-33; Colossians 1:13). This prophecy to David is dated about B.C. 1000.
2. **Daniel 2:44**—This prophecy is dated about B.C. 604. Daniel is giving the interpretation of a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of a giant image of four different sections and of its destruction by a little stone cut out of a mountain. He points out that the image represented four succeeding kingdoms, with the Babylonian being the first and the Roman being the last. It was during the days of the kings of the last kingdom that God would set up His new kingdom. But again a most significant statement is made about it—it will never be destroyed. It will not have an end like all earthly kingdoms have had! The new kingdom of God has lasted for almost 2000 years thus far.
3. **Daniel 7:13-14**—This prophecy is dated about B.C. 545. It speaks of one liken unto the Son of Man coming before the Ancient of Days (God, the Father). This one was given Dominion, Glory, and a Kingdom. But notice the special feature of this new dominion—all peoples and nations shall serve Him. People of all nations will make up this new kingdom. And again it emphasizes that it is to be an everlasting, unending dominion. It would not pass away nor be destroyed by men.
4. **Matthew 3:2**—In about the year A.D. 26 (A.D. 30 in original calendar), both John and Jesus came preaching that the kingdom was at hand, about ready to be set up among men. What kingdom? It had to be the one that God had been promising from the beginning of time through His prophets.

The Promise of the Coming of the Lord's House (Church). This term, "house" is just another way of describing the redeemed people that Jesus would save by His coming death on the cross. The Lord's house and the church are identified as the same thing in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:3-6).

1. **Isaiah 2:1-3**—This prophecy is dated about B.C. 740. The Lord's house was to be established in the top of the mountains (Mt. Zion in Jerusalem) (Heb. 12:22-23). It was to be established in the last days or last age of mankind on earth (Acts 2:16-17). All nations were to flow into it (Lk. 24:46-47). The word of the Lord was to go forth from Zion.
2. **Isaiah 9:6-7**—This prophecy was about B.C. 734. It foretells of Jesus being the new king and head over the church/kingdom (Matt. 27:11; Eph. 1:22-23; Matt. 28:18). There was to be no end to this new kingdom and it would be established with justice forever.
3. **Matthew 16:18**—Jesus said He would build His church—confirming what the prophets have said. The Apostles were given the keys to this new kingdom.

The Promise of the Giving of a New Covenant. A new covenant was made necessary because of the nature of this new kingdom. It would have a new king as well as a new High Priest. The Old Covenant was taken away and a new one given in its place (**Isaiah 2:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 24:47**). Jesus gave His marching orders to His disciples just before He ascends up from them into heaven. The new message was to go forth from Jerusalem unto all nations!

The Promise Coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would now be given not only to the Jews, but to Gentiles as well (**Joel 2:28-32**). Peter quotes this prophecy and states that it was being fulfilled at the time he was speaking to the people. In **Acts 10 & 11**, the Holy Spirit was also poured out upon Gentiles. Thus, all flesh in the sense of both Jews and Gentiles received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Miraculous events occurred to show that He had been poured out upon both Jews and Gentiles. The Apostles were given special powers by God to accomplish their work (**John 16:13-15**).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God's great mystery that He had planned from before time began was made known in "prophetic language" among the Jewish people from about 1500 B.C. down to about 400 B.C. The final prophet that God sent after 400 B.C. was John the Baptizer who was to prepare the way for the Messiah and His setting up of the new kingdom/church (Mark 1:1-15; Matt. 3:1-2). Everything was in readiness—the "fullness of time" had come for God's plan to be fully unfolded in Jesus! (Gal. 4:4).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What 5 things are tied together with the coming of this New Religious System?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
2. What prophet clearly foretold of a coming Redeemer for man?
3. Who is the "seed" of the woman in Gen. 3:15?
4. How could God "justly" forgive sinful man before Jesus died?
5. What is the significance of Jesus being the king over this new kingdom/church?
6. What prophet foretold of the coming of a new kingdom?
7. Why do we believe that Isaiah's "Lord's house" (2:1-3) is talking about the church?
8. How do we know that the church and kingdom are the same?
9. What prophet foretold of the giving of a New Covenant?
10. To whom was this New Covenant to be preached?
11. What connection does the coming of the Holy Spirit have with the coming of the church/kingdom?

Lesson Three

"Jesus' Promise to Build"

The kingdom of God had been prophesied of for hundreds of years. The Jewish nation had looked for and longed for its coming. After four hundred years of inspired silence (400 BC to 26 AD), a fiery preacher came on the scene preaching a message they had long yearned to hear, "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 4:17). Great excitement was being created among the people. Their long-looked-for-kingdom was about ready to be set up among them.

A factor that complicated the teaching process about the kingdom was the misunderstanding of what kind of a kingdom it would be. Their idea was one of an earthly ruler and realm, one of military power and material wealth (Matthew 2:2). Even the Devil tried to seduce Jesus with the idea of an earthly rulership over all nations (Matthew 4:8-10). The Jewish people were pressing for the kingdom to come (tried to force it on) (Matthew 11:12; Luke 16:16). They even tried to make Jesus king on more than one occasion (John 6:15).

Much of Jesus' teachings were to try to clarify the kind of kingdom that would be established. It was not to be an outward, physical kingdom to which they were accustomed, but a kingdom within the heart of persons who would recognize and follow their king (Luke 17:20-21).

Most of the passages in the gospels deal with the kingdom being at hand; that is, in its preparation stage before its full establishment among men. These Scripture will illustrate:

Matt. 3:2—John preached that the kingdom was at hand.

Matt. 4:17—Jesus preached that the kingdom was at hand.

Matt. 10:7—The twelve were to preach the kingdom was at hand.

Luke 10:9—The 70 were to preach the kingdom was at hand.

Matt. 6:10—Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the kingdom to come.

Several passages indicate the expectation on the part of various ones of the coming of the kingdom. The following will illustrate:

Lk. 17:20—The Pharisees asked to know when the kingdom would come.

Lk. 19:11-27—Jesus told a parable to help those who thought the kingdom was about to be set up immediately. He pointed out that He had to first go away to receive the kingdom.

Lk. 23:42—The thief on the cross wanted Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom.

Mark 15:43—Joseph of Arimathea waited for the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:6—Even the apostles, after Jesus' death and resurrection, were still expecting the kingdom to be set up.

But there are also special passages that help to pinpoint the time of the beginning of the kingdom. They are as follows:

Mark 9:1—Some of the people listening to Jesus would not see death before the kingdom would come. The kingdom was to come with power that could be witnessed.

Matthew 16:18,19; 18:18—Jesus said He would build His church and the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. Peter and the other apostles were given keys of the kingdom (to open the door for people to enter). They were given the power to bind and to loose.

Matthew 26:28-29—The Lord's Supper would be taken in His new kingdom.

There are several passages that do not fit into this over-all pattern of the above passages, and have posed problems to some in proper understanding. They are as follows:

Matthew 11:12—The kingdom suffers violence and the violent take it by force.

Matthew 12:28—The kingdom of God is come unto you.

Matthew 21:31, 43—Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before others.

Luke 16:16—The kingdom is preached and people press into it.

Luke 17:20-21—The kingdom does not come with observation.

Whatever understanding is placed on the above passages it must not be in contradiction to the many plain passages that indicate that the church (kingdom) was **not fully** and **completely** set up until later.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

Up to this point of time (the ascension of Jesus), the church-kingdom was in its promised and preparatory stage. After the ascension of Jesus, the church became a reality. The following Scriptures help to show this.

Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2—The kingdom or church would be set up in the "last days." Peter clearly stated that the "last days" had begun!

Luke 3:1—The kingdom would be set up during the days of the fourth world empire (Roman kings—Daniel 2:44). Luke records that John began his preaching in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when he preached that the kingdom of God was at hand.

Daniel 7:13-14—When Jesus ascended to the Father, He would be given a kingdom, dominion, and glory. In Acts 1:9-11, it is recorded that Jesus ascended back to the Father. But Ephesians 1:20-23 states that Jesus, upon His ascension, was placed over all power and dominion, and that all things were put under His feet, and that He became head over His church.

Acts 2:33—The Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh also in the "last days" (Joel 2:28-32). Jesus repeats this promise to His apostles in Acts 1:4-8. Upon ascending to heaven, He sent forth the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (Acts 2:33).

Acts 2:23-33—But the kingdom or church was to be built after Jesus had successfully overcome the "gates of hades." This, Peter said, he had done by being raised up from the dead (Acts 2:23-33), and then He was seated at the right hand of God.

Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8—The kingdom was to also come with power. Jesus promised this power to the apostles after his death. The power came when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles in Acts 2:1-4—on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:14-47—The doors to the kingdom were opened by the apostles when they preached their first sermon and made it possible for sinners to enter into the kingdom of God. Some three thousand responded and were baptized and they were added to their number (or the church) (Acts 2:47).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We believe that it can be logically concluded that the church or kingdom had its beginning on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem as had been prophesied. From here on (Acts 2), the church was always spoken of as being in existence. For example:

Acts 5:11—Great fear came upon the church.

Acts 8:1—The church was persecuted by Paul and it was scattered.

Acts 8:12—Philip preached things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Acts 12:5—The church prayed for Peter's release.

Acts 14:22-23—Through much tribulation, people could enter the kingdom—They appointed elders in every church.

Colossians 1:2, 13—Those in the church had been translated into the kingdom of God's dear son.

The church of kingdom of God had its origin on the day of Pentecost when the first gospel sermon was preached in fact and reality and 3000 were obedient to the message and added to their number (apostles). Any church professing to have a beginning before or after this time could not be the one that the Bible speaks about. It is very important that we are a part of the church Jesus promised and built by the shedding of His blood!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. During what earthly empire (kingdom) was the kingdom of heaven to be set up?
2. When did the church have its beginning?
3. Where did the church have its beginning?
4. What was to come at the same time the kingdom came?
5. From where was the Law of the Lord to go forth?
6. When did Christ sit on David's throne?
7. Was Peter the head of the church or was Christ?
8. When was Jesus made king over His kingdom?
9. Why be concerned about when the church or kingdom had its beginning?

TRUE OR FALSE

- ___ 1. The church was invented by the Apostles after Jesus' death.
- ___ 2. Jesus promised the Apostles special powers after He left them.
- ___ 3. Jesus stated that the kingdom was already set up during His public ministry.
- ___ 4. The church began just after the death of John, but before Jesus' death.
- ___ 5. Jesus sent 70 disciples out to preach that the kingdom had already come.
- ___ 6. Peter speaks of a "beginning" with reference to the events on Pentecost in Acts 11:15.
- ___ 7. Only Peter, among the Apostles, had the power to bind & loose.
- ___ 8. Acts 2 is a very important beginning date for the church.
- ___ 9. One of Jesus' parables stated that Jesus had to go away to receive His kingdom.

Lesson Four

"Jesus is King over the Kingdom"

The kingdom about which the prophets foretold and that John and Jesus proclaimed was at hand was set up and established on the first Pentecost after the Resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2). This was to be a new kingdom, not like the one with which the Jewish nation was familiar in their past experiences. The Messiah would reign over this new kingdom. He would govern His people. God was king over the Jewish nation at first, but the people clamored for a king like the nations around them; thus, rejecting God as their only king (1 Samuel 8:1-7). Under this new kingdom, God again would be their king (through the reign of Jesus) over His people.

PROPHECY THAT EMPHASIZED JESUS' AUTHORITY

The prophets spoke of a Messiah (the anointed One) to come to redeem mankind. This Messiah would come through the lineage of Abraham and David (Matthew 1:1). But the prophets also spoke of a king and a kingdom—a ruler that would build God's house—He would have authority. The following passages in the Old Testament are confirmed in the New Testament as being fulfilled in Christ.

- 1) **2 Samuel 7:13**—God promised to establish the throne of a seed of David. According to Peter in Acts 2:29-33, Jesus is on the throne of David reigning as king.
- 2) **Isaiah 9:6-7**—Isaiah also emphasized that one would sit upon the throne of David and the government would be upon his shoulders. Also, Acts 2:29-33 again shows the fulfillment of this prophecy about Jesus as king.
- 3) **Zechariah 9:9**—The prophet told the people of Jerusalem to rejoice because their king was coming and bringing salvation—as He came, he would be riding upon an ass, a colt, the foal of an ass. John records the account as being fulfilled in the triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem (John 12:12-15).
- 4) **Isaiah 28:16**—Isaiah foretells of a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, that is laid in Zion as a sure foundation. The Psalmists adds that this stone was rejected by men and He became the head stone of the corner (Psalms 118:22). Peter stated that Jesus was the tried stone that they rejected, but which God made the head of the corner (Acts 4:11).
- 5) **Psalms 110:1**—The Psalmists records what the Lord God said unto David's Lord—*"sit at my right hand until your enemies are brought under your footstool."* Peter attributes this prophecy as being fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 2:34-36).

Jesus , the Messiah (the Christ), is the fulfillment of these prophecies of a Ruler to come to rule over God's people.

WHAT DOES JESUS' KINGSHIP MEAN?

1. It means that Satan's power has been destroyed. Hebrews 2:14-15 indicates that one of the purposes for Jesus' coming was to destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil. Death no longer has power over mankind that it once had. The victory has been won—Satan has been defeated (Revelation 12:7-12). Jesus foretold of Satan's defeat (John 12:23, 31). As a result of this victory: (1) Mankind can now enjoy the salvation of God (Acts 2:38, 47); (2) The Power Jesus promised the Apostles could be sent (John 16:13; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:4, 16-17); (3) The kingdom can be set up (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:4); (4) and the Authority of Christ could be exercised (Matthew 28:18-20).

2. It means that Jesus has the power and authority to rule. Jesus is the Monarch of His church or kingdom. He has the right to rule because of the great sacrifice that He made for mankind (Revelation 5:12). He has the right to give commands, to govern, to reward and punish, to give guidance to His subjects. The early church understood Jesus' absolute authority. His authority was greater than: (1) The traditions and customs of men; (2) The gods of the pagan world; (3) The authority of the Caesars of Rome. They were willing to accept persecution and even death rather than to deny their king (Revelation 12:11).

VARIOUS TERMS USED TO DEPICT JESUS' RULERSHIP

- 1. "Government on His shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6-7).** This term easily depicts the idea of rulership. It is the kind of rulership that is characterized as one of judgment, justice, and peace. Jesus is called the "*Prince of Peace.*"
- 2. "Jesus as Lord" (Acts 2:36).** The term indicates one who rules over others and has authority over others to reward or punish those who obey or disobey. Christ is to be confessed by men as Lord (Romans 10:9-10). He is referred to as the "**Lord of lords**" (Revelation 17:14). The term, "Lord," also carries with it the idea of "Master" who has servants or slaves whom he employs or has purchased. Paul speaks of our need to glorify God with both our bodies and souls because we have been bought with a price, the blood of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). For one to turn his back on Jesus after becoming a Christian, the Scriptures say he has turned his back on his Lord that bought him (2 Peter 2:2).

3. **"Jesus as King" (Revelation 17:14).** Jesus is worshipped as not only the *"Lord of lords,"* but also as the *"King of kings."* His kingship is depicted as one who sits on the throne of David at the right hand of the majesty on high (Acts 2:29-35). He is in the right lineage to be king as a descendent of David and heir of the promise that God made to David (2 Samuel 7:12-17). He will rule as king over His kingdom until the end when He shall deliver the kingdom back to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

4. **"Jesus is Head" (Colossians 1:18).** The idea of headship is that of "pre-eminence." This headship involves Jesus being placed far above *all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named*" (Ephesians 1:20-23). But this headship is over His body, the church. The church is subject to Him as their head. There is a very strong emphasis upon the **ONENESS** of the head as well as the body! One head over one body, the church. Not many heads (two or more) and not many bodies or churches. Jesus does not share His rule or authority with anyone, especially with any man! The church has **NO** human head, only a divine One! Any one who would make such a claim is self-deceived and inflated with his own pride! If men originate churches, name them, organize them, give human laws, and place heads over them—they are human institutions (religious, but human) and not the body or church of Christ! For Christ is the only head over His one church.

5. **"Jesus is the Husband" (2 Corinthians 11:2).** Jesus gave up His life to purchase His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:25). As the husband is head over the wife, so Christ is head over His church. The bride is subject to her husband in everything, so the church should be to Christ (Ephesians 5:23-24). This relationship denotes the closeness, intimacy, and love between the husband and his bride.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is only one source of authority for the church or kingdom—Jesus! All power or authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). No man, nor group of men will supplant Him as the supreme ruler of His church. They may try and deceive themselves and others into believing that they have succeeded, but in the day of judgment the truth will come out (Revelation 20:11-15). If Jesus has all authority, then His subjects do not have a right to make laws in His stead. Christ has the right to rule and His rulership must be respected. In fact, there is a strong emphasis given to Christians that whatever they do in word or deed that all is to be done in name of Lord Jesus (by His authority) (Col. 3:17). It should be obvious that Jesus has

given His people a Law or Covenant to go by in order to be saved and be prepared to serve Him well.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is it vital to have a divine rather than a human head over the church?

2. If one refuses to belong to the body or church of Christ, what has he done with Jesus' headship or kingship?

3. What does a king or head do?

4. How much authority does Jesus have?

5. For how long is Jesus to reign as king?

True or False

- ___ 1. The Apostles were selected by the church to serve for a limited time.
- ___ 2. Peter was made head of the church.

- ___ 3. Elders are the heads of the local church.

- ___ 4. Jesus, as husband over His bride, the church, allows her freedom to do as she pleases because He loves her.
- ___ 5. There is to be only one head over one body, the church.

- ___ 6. Churches of Christ have to have human heads over the local congregations for unity's sake.
- ___ 7. A king is merely a figure-head, others do the ruling.

- ___ 8. Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and being crowned king destroys Satan's power.
- ___ 9. David referred to the Messiah (Jesus) as his Lord.

- ___ 10. Jesus is in the right lineage to reign as king on the throne of David.

Lesson Five

"Made up of the Saved"

The church or kingdom of God came into existence on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2). Those who believed the message were told what to do to have remission of sins. Upon their obeying those commands, they were forgiven and added to the church over which Christ was made "King of kings" and "Lord of lords" upon His ascension back to the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13-14).

In the previous lesson (4), emphasis was placed on the Authority of Christ and the various terms that denote this Authority position: King, Head, Lord, Husband, Government to be upon His shoulders. But Jesus' relationship to this new kingdom has other aspects such as the following:

1. Bridegroom of the Bride. (Matthew 9:15; Romans 7:4)
2. Savior of the Body. (Ephesians 5:23; 1:22-23)
3. Purchaser of the church. (Acts 20:28)
4. Builder of the church. (Matthew 16:18)
5. Foundation upon which the church is built. (1 Corinthians 3:11)
6. The Corner Stone upon which the church is built. (Ephesians 2:20)
7. High priest to make reconciliation for sins of people. (Heb. 2:17)
8. Mediator (Go-between). (Hebrews 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5)
9. Prophet. (Deuteronomy 18:18; Acts 3:22; Hebrews 1:1-2)
10. Shepherd of the Sheep. (John 10:11-15)
11. Intercessor. (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34)
12. The Way, the Truth, the Life. (John 14:6)
13. The Light of the World. (John 1:6-9)

THE CHURCH IS THE "CALLED OUT"

While lesson four was intended to give strong emphasis to the headship and kingship of Christ, lesson five will emphasize that the saved make up the body (church) or kingdom of Christ. Descriptive phrases are used to identify these special "called out" people. In each case the emphasis is upon the one to whom they belong.

1. Church of God (1 Cor. 1:1-2).
2. Church of Christ (Rom. 16:16).
3. Kingdom of God (Acts 19:8).
4. Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13).
5. Temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
6. Family of God (Eph. 3:14-15)
7. Body of Christ (Col. 1:18)

THE NATURE OF THIS CALLING

God's people today are a separated people, separated out from among the peoples of all nations, to be the new kingdom of God upon earth. In the Greek New Testament, these people are referred to as the "EKKLESIA:" that is, the "called out" people of God. The Scriptures speak of this calling in various concepts. The following will illustrate:

- 1) It is a heavenly calling. (Hebrews 3:1)
- 2) It is a holy calling (1 Thessalonians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:15).
- 3) It is a divine calling (1 Peter 5:10; 1 Corinthians 7:15; 2 Timothy 1:7-9)

How are these people called out? Does God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit call people directly by a "still small voice" inside of our being or an audible voice that we can hear with our ears? The Bible states that men have a divine calling, but does not stop there. It makes it clear how this calling is accomplished. It is done by Jesus when He expressed His loving invitation in these words: ***"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*** (Matthew 11:28). Or, as He stated to the church at Laodicea: ***"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."*** (Revelation 3:20) Thus, God's call to man is in the normal way of communicating to one another—by words! But God's call is accomplished today by some very special words that is called "the gospel!" We are called by God through the preaching of this gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). He does this calling through His servants' preaching or teaching His message of hope to others (2 Corinthians 5:20). Neither God, nor Christ, nor the Holy Spirit come to each individual directly, but calls each through His revealed Will to man (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:21-24).

Into what are people called? This calling of God is for men to leave something and come into something. It is to be called out of the world (2 Corinthians 6:17) or darkness (Colossians 1:13) so that redeemed men can come into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13-14). Men are called into a fellowship with God and other redeemed people into the "one body" of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9; Colossians 3:15). Men are called to be saints (sanctified, cleansed, set apart people) of God (1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Romans 1:7). It is lost prodigal mankind that is being called to be the children of God (Romans 9:25-26; 1 John 3:1). And such are called upon to live worthily of such a calling by God (2 Thess. 1:11-12). The church is made up of a separated people unto God (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

THE CHURCH IS A UNIVERSAL BODY OF REDEEMED PEOPLE

All Nations were to flow into it. This new church of God was to be made up of people from all nations, tongues, and kindred (Revelation 5:9-10). Isaiah foretold of all nations flowing into the Lord's house (Isaiah 2:2-3). The Revelation letter pictures it as a reality (Revelation 7:1-12). The Jews made up the kingdom of God under the Old Covenant as a special people of God on earth. Jeremiah foretold of a New Covenant to be given to the Jewish people (Jeremiah 31:31-34) that would replace the Old Covenant which they had broken. But, in addition, the Gentiles were also to be brought under this New Covenant, as well, and both Jew and Gentile would make up the new kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:16). Following are the prophecies that show this: 1) Hosea 2:23 (Romans 9:25); 2) Hosea 1:10 (Romans 9:26); 3) Isaiah 11:1 (Romans 15:12); 4) Isaiah 42:6 (Acts 13:47); 5) Isaiah 42:7 (Matthew 4:15-16); 6) Amos 9:11 (Acts 15:16-18).

Saul (later known as Paul, the apostle) was chosen to be an apostle unto the Gentiles to preach the gospel unto them as well as unto the Jews (Acts 9:15; 13:46-47; 22:21; 26:16-18). In the Ephesian letter Paul especially emphasizes that the cross of Christ not only took away the Old Law, but at the same time made it possible to reconcile both Jew and Gentile in "one body" or church (Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:20-22).

A universal body under Christ as Head. A body has **ONE** head and a head has only **ONE** body. Yet, the body is made up of "many members" (1 Corinthians 12:14). Each local congregation is made up of "many members." Each member has its special function; yet, they are all members of the same body (1 Corinthians 12:12). The same would also be true of every congregation of God's people. They have the same head and are the same body of Christ as any other congregation. The word of God does not advocate a church for Jews and a church for Gentiles that is different, but they are both in the one body of Christ (Ephesians 2:16). It is to be the same body or church throughout the world—it is a universal body of **saved** believers. Jesus made it very clear that His people would be "one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). On the night of His betrayal He prayed earnestly that His people would be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:1-26). The letters to the seven churches of Asia illustrate the point well (Revelation 2-3). It was the Lord's people in seven different cities. Each had problems and need for continued growth in the Lord, but they were the churches of Christ in Asia. The church is the "one body of Christ" made up of many members scattered over the nations of the world. Christ is their king, their head, and their loving shepherd! **They compose the saved or the redeemed of God!**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the expression "called out people of God?"
2. What is the privilege we can enjoy as a branch tied to Christ as the Vine?
3. What do priests do in a temple?
4. What kind of calling has the church received?
5. How are people called into this kingdom?
6. What made it possible for Jew and Gentile to be in One Body in Christ?
7. Is it possible to trace Christ's kingdom through the centuries.....that is, His faithful people?

TRUE OR FALSE

- ___ 1. Christ is pictured as being many things in relationship to His church.
- ___ 2. The church is to come out of the world.
- ___ 3. The church is related both to God and Christ at the same time.
- ___ 4. The church has no ONE official name.
- ___ 5. Jew and Gentile have separate churches in the kingdom.
- ___ 6. A body can have many heads.
- ___ 7. A head can only be over one body.
- ___ 8. Christ is king over many different kingdoms, as well as head over many different churches.

Lesson Six

"A Glorious Hope"

Human beings are creatures of motivation—“*What’s in it for me?*” We have to see some value or purpose for doing things. Why should I want to live a righteous life? Why should I deny myself the indulgence in all the tempting activities of this world? The question of why continually comes up and demands some kind of an answer because we are creatures of motivation. Our children continually remind us of this fact by their wanting to know why, why, why?

The Bible talks about the “one hope” (not many) of the Gospel—that is, the hope of Heaven. There are various Bible terms that express this idea of the “one Hope”—“everlasting life” (Matthew 25:46), “many mansions” (John 14:1), “new Heaven and Earth” (2 Peter 3:13), etc. If you were to ask someone, “*Do you want to go to Heaven?*”—I think that a large % would definitely say “yes!” A survey was conducted among 500 persons in a university that desired to be preachers. Here are four of the questions and their response:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| 1) Is there life after death? | (No—8%) | (Yes—92%) |
| 2) Is there a Judgment Day? | (No—39%) | (Yes—61%) |
| 3) Is there a Hell? | (No—69%) | (Yes—31%) |
| 4) Is there a Heaven? | (No—41%) | (Yes—59%) |

While they seem to be confused on their Bible knowledge, it is hoped that they can become more knowledgeable before they begin to preach. Survey after survey shows a high % of people that do say “Yes!” Going to Heaven is one of the great motivating factors that God has placed before us to get us to live righteous.

Motivation has been illustrated in various ways, but this little funny story can help us to get the point. Motivation is like a fellow being chased by a bear. He was in an open field, with but one tree available. The lowest branch was a good fifteen feet off the ground. The bear was getting closer, so in desperation he leaped for the limb. He missed it.....but caught it on the way back down! Now, that bear was a good motivation to say the least!

We can be motivated by various things: money, desire for education, thrill or excitement, profit, fear, love, etc. We can also be motivated to do various things: to go to work, to go to school, to dress neat, to make plans and carry them out, to buy, to sell, etc. When you see a sloppy, lazy, spineless, dirty quitter—you see someone not motivated. Give him the right motivation and his life will be changed.

WHAT MAKES HEAVEN SO DESIRABLE?

Why do I want to believe in Heaven? There has to be something about it that will motivate me to change my life and devote it to serving the God of Heaven. God uses many things to motivate us: fear of punishment, gratitude and thankfulness, sense of duty, rewards, blessings, etc. Possibly, our greatest motivation is Heaven. Heaven is God's "carrot stick" to lure us unto Himself. It is God's answer to man's question: "*What's in it for me?*" "*Why should I serve God?*" "*Why should I want to be a Christian?*"

1. The terms used to describe Heaven Makes it Desirable. We can easily see the desirability of it. Even though God uses physical terms to describe Heaven (which is a spiritual existence), He helps us to see good reason for wanting to go there. He uses the best, the most desirable, and the most precious of metals and stones to describe what it is like (Revelation 21:17-21).

2. The conditions described in Heaven. Such is in stark contrast to the undesirable conditions on earth (Revelation 21:4-5; 21:1; 2:7). It will be like a new heaven and earth, or like a beautiful and desirable Garden (Paradise).

3. The idea of living forever in a desirable place. (1 John 5:11; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 7:9-12). But also, the desirability of living forever with redeemed people (only the righteous will be there)—especially our loved ones! A father lay on his death bed and called his two sons in to say his final words. He finally turned to one son and said "*Good-night.*" He turned to the other and said "*Good-bye.*" The 2nd son noticed the difference and asked why. The father said: "*Your brother is a Christian; I hope to see him for all eternity, so it is only Good-night for now. But you are not a Christian; and unless you change, I will never see you again, so it is Good-bye forever.*"

4. The greatness of the blessings promised. The place and all its desirability never ends—it is imperishable. It is described as glorious. (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:25; Romans 8:18, etc.).

5. The total bliss and satisfaction of the place. Its beauty and desirability does not fade away. It will be a place of exceeding joy. No more sadness, hunger, thirst, or excessive heat to deal with, etc. (1 Peter 1:4; 4:13; Revelation 7:16-17, etc.).

6. One of the great blessings....a deliverance from everlasting punishment for our sins. We no longer have to deal with unrighteous people—no more tempted by the Devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 20:15;

2 Peter 1:10-11). Hell will not only be populated by the unsaved people, but also by the Devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

ONLY THE SAVED GO TO HEAVEN !

Have you noticed man's desperate efforts to seek for such a place here on earth? We even use expressions that indicate this desire, such as: "*Heaven on earth,*" "*Fountain of youth,*" "*Ideal world,*" "*Mansion on top of a hill,*" *etc.* But these and other phrases are all mere imitations or poor substitutes for the real thing. All of these are really only temporary in this life. Heaven is eternal in nature. Why settle for less when you can get the real thing—HEAVEN!

Sadly, not everyone that talks about Heaven is going there! Jesus has made it very clear that those who go unto the Father have to go through Him. He is THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE (Jn. 14:6). He also stated: "***If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.***" (Jn. 8:24). He stated in Matthew 7:21 that those who shall enter the kingdom of Heaven are those who do the will of His Father in Heaven! Heaven is to be offered to all (Matt. 28:18-20), but only those who are acceptable to God will make it to Heaven.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

But the real issue is, not just if we want to go there, but are we willing to pay the price to get the real thing? Most people want to go to Heaven and to enjoy all that it represents. But, are we willing to give the time and effort in order to attain it? A storekeeper's little boy asked his mother: "*Mother, will Daddy ever go to heaven?*" "*Yes, son, what makes you ask such a question?*" "*Well, Mother, how can he ever leave the store?*" The Father couldn't leave the store to worship God, so the little boy wondered how he could ever leave the store to go to Heaven. Is Heaven your goal in life? Will it be your final destination? Do you want to go to Heaven greater than any other desire of your life? If not, you probably won't make it to Heaven! "***Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life.***" (Rev. 2:10).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is there only "one Hope" that God holds out to mankind (Eph. 4:4-6)
2. Is there literal "streets of gold" in Heaven?
3. Can you envision what it will be like to be in the presence of God forever?
4. What kind of activities do you expect to engage in in Heaven?
5. Why does fear of punishment cause us to do right?

True or False

- ___ 1. To use Hell to get people to become a Christian is wrong.
- ___ 2. We have to be motivated to do whatever we do.
- ___ 3. When someone is sloppy, lazy and spineless, they need a new motivation.
- ___ 4. In surveys, a higher number of people believe in Heaven than in a Judgment Day.
- ___ 5. The description of Heaven is in physical terms, but Heaven is not physical.
- ___ 6. Living eternally with God is a strong motivation to live right.
- ___ 7. "Heaven on earth" is man's way of saying they want to go to Heaven.
- ___ 8. Our deliverance from Hell is a very strong motivation to want to go to Heaven.
- ___ 9. Paying the price is the real issue in this matter of going to Heaven.
- ___ 10. We can become too busy to prepare to go to Heaven.

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