

HOME BIBLE STUDIES SERIES

# ***The Church that Jesus Built***

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Lesson One

## **"The Builder of the Church"**

(Matt. 16:13-20)

About half-way into Jesus' public ministry He finally made a statement about building His church. Up until this point, His emphasis had been on the **"kingdom of heaven is at hand."** (Matt. 4:17). But in Matthew 16, He intertwines the two together as one! This was done at a most appropriate time. Up to this point Jesus had not been preached as the Messiah, the Son of God! The Apostles were already getting insights to this fact, however. Others were beginning to see the possibilities. When Jesus questioned the Apostles to see what others were saying about Him, He received a variety of answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets. He then asked the Apostles who they thought Jesus was. Peter was the first to speak out: **"You are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God!"** It was at this point that Jesus announced that He would build His church.

Valuable insights can be gained by analyzing this statement in reference to other passages.

### ***"You are Peter"***

Jesus had given Simon, son of Jonah, a new name—it was Cephas in the Aramaic and Peter in the Greek.

John 1:42 \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus could see in Simon Peter a great character that would be developed over a period of time. He did live up to his name in later life. Shortly after this confession by Peter, he denied the Lord three times. But later, he became a strong leader and pillar in the early church.

Gal. 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Tradition states that he died for his faith by being crucified upside down—not feeling worthy to be crucified like his Lord. Peter lived up to his name which means a rock or stone.

### ***"Upon this Rock"***

Some believe that Jesus was saying that He would build His church upon Peter. Jesus is obviously making a play on words when He says: **"You are Peter (a rock), and upon this rock I will build my church."** However, the Greek words for rock are showing a contrast, not an identity.

In the Greek, it is Petros versus Petra, which are two different genders. If the church was to be built on Peter (Petros), then why switch terms? Jesus evidently had something else in mind upon which His church would be built. We can look to the Old Testament as a possible answer.

Isaiah 28:16 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus identifies Himself as that stone or foundation.

Matt. 21:42-44 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Peter identifies Jesus as this stone also.

Acts 4:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Paul identifies Jesus as this stone and the only foundation to build upon.

Rom. 9:33 \_\_\_\_\_  
1 Cor. 3:11 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

From these passages, we can conclude that the rock (petra) that the church was built upon was Christ, Himself! This was the confession that Peter had just made: ***"You are the Christ (Messiah)."*** Without this truth, the church is worthless—in reality, a farce!

The church is not built upon weak, wavering men; nor upon the ideas, philosophies, or doctrines of men; but, upon the unwavering Christ, the Son of the Living God.

In a special sense the Apostles and Prophets played a role in laying this foundation.

Eph. 2:19-20 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus is the foundation that was laid through human instrumentality. This foundation was laid not just by Peter but by all of the Apostles and Prophets. In that sense, they are spoken of as being the foundation upon which the church is built. Jesus is the corner-stone, the chief stone—the others are not that important. This building is erected upon a sure foundation. He is a tried stone, a proven stone, which can be depended upon for all time.

***"I will Build My Church"***

Men may build many institutions, religious or otherwise, but none will ever measure up to the one that He has built. And....neither can the institutions of men take the place of His church. For men to try to do so is a reflection upon God, but also a vain thing.

Psalm 127:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 15:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 15:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Men labor in vain to try to duplicate Christ's church. He is that one and only true builder that can accomplish God's purposes. The works of men will be rooted up by God to show their helplessness.

When Jesus made this statement, it was future tense—***"I will build."*** John the Baptist did not build the church; nor did Jesus during His public ministry. The stone had not been tried as yet—Jesus had to be tested first so that he could be a sure foundation. After His death, burial, and resurrection His church was built. From Acts 5:11 onward, the church was spoken of as being in existence.

Jesus claimed the church as His own! It is His by right of ownership. The phrase "church of Christ" denotes that ownership.

Rom. 16:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Men build institutions and often give names that honor one or more persons. The church built by Jesus carries His Name that gives honor to Him. The Name of Jesus is indelibly stamped upon the church.

Acts 4:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus did not state that He would build many different churches, but only one.

Eph. 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Col. 1:18 \_\_\_\_\_

It should be the desire of everyone who has been saved by Jesus to be a part of His church that honors His Name.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How did Jesus indicate that the church and the kingdom were the same institution?
2. What important event had just occurred when Jesus said He would build His church?
3. What does the name "Peter" mean in the Greek?
4. Was the church build upon Peter?
5. What was the foundation that the church was built upon as revealed by the New Testament?
6. What connection does Peter confession have to Jesus being the foundation of the church?
7. What role did the Apostles and Prophets play in laying this foundation?
8. What is meant by the expression that Jesus is the "corner-stone?"
9. What part did John the baptizer play in the building of the church?
10. Why have men tried to mimic the church that Jesus built?
11. What is the purpose of a name?
12. By what name alone can man be saved?
13. How many churches did Jesus build?

Lesson Two

## "The Nature of the Church"

(Eph. 1:15-23)

In certain places that one might travel, you can get a sense of going uphill when in reality you are going down hill. If you were to stop the car, shut off the motor, put the gear in neutral, you would begin moving. To prove this, you can secure a large level and it will show clearly that you are going down hill. This shows that sometimes our senses can be deceived.

The same can be said about religious beliefs and practices. We can be deceived by our senses. The only reliable standard is to turn to the Word of God and study it diligently to understand God's Truth.

John 8:31-32 \_\_\_\_\_

When it comes to the church, we definitely must not depend upon what we see and feel to determine what is right. That is the challenge of this series of lessons on the church—study to see what the Bible has to say, not what we see and feel. This lesson will be looking at the "Nature" of the church.

### THE DUAL USE OF THE WORD "CHURCH"

**1. It is used in a universal sense.** The church was to be established all over the world. It was not to be different churches, but the same church everywhere. Thus, all who have obeyed the Gospel of Christ are added to this universal body of Christ (Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:16). Christ is the ONLY HEAD of this ONE UNIVERSAL BODY (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). He does not share His headship with anyone!

**2. It is used in a local sense.** Those who have obeyed the Gospel of Christ become a member in not only the universal body of Christ, but should also be considered a member of a local body of Christ. They compose the Lord's people at that local area. In this sense, the word can be used in the plural when indicating several congregations in a given region or state.

Rom. 16:16 \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible does not condone many DIFFERENT churches! Nor does it condone churches wearing names to distinguish them from other churches (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-3; 4:6). Nor does it condone teaching different doctrines.

Gal. 1:6-9 \_\_\_\_\_

2 John 10 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Tim. 4:1 \_\_\_\_\_

**THE CHURCH'S IDENTITY IN THE WORLD**

The church came into a world filled with religious ideas and many different religious groups. It was necessary that it be distinguished from all of these. Many terms were used in regards to the church that were already in use by other groups at that time, such as: **Kingdom, Body, Family, Temple, or an Assembly of called out people.** What made their use different was the **Possessive** phrase at the end:

- 1) The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13).
- 2) The Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23).
- 3) The Temple of God (Eph. 2:21).
- 4) The Assembly or Called out People of God or Christ (1 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 16:16).
- 5) The Family or Household of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19).

While the above are not strictly names of God's people (the church), they serve the same purpose.....they are a means of identification. It identified that group of people who belonged to God or Christ in the first century, and it can still do the same today. Individually, we are identified as:

- 1) Citizens in God's kingdom (Eph. 2:19).
- 2) Members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:20).
- 3) Living Stones in the Holy Temple of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:21).
- 4) The Church or Called out People of God and Christ (1 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 16:16).
- 5) Children in the Household of God (1 Jn. 3:1-2; Eph. 2:19).

**THE GREEK TERM "EKKLESIA"**

The Greek word literally means "to call out." This word is used of any called out group of people, whether social, political, or religious. The context in which the word is used and/or the descriptive phrase to follow it makes it clear what is meant. The church (called out people) of God or Christ would give an obvious meaning to the term. This would immediately distinguish the Lord's people from all other groups. And, if Christians are called out people, it should be obvious that God is calling



the lost to come and be a part of His People! But how does God do the calling?

2 Thess. 2:14 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 1:2 \_\_\_\_\_

God is calling us to:

1. Come out of the world and be saints of God (2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:2)
2. Come and be His own possession (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
3. Come and no longer be a servant of sin, but a servant of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

An obvious fact that clearly shows that God calls through the Gospel is to realize that there are no Christians where the Gospel has not gone!

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The lost have been called to come out of the world and be God's people. Saved people are "in the world" but not "of the world." Notice the following Scriptures:

John 17:14-18 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Cor. 6:14-18 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 5:9-13 \_\_\_\_\_

We are to leave practicing the evil and sinful things of this world and live godly and righteous lives. We cannot cut ourselves off from those who are lost, but rather we need to be concerned about them and strive to get the message of the Gospel into their hearts. Christians need to be grounded and trained to go back into the world to preach and teach the Gospel to the world.

Eph. 4:11-16 \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Can we always depend upon our senses or feelings?
2. What can be depended upon in every situation?
3. How is the word "church" used in a universal sense?
4. How is the word "church" used in a local sense?
5. What does the Bible have to say about following a perverted Gospel?
6. What are some terms that identify the People of God?
7. What does the Greek word "ekklesia" mean?
8. By what are the lost called to become children of God?
9. What does it mean that saved people are to come out of the world and have no fellowship with such?
10. What does the expression mean: "Not of the world, but in the world?"
11. Why should Christians be grounded and trained?
12. Can a Christian be worldly?

Lesson Three

## "The Value of the Church"

(Eph. 1:15-23)

The God who created us placed within each of us certain basic needs. But He has also provided a correct way to satisfy those needs for our and other's good. One of the basic needs of man is "Spiritual Life!" Jesus said that He came to give man that life.

John 10:10 \_\_\_\_\_

This life is primarily fellowship with God but it also involves a special fellowship with those of like-minds. It is a fellowship of those who compose the church of Christ all over the world. The primary work of this fellowship is to build each other up and then reach out to those who are lost with the Gospel. In order to reach the lost, Christians need to have something in their lives that impress those around them.

John 13:35 \_\_\_\_\_

Unfortunately, there are those who call themselves Christians who have made a mess of being a Christian and have destroyed the good image of the church. The church has become minimized, belittled, and devalued in the eyes of many people. But, hopefully, they can be convinced to go to the Bible to see how God evaluates His church and decide to become a part of it.

### **GOD'S EVALUATION OF THE CHURCH**

**1. He planned and prepared for its coming for hundreds of years.** He did this before the foundation or creation of our universe (Eph. 1:3). It was foretold by the Prophets some 700 years before it was built.

a) Isa. 2:2-3 \_\_\_\_\_

b) Dan. 2:44 \_\_\_\_\_

And, there was even special preparation made for its establishment during the public ministry of John and Jesus.

a) Matt. 3:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

b) Matt. 4:17 \_\_\_\_\_

It would seem to be very logical that God would not go to all this trouble over something that was not very valuable or very important for His purposes.

**2. Its Value is seen in the high price God paid for the Church.** Jesus gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). In His death, He purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). I do not know of a better way for God to show how much He values the church. Jesus told a two Parables that were intended to show how He valued the church.

Matt. 13:44-46 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If God places a high value on the church, shouldn't we also?

**3. Its Value is seen in God's continued concern for the Church.** Notice the concern that God has and is showing for His People:

- a) He claims the church as His own (1 Cor. 1:2).
- b) He dwells in the midst of His people (1 Cor. 3:16).
- c) Jesus serves as its head (Eph. 1:22-23).
- d) Jesus walks in the midst of the churches (Rev. 2:1).
- e) He also serves as High Priest and Intercessor for His People (1 Jn. 2:1).

There is a great failure on the part of mankind—a failure to respect, reverence, and value what God views as of great value.

**4. Its Value is seen in its glorious destiny.** God has not only called us to be His People, but He has even greater plans for our eternal destiny.

Eph. 5:27 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 21:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL VALUE OF THE CHURCH**

**1. To be in the church is to be among the saved!** The saved are added to the church and the church is made up of the saved (Acts 2:47)

Eph. 5:23 \_\_\_\_\_  
1 Cor. 6:11 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Those in the church glorify God!** Our purpose for existence is to bring glory to our Maker. God has so designed things that He receives glory in the church through Christ.

Eph. 3:20-21 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. I can receive mutual help both physically and spiritually.** The first congregation of the church showed this clearly.

Acts 2:41; Eph. 4:11-16 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2:43-47; 1 Cor. 12:25 \_\_\_\_\_

We not only receive help, but give help and encouragement to others as well.

Heb. 10:23-25; Jn. 13:34-35 \_\_\_\_\_

Such fellowship can help to protect me from sinfulness in my life.

1 John 2:9-11 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. I can join in with other Christians to express worshipful devotion to God.** God desires to be worshipped by His creatures and as well deserves that devotion.

Matt. 4:10 \_\_\_\_\_

John 4:24 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 7:9-12 \_\_\_\_\_

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

One thing that we need to remember is that there is a Divine side of the church which is perfect, but there is also the human side which is imperfect. The human side has its frailties, problems, and brings disappointment. Even the member's lives may be inconsistent with their teaching. There may be politicking and striving for power in the group as well as class and racial distinctions shown. We may see jealousy and envy among members and possibly see indifference in many. But we need to remember that these things are not what God wants, planned for, nor is pleased with. Changes need to be made in our lives day by day. The church's challenge is to live up to the Divine Ideal as God planned the church. We need to be concerned about listening to God and follow His instructions. The more we act like God wants us to, the more desirable the fellowship becomes and to cause us to want to be a part of such.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What is the basic need that Jesus said that He came to provide for man?
2. What is one of the best ways for people to recognize that we are Christians?
3. What are some ways that we can see how God values the Church?
4. What are some personal values of the church to each Christian?
5. God alone is to be worshipped and served! How does this affect my relationship to my mate, my children, my relatives, and my friends?
6. How can the human side of the church affect the church?
7. Why should the church want to live up to the Divine Ideal?

Lesson Four

**"The Work of the Church"**

(Eph. 4:11-16)

A man's character is often revealed by what he considers to be most important in his life. Christ considered the Kingdom of heaven and God's righteousness the most important in His life (Matt. 6:33). He showed this to be true throughout His public ministry. Even at age twelve he was concerned for being about His Father's business (Lk. 2:49). What greater concern can we have than this? We not only need to be concerned about the church but our responsibilities in it! This lesson will be looking at the work that God has given for the church to be involved in.

**CHRISTIANS ARE TO GROW**

Jesus grew in all areas of His life:

Luke 2:52 \_\_\_\_\_

He prayed often (Mk. 6:46); taught against hypocrisy in worship (Matt. 15:7-9); and kept the worship requirements of the Law (Matt. 5:17). What better example do we need than Jesus.

The early church felt this need of growth and met even daily at first so that they could accelerate their growth.

Acts 2:42-47 \_\_\_\_\_

Later when some had not grown, they were kindly, but strongly, exhorted to change their ways.

Heb. 5:12-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 10:24-25 \_\_\_\_\_

**KEEPING THE SAVED FAITHFUL**

There is not only a need for the lost to be saved, but to also keep them in a saved relationship with God.

Matt. 10:22 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 25:23 \_\_\_\_\_

The early church saw the need of such and stressed it greatly at first:

Acts 2:41 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 15:58 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Pet. 1:10 \_\_\_\_\_

If they saw the need, we should be able to see the same need. The church is and should be a great teaching and training school. It needs a great faculty that is dedicated, informed, abilities developed, enthusiastic and zealous, and committed to their task. It needs students who really want to learn and grow and who will commit themselves to this end. The purpose is to not only stabilize and thoroughly ground people in the faith, but to also equip them to serve God effectively and faithfully to the end. How well are we carrying out this great work?

**HELPING THE NEEDY**

Jesus set the example of compassion for those who were needy among the people of God.

Acts 10:38 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 11:2-6 \_\_\_\_\_

The early church had this same benevolent spirit:

Acts 2:45 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 6:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Generally admonitions were given to the churches:

Gal. 6:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Tit. 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_

James 1:27 \_\_\_\_\_

How compassionate are we as a people?

**SEEKING THE LOST**

Jesus again is our example of this great need of mankind.



Jn. 3:17 \_\_\_\_\_  
Matt. 1:21 \_\_\_\_\_  
Lk. 19:10 \_\_\_\_\_

The early church also keenly felt this great purpose:

Mark 16:15-20 \_\_\_\_\_  
Acts 8:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Acts 5:42 \_\_\_\_\_

So effective were their efforts, zeal, and dedication that wo years later Paul could state "*The Gospel*) was preached to every creature which is under heaven..." Col. 1:23). How zealous and effective are we in carrying out this great work?

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The work of the church is terribly important! It is the work of God. Our happiness here and hereafter depends upon it. Booker T. Washington made an appeal for money from a wealthy business man to help support the cause he was concerned with. When he went back later to get the decision of the business man, he received a check for only \$1,000. Mr. Washington said: "*I see I have failed to impress upon you the importance and magnitude of the cause I represent.*" We must see the importance and magnitude of the church and its work because too much is at stake! Our soul and the souls of so many others are deeply involved in this situation. This work is for all members, not just a few!

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What helps to reveal our character to others?
2. At age 12, what was Jesus' great concern?
3. Why is growth so important to the Christian?
4. Is it possible that some Christian will not grow and will need to be rebuked and encouraged to grow?
5. Why is it important for the church to have a dedicated teaching faculty?
6. How do God's people become equipped to do the work that God has given us to do?
7. What did Jesus say was one of the signs that He was the Messiah?
8. How concerned was the early church in caring for their own?
9. Who all should we be concerned about?
10. What is pure and undefiled religion?
11. What was Jesus primary mission for coming to earth?
12. What was the reaction of the early church in regards to reaching the lost?

Lesson Five

## **"Wrong Attitudes Towards the Church"**

(Matt. 21:28-32)

In the above verses, Jesus is speaking to the chief priests and elders of the Jewish people. He lays a strong indictment against them: ***"Tax Collectors and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."*** Why? Because they believed the preaching by John and repented, but these men had done neither! Why did they not believe John's preaching? Many reasons might be given, but there seems to be a basic one—they misunderstood the kingdom. They thought it would be an earthly kingdom. John's preaching did not fit into their understanding. Thus, they not only rejected John's preaching but they rejected the kingdom that he preached..... and at the same time they rejected the Messiah that John was serving as a forerunner for.

People still have the same problem today! They misunderstand Christ's teachings about His church or kingdom. They have a different outlook on what the kingdom or church should be. Their wrong attitudes can caused a rejection of Christ and His Church. In this lesson we want to look at a few wrong attitudes toward the church.

### **THE CHURCH IS NOT A BUILDING**

This may sound silly to some, but this wrong attitude is show in various ways. When the building is looked upon as "sacred" and they advocate that only sacred things can be done in the building—they have the wrong attitude about what is the church. It is proper and right to be respectful of property. It is right to be respectful of what takes place in a building. But the building, as such, is not sacred or holy.

Terminology reveals the wrong attitude about the church. When someone says: *"The church has a kitchen in it,"* it is quite obvious that they do not mean what they are saying! The church obviously does not have a kitchen in it, but the building where the church meets may have a kitchen in it. We get careless and lazy and do not say things correctly. When we say that: *"We are going to have a fellowship at the church,"* we show we do not have the right attitude about the church. We may have a period of fellowship at the building where the church assembles together, and we may eat food together in the building, but not in the church. The church is illustrated by a building, but the church is not a building.

! Cor. 3:9 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_

**THE CHURCH IS NOT A SOCIAL CLUB**

Some show that they look upon the church as a social club to be joined and enjoyed, but no responsibility. It should be obvious that this idea is foreign to Bible teaching. Men may begin social clubs, regulate them, and even lay down rules for the members, but Christ's church was never intended to be just a social club. In the first place, the Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). The saved are then expected to begin accepting responsibilities that come as a result of what God has done for them.

Phil. 2:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Gal. 2:20 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 7:21 \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of an attitude is portrayed in the following statements?

*"It is fine to be a member of the church... lots of good people"*

*"It is fine to enjoy the blessings of this fellowship"*

*"It is fine to enjoy a nice, commodious building in which to meet"*

*"It is fine to have Meetings, Campaigns, and Outreach with the Gospel, because this is how I was reached"*

Now, compare the second half of these statements:

*"But I don't have any money to give to help make all this possible"*

*"I don't have any time to spend in helping to study, learn, and teach others"*

*"I can't accept responsibilities—I have too much of my own things to do"*

Would you characterize this attitude as selfish? Get, Get, Get, but no Give! Responsibilities must come with the blessings in the church.

James 1:25 \_\_\_\_\_

**SOME THINK THE CHURCH IS UNIMPORTANT**

The following general attitudes will help to reflect how some people view the church:

*"You don't have to be a member of the Lord's Church to be saved"*

*"You don't have to belong in order to go to heaven."  
"Give me Christ, but I have no need of the church"*

It is possible that such attitudes are the result of misunderstandings about what the Bible says about the church. The following passages do show that the church is very important:

Acts 2:47 \_\_\_\_\_  
Eph. 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_  
1 Cor. 6:11 \_\_\_\_\_

The church is made up of the saved, reconciled, washed, sanctified, and justified people. Men can be saved outside the institutions of men, but not outside the church of Christ. What do people mean when they say they want Christ, but not His church? The following thoughts may be what they mean:

*I want the blessings of Christ without the responsibilities that go with the church.  
I want Christ to be my Head, but I don't want to be in submission to Him as His body.  
To be in Christ is to be in His body or church (1 Cor. 12:13).*

### **SOME THINK THE CHURCH IS JUST ANOTHER DENOMINATION**

This is possibly the greatest misunderstanding of all. There are several wrong attitudes that come out of viewing the Lord's church as just another denomination among denominations.

*"The church is not important. You can go to heaven without belonging to a particular denomination."  
"A person can be saved outside of any particular denomination"  
"It doesn't matter what denomination one belongs to"*

However, it should be abundantly clear from Scripture that:

1. The Lord's church is not a denomination, nor made up of such.
2. Christ did not build a denomination or many denominations.
3. He did not die for a denomination or many denominations.
4. He is not head over denominations—men are.
5. He does not add saved people to denominations.
6. Nor has He promised to save anyone in a denomination.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Misunderstandings can be cleared up by turning to the Scriptures to find out the truth of these matters. Closed eyes, ears, and hearts cannot be reached by the truth. Is our hearts open to what God says?

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. It is possible that people can read and study the Bible and still not understand it correctly?
2. Is the church a building or the people who make up the church?
3. Why do some look upon the church building as sacred?
4. Is the church designed to be primarily a "social club?"
5. What are some attitudes that show people look upon the church as a social club?
6. What are some statements that show that people do not think that the church is important?
7. Who make up the Lord's church?
8. Is the church of Christ a denomination?
9. What makes a church a denomination?
10. Did God design His church to be made up of different denominations?
11. Does God add people to a denomination or to His church?
12. Who cannot be reached with truth?

Lesson Six

## "The Church is Not a Utopia"

(1 John 1:4-2:2)

Let me pose a couple of problem questions to introduce this study. Here are two people:

The first is a very good moral person in the eyes of neighbors and friends. He died never having become a Christian.

The second person was a liar, a cheat, and immoral, but became a Christian and died shortly after that.

**The questions:**

1. *How can the 2nd person go to Heaven in spite of all his evil. Even if he lived, it would take years to become as good morally as the first person.*
2. *How can the 1st person go to Hell in spite of all his moral goodness?*

People seem to expect at times for the church to be made up of perfect people—they expect a Utopia! They are greatly disappointed when they see sin in the lives of Christians. Many turn in disgust, stating—*"They are all sinners like the rest!"*

Will you spend a few minutes to explore the things mentioned above?

### **WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ACTUALLY MAKE UP THE CHURCH?**

According to the inspired Apostle Paul, it is made up of cleansed sinners (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Such have been washed, redeemed, saved, or justified by the blood of Jesus. All men have a common identity before God—we are all sinners! (Rom. 3:23). Some sinners have been saved because they have obeyed the Gospel; while some sinners are lost because they have not obeyed the Gospel:

Heb. 5:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Thess. 1:8 \_\_\_\_\_

But all men sin whether saved or not—there are none righteous, nor perfect—without sin.

1 John 1:8, 10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**BUT**, it is rightfully expected of saved people that they turn from walking in the way of sin!

Acts 3:19 \_\_\_\_\_  
Rom. 6:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

But even with this understanding, we still cannot expect saved people to be perfect. There definitely should be a change of heart, a change of allegiance, and a changed life; and that a Christian will no longer walk in darkness, sin, and disobedience to God. But, at the same time we are exhorted to continue to confess our sins. We need continual cleansing by the blood of Jesus.

1 John 1:7-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 John 2:1 \_\_\_\_\_

We do not believe that the Lord condones those who are insincere or hypocritical in the church and continue in the way of sin.

Matt. 13:36-43 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 12:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 23:23 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE CHURCH IS MADE UP OF  
IMPERFECT PEOPLE**

To expect the church to be a Utopia is cruel, hard, and unrealistic. It is expecting something of humans that we are incapable of. But sin must not be minimized! It is wrong, it is against God, and it is unbecoming of God's creatures made in His image. And men will suffer because of sin in their lives—even though forgiven!

Gal. 6:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sin can condemn us away from God for all eternity if not forgiven! But we should not be surprised that even Christians sin, at times. To be surprised is to show we expect perfection of the Christian, which is unrealistic!

Expecting perfection in myself as a Christian can be very harmful also.



We will sin at times even though we are trying very hard to live right. But we must watch for two extremes:

1. **To be too permissive about sin in my life—unconcerned.**
2. **To expect or demand too much of myself and become discouraged and quit trying.**

God does not expect perfection of us. Nor is He surprised that we sin (He knows when we sin). He does not excuse our sin, and we need to know that our sin grieves Him. But he is not through with us when He finds sin in our lives.

There is another thing that is important for us to understand—There are no perfect men to do God's work! We often look at the good side of great men and women of the Bible. That is fine and there is a reason why they are given—to encourage us to do the same. But God also gives the bad side at times also....WHY? He does this to remind us that all men sin and have to be saved by His grace. So....there are no perfect people to do God's work!

Look at the example of NOAH! He stood alone against a whole world in sin. No person will ever have to face what he faced! His faith was great! But the next picture we see of him is that he is drunk and naked in his tent. Some try to find an excuse for him. Don't bother! God placed it there for us to see that he also needed repentance and forgiveness.

Look at the example of ABRAHAM! He is called the "father of the faithful." His faith is extolled by God, time and again! But he had his weaknesses too. He repeatedly lied about his wife! Don't try to excuse him, for God had such recorded for a purpose.

The same things can be pointed out about Jacob, Moses, David, Peter, etc. All men stand in need of repentance and the forgiveness of God!

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

All men, even at our best, need to repent and to receive the forgiveness of God. God reproves sin in all men's lives. However, God can still use sinful, imperfect men to do His work. But it is necessary for men to learn to repent. We must not go on pretending we do not sin and have no need of the continual cleansing by the blood of Christ. Such attitudes can cut us off from God. In the words of the inspired Apostle Paul: *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..."* (1 Tim. 1:15).

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What determines whether a person will be saved or lost?
  
2. What kind of people make up the church?
  
3. What can rightfully be expected of saved people?
  
4. Why was Jesus so hard on hypocrites?
  
5. Why would a Christian expect perfection of himself?
  
6. What are two extreme positions that men must avoid?
  
7. How does Noah and Abraham illustrate that God does not expect His people to be perfect?
  
8. Why do all men need to learn the concept of repentance and forgiveness?
  
9. Why did Jesus come into the world?



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