



**"The Beginnings  
of Faith"  
(#4)**

- 1—Reasons for being Baptized
- 2—God's Use of Water
- 3—The One Body versus Many bodies
- 4—The One Body Planned & Foretold
- 5—Jesus Promised to Build the One Body
- 6—The One Body is made up of the Saved

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*Lesson One*

***"Reasons for Being Baptized"***

We continue our study of the "One Baptism" mentioned in Eph. 4:4-6—with an emphasis upon **Strong Reasons** for being immersed into Christ. Just why should a person be concerned and/or obedient to the command to be baptized? Why has God required such a simple act and connected it with the importance of being saved or being justified before God? What is it about this act that would give some kind of importance to it as such? We hope the following reasons will help you to fully appreciate why God requires this act.

**It shows my faith in the Promises of God**

What has God promised to those who will be baptized? Go through the following Scriptures and write down what God promises to those who will believe and obey Him.

- Mark 16:16** \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Peter 3:21** \_\_\_\_\_
- Acts 2:38** \_\_\_\_\_
- John 3:5** \_\_\_\_\_
- Gal. 3:26-27** \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Cor. 12:13** \_\_\_\_\_
- Rom. 6:4** \_\_\_\_\_
- Rom. 6:17-18** \_\_\_\_\_
- Rom. 6:17-18** \_\_\_\_\_
- Acts 5:32** \_\_\_\_\_

If you will notice that baptism is not commanded of people who are already saved, but commanded of people who wanted to be saved!

- Acts 2:36-38** \_\_\_\_\_
- Acts 2:41** \_\_\_\_\_

Thus, baptism is in reality an act of Faith. It makes our faith in God complete. It perfects our faith (KJV).

- James 2:20-23** \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

I show that I believe in God's promises by my obedience to His command to be immersed in water.

**So I can began a New Life in Christ**

In order to become a Christian, it is necessary that we believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:16; Acts 8:37); that we "repent;" and upon a confession of our faith, to be baptized into Christ. The importance of faith is an obvious! The importance of repentance should also be obvious. God is not saving us so that we can continue in the way of rebellion to His Will (Rom. 6:1-2); rather, we are saved in order to *"walk in newness of life."* (Rom. 6:3-4). In repentance, we make a decision to turn from a disobedient life to an obedient life in Christ. Being baptized is our way to saying that we are turning from sin to walk a righteous life. This death to sin is described in several ways in Romans 6:6-19:

Verse 6 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 7 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 12 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 13 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 14 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 16 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 18 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 19 \_\_\_\_\_

It is important that we live up to the decision or commitment that we have made—to live a righteous life! Those who are born of God do not continue in the way of sin (rebellion) (1 John 3:9); but rather, they practice (continue in the way of) righteousness (1 John 2:29; 3:10). In baptism we are saying to all that we want to live right, we want to be freed from the hold (bondage) of sin, and we want to belong to God. The idea of "bondage" is that a person is under the condemnation of sin and has no way to get a release from this bondage on his own or by his own power. He needs help to be released. Jesus offers to release him when his faith leads him to repent, confess Jesus, and to be baptized (buried with Christ). Upon this act, we are made free!

**To Show My Respect to God**

God calls upon his people to show honor and respect to others. The following passages show this clearly:

**Rom. 12:10** \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 13:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 13:7 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Pet. 3:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Lev. 19:32 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 6:2 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Tim. 5:3 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Pet. 2:17 \_\_\_\_\_

Children show honor to the parents by being obedient to them (Eph. 6:1-2). We show whether we honor or respect people by our attitude and actions toward them. Would you like to live in a society where there was no honor or respect for anyone or anything? I don't think so!

Then, how much more does God deserve our honor and respect! These passages call this concept to our minds:

Mal. 1:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 5:12 \_\_\_\_\_

*"God is greatly honored in the assembly of His people."*

**Concluding Thoughts**

The same way we show respect to our fellow human beings, we can also show it unto God as well. God wants us to listen to what He has to say. He wants us to be saved eternally. He has given His Word to serve as an infallible guide for our lives. He has given His Son as a sacrifice in our stead, etc. Do we listen? Do we believe Him? Do we obey His Word? Undoubtedly, He is worthy of our honor and respect.

**Questions for Discussion**

Jesus gave an illustration in the Gospel of Mark how we can either show or not show honor and respect for God.

**Mark 7:1-13**

1. What did the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of doing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does the Bible call this teaching about washing hands? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why did Jesus call these people hypocrites? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why was their worship vain? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Did they reject the command of God? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Why did they reject it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How did they make the word of God of none effect? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Lesson Two*

***"God's Use of Water"***

Water is a most unusual compound on our earth! It is not only unusual, but it is vitally important! Man would have a very short stay on earth with it! Look at the following four outstanding facts about water:

1. It is common, abundant, plentiful, and freely given to mankind! It is the most plentiful of all chemicals. It covers 75% of the earth and is 6 miles deep in some areas. It is in the form of vapor in the air above us. It is in the form of ice and snow that blankets the Polar Regions and high mountain tops. Man, himself, is 3/4ths to 2/3rds water. 97% is salt water, 2% is frozen, and 1% is fresh water.
2. It is absolutely necessary to live. Without it, the earth would be lifeless like the moon. It's vapors shield the earth from the burning rays of the Sun. It prevents heat loss at night. Man cannot exist long without it. It becomes torture and torment without it.
3. Water is a very effective cleanser for man's body and filth.
4. Water refreshes and renovates the weary and the faint.

We would be FOOLISH to be PREJUDICE against water! Let's see how God has used & required water that has affected man!

**Genesis 6:14-18**

Man's wickedness became great on the earth and brought on God's punishment. Noah's righteousness made it possible to start all over again. Water enveloped the whole earth and destroyed every living creature that was not in the Ark. God used water to destroy the wicked, but in a special sense He used water to save Noah and his family from that wicked generation and destruction.

**1 Pet. 3:18-20** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The next destruction of this present heavens and earth will be by fire!

**2 Pet. 3:7** \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 14:15-18**

God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and when they came to the Red Sea, it appeared that they would be overtaken by Pharaoh's army and be slain. God parted the waters of the Red Sea and the Israelites passed through on dry

ground. Afterwards, the Egyptians were destroyed when God caused the water to come back down on them in the midst of the Sea.

**Exodus 14:26-28**

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In a special sense water saved Israel (Exo. 14:30).

**1 Cor. 10:1-4**

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**2 Kings 5:10-14**

Naaman was a Captain in the Syrian Army. He was a man of valor and courage, but he had leprosy. He heard of a Prophet in Israel that could cure him, so he journeyed to see this Prophet. The Prophet of God told him to go dip seven times in the Jordan and he would be made clean. His first reaction illustrates man's reactions against the simple! However, upon reconsidering, he obeyed; dipped seven times; and was cleansed! Look and see what was involved: God's power to heal, obedience on the part of Naaman, and dipping in the River Jordan. God used water!

**John 9:6-11**

Jesus healed a man that was blind from birth so that God could be glorified through this man (Jn. 9:3). Notice that Jesus anointed his eyes with the clay that he made from his saliva and dirt and told the man to go wash in the pool. He obeyed Jesus and his sight was restored. The water had no power of its own to heal the blind man! Then, why did Jesus use water? Why not just heal him with a word? I do not know the answer, but it is interesting that Jesus used water in the process. But it also required the man's obedience in order to be healed.

**Mark 1:1-5**

God required the use of water in various ways in the Old Testament for the people's ceremonial cleansings. But John's commanding immersion of their bodies in order to be cleansed of their sins was new to the people. Yet, the people were all baptized by John in the Jordan River, confessing their sins (Lk. 7:29-30). Those who were baptized by John "justified God," but those who were not baptized rejected the Will of God. Why did God use Water in this way? I am not sure that I can give you an answer. But the fact is....He did use water in this way! He connected their being immersed in water with the cleansing of their sins (Mk. 1:4).



**Mark 16:15-16**

When we see how God has used water in the past in a special way that is connected with cleansing, it is no surprise that Jesus' great commission to His Apostles would require them to baptize people also. It was used before to test man's faith; so, why not again, as well? To require water was not new, nor strange, nor unreasonable. And the point is that God did require it.....not man!

**Rom. 6:3-4** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rom. 6:17-18** \_\_\_\_\_

**Is there any power in the water?** Obviously not! It is the power of God at work, but He chose to require something on man's part connected with water before His power would be put into action. People are saved by God when they meet the water test!

**Concluding Thoughts**

God has promised to wash away man's sins upon his willingness to confess his faith in Jesus as the Son of God, upon true repentance, and upon being immersed in water. It is just that simple! God is testing us to see if we believe Him!

When we do what God commands of us.....we "justify God!"

When we refuse or reject His commands.....we judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life!

**Questions for Discussion**

*True or False*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. God has made drinking water so plentiful because man's life depends upon it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Water is not only connected with giving life for man, but it is also a cleanser.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. God has used water to destroy the good and the bad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. God said that He would destroy the present heavens and earth by water and fire.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Israel's deliverance from Egypt and its army was by water.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Naaman's first reaction to God's command through the Prophet was typical of man—he obeyed immediately.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Jesus healed the blind man of his blindness without the use of water.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. John's commanding immersion of their bodies something new for the Jewish people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Water is a part of the Great Commission of Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Faith and Baptism are inseparably tied together.

*Lesson Three*

***"The One Body versus  
Many bodies"***

If a person were to go to the "World Christian Encyclopedia" with the intent to look up information on the church, he would be amazed at the great divisiveness and fragmentation of what is called by men "the church." At the time this Encyclopedia was completed there were 20,800 different (distinct) churches listed. This is in stark contrast to our lesson today—The One Body or Church of Christ! (Eph. 4:4). It is an obvious fact beyond dispute that in the beginning of Christianity there was but one body or church. All who obeyed the Gospel were added to this group of redeemed people (Acts 2:47). If someone were to ask: "*What has happened,*" the answer should be obvious—man has made a lot of changes! (2 John 9-11). To learn about this "One Body" we must go to the source—the Word of God!

**The One Body is the One Church**

The "One body" is the spiritual body of Christ. Thus, the "One body" of Christ is the "One church of Christ." (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). Jesus is the head of this body, the church. There is but one head over one body! The church and Christ are not a "freak," but that which is natural all around us—one head over one body. Headship carries with it the concept of authority over the body (the church). The body is either in subjection to the head or in rebellion against the head. When the Scriptures use the phrase "*the churches of Christ salute you,*" it is not referring to different churches, but the same church (congregation) in different localities. (Rom. 16:16). It is also obvious that a body is made up of many members; and, in the same way, the church is made up of many members—but they make up that "One Body of Christ (the church)." (1 Cor. 12:12).

**The One Body is the New Kingdom of God**

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.

### **THE CHURCH IS THE "CALLED OUT"**

The literal translation of the Greek word "ecclesia" is "the called out." With reference to what we call "the church," it is the called out people of God. 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).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

**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.

### **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 Four*

***"The One Body 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. 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.

*Lesson Five*

***"Jesus Promised to Build the  
One Body (the Church)"***

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 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 Six*

***"The One Body is Made up  
of the Saved"***

The One Body, 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).

Upon His ascension, Jesus was given a place of Authority. This position is described in various terms that denote this Authority: 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. (Hebrews 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 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**

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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.

**Isa. 2:2-3** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Dan. 2:44** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

**Matt. 3:1-2** \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

**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?



