

“Rooted and Built Up” Discipleship Program

Lesson Seven- What is Church?

Scripture- Acts 1:1-15, 2:37-41

Memory verse- Matthew 16:18, *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

INTRODUCTION- Today, the meaning of a “church” provided by men is usually unclear and quite vague. A popular online encyclopedia defines church as *“an English word for a Christian religious institution or building.”* According to the Bible, a church is much more than just a “religious institution”. Even among religious circles and modern denominations there seems to be a misunderstanding or at least a misconception regarding a church’s relationship to our world. Noah Webster, concerning the term “church”, describes it this way: *“This seems*



to be the original meaning of the word. The Greek [meaning of the word], to call out or call together, denotes an assembly or collection...and the house in which they worshipped was named from the title.” Although a brilliant and godly man, Mr. Webster’s definition still falls short of describing a church. However, there is a better way of knowing the true meaning of a church. It may be accurately stated that “you are what you do”, for certainly, our actions define us. For instance, no one refers to an expert in plumbing by the name “electrician”; likewise, a church may be defined by its authority and expertise. In other words, understanding the church’s beginning and purpose helps us to answer our question–What is Church? In this lesson, we will permit the Bible to determine the origin and duties of a church, thus allowing us to comprehend what makes a true, New Testament, local church.

I. THE BIBLICAL “ _____ ” OF THE CHURCH

- A. A _____ of church in the Old Testament of the Bible.**
(Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Acts 8:34-40; Jeremiah 7:25, 25:4, 26:5, 29:19, 35:15, 44:4; Matthew 10:1-7)
- B. The _____ of church in the New Testament of the Bible.**
God works in our day (New Testament times) through local churches that have been given life from other local churches, who can trace their history back to the time of Christ and the church He started. Notice the church’s course of growth:

1. **The “church” the Lord Jesus began while in His public ministry on earth consisted of twelve men known as “His disciples”, whom Christ called “apostles” (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-13; Matthew 10:1-4, 24-25; Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1-2).**
2. **After Christ’s resurrection, He appeared to His church, that at the time consisted of eleven disciples, for Judas Iscariot had killed himself (Luke 24:33-36; Matthew 28:16; Acts 1:7-8, 15-18; Luke 24:49).**
3. **After Christ’s ascension, His local church experienced rapid growth (Acts 1:9-15, 2:41, 47).**
4. **Under great persecution, the church of Jerusalem was responsible for the birth of other churches, who in turn started more churches (Acts 8:14-17, 11:19-26, 13:1-4).**

NOTE- A true, New Testament church is one that traces its beginning back to Christ and not to some other man or woman. Notice the following religious institutions and who started them:

1. The Baptist Church- founded by Jesus Christ in about 26 AD.
2. The Catholic Church- founded by Constantine the Great in 325 AD.
3. The Greek Orthodox- founded in 869 AD as a separation from the Roman Catholic Church.
4. The Lutheran Church- founded by an ex-Catholic priest named Martin Luther in 1530 AD.
5. The Episcopalian Church (Church of England or Anglican Church)- founded by King Henry VIII in 1534 AD.
6. The Presbyterian Church- founded by John Calvin in 1541 AD.
7. The Congregational Church (Puritans)- founded by Robert Brown in 1602 AD.
8. The Quaker Church- founded by George Fox in 1652 AD as a split from the Congregationalists.
9. The Freewill Baptist Church- founded by Benjamin Randall in 1780 AD.
10. The Methodist Church- founded by John Wesley and George Whitefield in 1739 AD as the birth of a separation from the Church of England.
11. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ or Church of Christ)- founded by Alexander Campbell in 1827 AD.
12. The Mormon Church (Latter-Day Saints)- founded by Joseph Smith in 1830 AD.
13. Seventh Day Adventist- founded by William Miller in 1843 AD.

14. Christian Scientology- founded by Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddie in 1866 AD.
15. Jehovah's Witnesses- founded by Charles Taz Russell in 1884 AD.
16. The Church of the Nazarene- founded by S. F. Breeze in 1885 AD as a split from the Methodist Church.
17. The Church of God (Apostolic, Pentecostal, Holiness, etc.)- founded in the early 1900's AD (1902-1923) A. J. Tomlinson being one of its founders.
18. World-Wide Church of God- founded by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1934 AD as a split from the Seventh Day Adventist.

II. THE BIBLICAL " " OF THE CHURCH

- A. **The main purpose of the local church is to present the _____.**
(Mark 16:15; Romans 1:14-16; I Corinthians 9:16)
- B. **The main purpose of the local church is to provide _____ following salvation.**
(Romans 6:1-4; Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41, 9:1-6, 17-18)
- C. **The main purpose of the local church is to produce disciplined _____ of Christ after their baptism.**
(II Peter 3:18)

NOTE- Notice the following ways that this is accomplished:

1. Through Christian fellowship (Acts 2:42).
2. Through spiritual oversight (Hebrews 13:17; Ephesians 4:11-12).
3. Through Scriptural preaching (Acts 13:5).
4. Through patient assistance (Galatians 6:1).
5. Through ministry involvement (Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 2:10).

III. THE BIBLICAL " " OF THE CHURCH

ORDINANCE- "a rule established by authority; a permanent rule of action."

- A. **Baptism is the _____ ordinance of the church.**
(Ephesians 4:4-6)
- B. **The Lord's Supper is the _____ ordinance of the church.**
(Matthew 26:26-29; I Corinthians 11:23-31)

IV. CONCLUSION

The meaning of the church is that “called-out”, baptized believers are to take the Gospel into all the world and teach whoever believes to observe what Christ has commanded in Scripture (1 John 3:23).

Student tip- Today’s churches could use a “time-out” for a “tune-up” from the “Triune”.