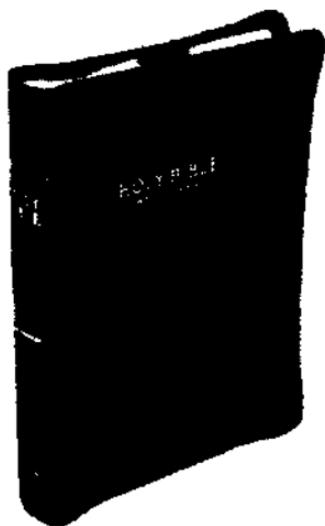


The Church of The Bible



by
J. C. Choate

Published by
World Literature Publications
Winona, Mississippi

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40th printing in the USA, 2019

Printed in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Singapore, Guatemala,
Russia, Ghana, South Africa, Korea, Philippines, and U.S.A.

Translated into more than 50 languages, including Paite, Urdu, Telugu,
Tamil, Korean, Zulu, Japanese, Malayalam, Indonesian, Chinese, Spanish,
Russian, Bengali, French, Hindi, and Punjabi.

More than 150,000 copies printed and in circulation around the world.

This printing, 5,000 copies, 2019

Order From:

World Evangelism Publications

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Winona, Mississippi 38967

Phone (662) 283-1192

Email: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org

Web Site: www.worldevangelism.org

INTRODUCTION

I wrote this material originally as a Bible correspondence course and it appeared for 13 weeks, one lesson at a time, in *Weekend Magazine* in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Since the thoughts were directed to those who were not familiar with the Lord's church, I tried to make them as simple as possible. Each succeeding lesson somewhat previewed the former lesson, and then questions followed each study, with all of the major points being covered.

After moving to New Delhi, India, we had the course printed in book form. It has been reprinted there in several languages and continues to be used to this day. Later it was printed in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Guatemala, here in the U.S.A and several other countries. It has been widely used not only in these nations but also sent to contacts and Christians around the world.

The purpose of this book is to introduce the reader to the church of the Bible. I personally believe that if you will go through these lessons, along with your Bible, you will be convinced that the Lord has but one church, that it wears His name, and that you should be a member of it. But don't take my word for it. Read and study for yourself. If it is the truth, then accept it. If it is not the truth, reject it. That is the only way you can be right.

I would like to encourage Christians to use this book to introduce the Lord's church to their friends. Put it to use wherever possible and I believe it will do good.

I look forward to many future printings and I pray that this book can be used to reach many souls for Christ.

J. C. Choate
Winona, Mississippi
January, 2000

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Note: This material originally appeared in the form of a Bible correspondence course and was published weekly in *Weekend Magazine* in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Lesson One

Meaning of the Church

No one will deny that the Bible talks about a church. But whose church? Which church? What church? These questions, and many others, will be answered in time, but right now we want to find out what the church is.

Let us begin by pointing out what it is not. The church as described in the Bible is not Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. It is not denominational, inter-denominational, or sectarian. It is not a political organization, just another social organization, and neither is it a material meeting house. So if it is none of these, what is it?

The majority of people do not understand the church because they do not know what it is. Consequently, they do not understand the purpose of it, the importance of it, or the work of it. But the Bible plainly tells us what it is. The word church comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means "the called out." So the church is a called out body of people, those who have been called out of the world into the kingdom of God's dear Son (1 Colossians 1:13). It is the spiritual body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), made up of those who have obeyed Christ (Hebrews 5:8,9), and are therefore saved by him and added to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). Another way of putting it, the church consists of the followers of Christ.

The word church appears in the Bible in two senses. First, it is spoken of in the universal sense. This is what Christ had in mind when he said, "*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18). There are many other verses where the word

church is used in the same way, speaking of the church in a universal sense. That is, wherever the church may be found in the world, if it is the Bible church, it is that church which Jesus said he would build. Second, it is spoken of in the local sense. For instance, when Paul was writing to the church at Rome, and speaking of the various congregations, he said, "*The churches of Christ greet you*" (Romans 16:16). He wasn't speaking of a number of churches, in the sense of denominations, but rather a number of local congregations of the Lord's church.

To further explain, you will note that the scriptures speak of the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Philippi, etc. (1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1). All of this is confusing to some people because they are accustomed to thinking of the church only in the terms of denominationalism. But you will not read of the first denomination in the word of God. In the foregoing cases, you have a number of congregations spoken of and each congregation is the Lord's church in its particular community, but all of them together compose the church universal. It is so simple when denominationalism is forgotten and one goes to the Bible and sees the church as the Lord gave it.

To further help us to understand the meaning of the church, let us realize that the Bible pictures the church as being:

1. **The body of Christ.** It is the spiritual body of Christ, with Christ as its head (Ephesians 5:23). There is but one body (Ephesians 4:4), and the one body is the one church (Colossians 1:18).

2. **The household of God.** The word house in the scriptures suggests a family, which helps us to understand that the church is the family of God. In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul says that the house of God is the church of the living God. God is the Father and we are his children (Galatians 3:26,27; Ephesians 1:3).

3. **The kingdom of God.** Kingdom suggests a king, and so Christ

is the King (Revelation 17:14). But to be a king, the kingdom has to exist now, and it does (Acts 8:12). We are his subjects, the world its territory, and the New Testament its law. This is the church (Matthew 16:18,19).

4. **The vineyard of the Lord.** Christ is the vine and individual Christians are the branches (John 15:1-8). The idea here is to work in the vineyard and to bear fruit for the Lord.

The church is thus defined. Please study these matters in light of the scriptures and see for yourself. If you will see the church as God intended for you to see it, then your whole attitude will be changed, and perhaps even your life.

Questions

Please circle the correct answer:

- | | | |
|-----|----|--|
| YES | NO | 1. The Bible speaks of a church. |
| YES | NO | 2. The church is Catholic. |
| YES | NO | 3. The majority of the people understand the church. |
| YES | NO | 4. The word church is used in the Bible in only one sense. |
| YES | NO | 5. Christ said he would build his churches. |
| YES | NO | 6. The seven churches of Asia refer to seven distinct denominations. |
| YES | NO | 7. The church is the body of Christ. |

- YES NO 8. There is one body.
- YES NO 9 Christ is the head of the church.
- YES NO 10. The kingdom is yet to come.

Please give the correct answer:

1. List some things the church is not.
.....
2. From what Greek word does the word for church come?
.....
3. Of what does the church consist?
.....
4. In what two senses is the word church used?
.....
5. Who said he would build his church?
.....
6. How many did he build?
.....
7. What were the seven churches of Asia?
.....

8. How many bodies are there?
-
9. Who is the King of Kings?
-
10. What are we to do in the Lord's vineyard?
-

Please give a brief definition:

1. Ekklesia
2. Body of Christ
3. Household of God
4. The kingdom of God
5. The vineyard of the Lord

Lesson Two

The Coming of the Church

The church did not come into existence over night. It was planned, prophesied, promised, and then established. The Bible shows all of this clearly.

First, the church existed in the mind of God. Paul declares this unto the saints at Ephesus. He said, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved"* (Ephesians 1:3-6). Please note that he is talking to the church at Ephesus and he says God had chosen them before the foundation of the world. That means that God was thinking about the church even before the world was created. That is, he was planning it at that time, and so it originated in the mind of God. How absurd then to belittle and underrate that which God planned from the beginning.

Second, the church was spoken of in prophecy on numerous occasions. Isaiah said, *"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 2:2,3). Joel stated, *"And it shall come to pass afterward that I*

will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28,29). Then Daniel pointed out, *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever"* (Daniel 2:44). Now let us draw some conclusions:

1. The kingdom would be established in the last days.
2. It would be established in the mountains.
3. All nations would flow unto it.
4. The Lord would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh.
5. It would be established in the days of the fourth world empire.
6. It would consume all other kingdoms and stand forever.

Now, where is all of this fulfilled? Read Acts 2.

Third, the church was promised. John said it was at hand (Matthew 3:2). That means it was near by or would soon be established. Christ promised, *"And I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). *"And He said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power"* (Mark 9:1). *"Then He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high"* (Luke 24:46-49). Now observe these facts:

1. The kingdom was near.
2. Christ promised to build it in spite of death.
3. Some of those who were with Christ would still be living at the time of its establishment.
4. It would come with power.
5. Repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name among all nations.
6. It would begin in Jerusalem.
7. The apostles would be endued with power from on high in the city of Jerusalem.

Please keep all of these points in mind as we come finally to the establishment of the church and you will see all of this unfold.

Turn now to Acts 2. On doing so, read it carefully several times. All Bible scholars admit that the church was established at this time. Furthermore, the place was Jerusalem, the time was the last days, the days of the kings of the Roman Empire, the power came, repentance and remission of sins were preached to all the nations, and the church has been in existence ever since. So, the church that God had in his mind was established, the prophecies concerning it were fulfilled, and the promises regarding it were kept.

Questions

Please give the correct answer:

1. Where did the church first exist?
2. When did God choose the church?

3. Name three prophets who spoke of the coming of the kingdom:
4. How long will the kingdom stand?
5. Who promised to build the church?
6. Whose church did he promise to build?
7. How many did he say he would build?
8. With what would the kingdom come?
-
9. What would be preached in Jerusalem?
-
10. Where can you read about the establishment of the church?
-

Please circle true or false:

- | | | |
|------|-------|--|
| TRUE | FALSE | 1. The church was planned, prophesied, promised, and then established. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 2. The church originated in the mind of God. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 3. John said the kingdom was near at hand. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 4. The kingdom was to come with power. |

- | | | |
|------|-------|--|
| TRUE | FALSE | 5. Repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name among all nations. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 6. The church would begin in Jerusalem. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 7. Acts 2 tells of the establishment of the church. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 8. This was in the days of the kings of the Roman Empire. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 9. The last days had already begun. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 10. The prophecies and promises were fulfilled and kept. |

Please complete:

1. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the
2. "And it shall come to pass in
3. "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be
4. "I will build
5. "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached, beginning at

Lesson Three

The Establishment of the Church

In our last lesson we observed from Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28,29; and Daniel 2:44 that the Lord's kingdom (or church) would be established in the last days, in Jerusalem, at the coming of the Spirit, that all nations would flow into it, and that it would stand forever. Then Christ promised in Matthew 16:18; Mark 9:1; and Luke 24:46-49 that he would build his church, that it would come with power, and that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name among all nations. Now by turning to Acts 2 we will discover that in this chapter alone all of these prophecies were fulfilled and all of these promises were kept.

As we read Acts 2 we find that the Apostles were in the city of Jerusalem at that time: *"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language"* (Acts 2:1-6).

The record continues to tell of the many nations that were represented, *"So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, whatever could this mean? Others mocking said, they are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and*

said to them, Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. . . And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:12-17,21).

After showing that all that was happening was in fulfillment of the prophecies of old, Peter launches into his sermon. He shows how that Jesus was a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in their midst. Next he tells how that Christ had been taken and delivered up to the counsel and by wicked hands had been crucified and slain. Then he points out that God had raised him up, having loosed the pains of death. To convince his audience of this he quoted David to show that Christ lived, died, had been buried and resurrected, and had then ascended into heaven to sit upon the throne at the right hand of God.

Continuing, he said, *“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved*

from this perverse generation. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:32-41,47).

In the foregoing passage of scripture the Lord’s church was established. You will notice that all of it took place in Jerusalem. The power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles. What took place was in fulfillment of the prophecies of old. Peter specifically said, *“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel”* (Acts 2:16), so there can be no doubt about this. Furthermore, since the prophets had said these things would happen in the last days, and since Peter said it was occurring as the prophet had said it would, then the church was established in the last days. All nations were present on that day as repentance and remission of sins were preached, and about 3000 were obedient, were saved, and added to the church. Therefore, Christ established the church in Jerusalem in A.D. 33 and it has been in existence ever since.

Questions

Please tell us who said it:

1. Who said he would build his church?.....
2. Who said, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh”?
3. Who said, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand”?
4. Who said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”?

5. Who said, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation"?

.....

Please give the prophecies:

1. When was the Lord's kingdom to be established?
2. In what city would it be established?
3. How many would flow into it?
4. With what would it come?
5. How long would it stand?

Please give the promises:

1. Who would build the church?
2. With what would it come?
3. What would be preached?
4. Among how many nations would it be preached?
5. In whose name would these things be preached?

.....

Please answer these questions from Acts 2:

1. Who received the Spirit?
2. What were the signs of his presence?
.....
3. How did Peter convince the people that Christ was the Son of God?
4. What question did the people ask?
And what was the answer given?
.....
5. Who added the saved to the church?

Please define:

1. Church
2. Prophecy
3. Pentecost
4. Repentance
5. Baptism

Lesson Four

Identity of the Church

How would you set out to locate a long lost friend? Naturally, you would gather all of the marks of identification and then begin the search. Only after finding the individual that matched every mark of identification, would you accept him as being the one that you were seeking. Likewise, there are many churches in the world. How can one know which is the right one, the genuine one? How can one know which one is Christ's church? You must take all of the marks of identification and compare the various churches with them. Only after you find the one that matches every mark of identification can you be sure you have found the right one. But what are the marks of identification? Where are they found? The Bible is the answer.

1. **Christ established the church.** *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

2. **It had its beginning in Jerusalem.** This is seen in Luke 24:45-49 and Acts 2:5.

3. **The date of origin was A. D. 33.** This is also based on Acts 2, with the church being established on the day of Pentecost.

4. **The church wore the name of Christ.** Speaking of the various congregations, Paul wrote, *"The churches of Christ greet you"* (Romans 16:16). He further says, in speaking to the church at Corinth, *"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually"* (1 Corinthians 12:27). But what is the body? The church (Ephesians 1:22,23).

5. Its members were called Christians. *"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). "Then Agrippa said to Paul, You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter" (1 Peter 4:16). And finally, remember, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).*

6. Christ is its only head. *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).*

7. There is but one. *"There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4). But what is the body? It is the church (Colossians 1:18). Therefore if there is one body and it is the church, there is but one church.*

8. There are terms for entering the church. These include faith (Hebrews 11:6), repentance (Acts 17:30), confession of faith (Romans 10:9,10), and baptism (Mark 16:16). Once one is saved he is added to the church (Acts 2:47). Also Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27; and 1 Corinthians 12:13 teach that one is baptized into Christ and his church. Through obeying these commands one is said to be born into the church or the kingdom (John 3:3-5).

9. The worship of the church is peculiar. Christians are to assemble on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) to sing (Ephesians 5:19), to pray (Acts 2:42), to study (2 Timothy 2:15), to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) and to give (1 Corinthians 16:2).

10. The doctrine of the church is based on the Bible only. It is accepted without addition, subtraction, or substitution (Revelation 22:18,19). The Bible is the one and only creed of the church. Additional books or creeds are rejected.

11. The organization of the church must be according to God's plan. Christ is the head (Ephesians 5:23) and each congregation is to

have its own elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). The Lord's church does not have any earthly head or headquarters and neither does it have national or international man-made organization.

12. The mission of the church is three-fold. Its work is to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15,16), to help those in need (Galatians 6; James 2), and to edify the members (Hebrews 3:12-14).

13. Each Christian must live the faithful Christian life. We can not love the world (1 John 2:15; James 4:4), but must produce the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). Only the faithful will receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

These are some of the marks of the church. These are taken from the pattern, the Bible. Compare your church with these. For example, take the first four. Ask yourself, "Who established my church?" Was it established by Christ or some man? Then ask, "Where was my church established? Did it have its beginning in Jerusalem or some other place?" Continue by asking, "When was my church established?" If it was after A. D. 33 it couldn't be the Lord's. And finally, ask yourself, "What name does my church wear?" If it is not the name of Christ, then how can it belong to Christ? You could continue, but these are enough to help you see whether your church is of the Lord or of man. You can also compare other churches to these identification marks to determine if they are of God or not. I believe you will be able to see the difference if you'll be honest with yourself.

Should you find that the church you are a member of is not the one true church of the Bible, then let me urge you to leave it behind, learn the truth, obey it, and be added to the church that you can read about in God's word. Then you'll be in the one in which salvation is to be found.

Questions

Please give correct answers:

1. How would you locate a long lost friend?
.....
2. Are there many denominational churches in the world today?
.....
3. How may one know which one is right?
.....
4. Where are the marks of identification found?
.....
5. Who established the church?
6. Where did it have its beginning?
7. When was it established?
8. Give the name of it.
9. What is the body?
10. What were the members called?
11. Who is the head of the church?

12. How many churches are there?
13. Give the terms of admission to the church.
.....
14. How does one enter Christ and the church?
-
15. List the acts of worship.
.....
16. What is the doctrine of the church?
-
17. Tell what each congregation is to have?
-
18. State the three-fold mission of the church.
.....
19. What kind of life must the Christian live?
-
20. Who will receive the crown of life?
-

21. Can a church be the Lord's church if man started it?
-
22. Can a church be of the Lord if it did not have its beginning in Jerusalem?
23. Can a church be of the Lord if it had its beginning after A. D. 33?
24. Can a church be of the Lord if its members do not wear the name of Christ?
25. If you are saved, Christ will add you to what church?
-

Lesson Five

Name of the Church

If the church is to be scriptural, then it must have a scriptural name. However, there are many man-made churches with many man-made names and titles. How did these come about? Some of these names were given to honour their founders, such as "Lutheran." Some of them exalt a doctrine such as baptism or a method of doing the Lord's work. Some of them glorify a day such as the day of Pentecost or the Sabbath day. Still others place emphasis on the form of government by underlining the work of the presbyters of the church. But all of these, and any others that might be mentioned, take all of the glory, praise, and honour that belong to Christ, and give it those names, titles, and descriptions that have originated with men.

Man-made names and titles are wrong for several reasons. First, they cause division. They make distinctions where God did not intend distinctions to be. They separate people. They oppose the very prayer of Christ as recorded in John 17 when he prayed that we might all be one. Second, they are condemned in the Scriptures. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 the Apostle Paul showed his brethren the error of wearing the names of men, thus dividing up into parties and sects. Third, the names of men are substituted for the Lord's name. Yet, we read concerning the name of Christ, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Fourth, man-made names and titles are misleading, confusing, and create the wrong impression among unbelievers. They cause unbelief. Fifth, they will cause all who wear them, and all of those who are turned from Christ because of them, to be lost. For these reasons, they are wrong and sinful.

As to the church, Christ promised to build it (Matthew 16:18). It is said that he purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28), that he was the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), and the head of it (Colossians 1:18). It is only natural that it would wear his name to honour its founder, builder, saviour, and head. So when Paul wrote to the church at Rome, and sent along the greetings of the congregations in his area, he said, "*The churches of Christ greet you*" (Romans 16:16). Then in speaking to the church at Corinth, he said, "*Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually*" (1 Corinthians 12:27). But since the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22,23), he was simply talking about the church of Christ. It is also called the church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 20:28), the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9), the kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5), the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13), the kingdom of our Lord (2 Peter 1:11), the church (Acts 13:1), the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15), the church of the Firstborn (Hebrews 12:23), etc.

So the church is not called by any one exclusive name or descriptive phrase. At the same time, it should be remembered that that which belonged to God belonged to Christ and vice-versa. Also, those names all refer to the church that Christ built. If it is not the church of Christ, then whose church would it be? Furthermore, with all of these names and descriptive phrases of it, it would seem that one would really be desirous of getting away from the scriptures to have to choose another name for the Lord's church. But let us stay with the Bible and call the church what the Bible calls it. Then we will be right.

As to the names of the members of the church, the scriptures make that clear also. To begin with, the Prophet Isaiah said that God would give his people a new name (Isaiah 62:2). That name was borne by Paul many years later (Acts 9:15), but it was not to be given until the Gentiles had had an opportunity to obey God. All of this was fulfilled in Antioch of Syria when the disciples were first called Christians there (Acts 11:26). Later, we read where Paul was preaching to King Agrippa, and he responded by saying, "*Then Agrippa said to Paul,*

You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Finally, we read where Peter said, "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter" (1 Peter 4:16).

It is therefore plain that the followers of Christ in New Testament times were Christians and Christians only. The Lord would have us to be the same today. If we wear names and titles tacked on to the name Christian then that means we are not true Christians. The name Christian distinguishes one from the rest of the world and that is all the Lord requires.

In both the name of the church and its members, the name of Christ is to be exalted. Why? Because it is the family name (Ephesians 3:14,15), a name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9-11), and the name in which salvation is to be found (Acts 4:12). Therefore, we are to believe in the name of Christ (1 John 5:13), confess that name (2 Timothy 2:19), repent and be baptized in that name (Acts 2:38), meet for worship in that name (Matthew 19:20), do all in his name (Colossians 3:17), that we might have eternal life through his name (John 20:30,31).

With the foregoing in mind, surely no one could say that there is nothing in a name. There is certainly no salvation in the names and titles of men, but those who wear them will be lost because of them. On the other hand, there is salvation only in the name of Christ.

Questions

Please complete these phrases:

1. "The church must have a scriptural
2. "Man-made names and titles are

3. "The prayer of" plead for
4. "Now ye are the"
5. "God would give his people a"

Please circle the correct answer:

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| YES | NO | 1. Must the church have a scriptural name to be scriptural? |
| YES | NO | 2. Are man-made names and titles wrong? |
| YES | NO | 3. Is salvation in the name of Christ? |
| YES | NO | 4. Would the Lord have all of us to wear the same name today? |
| YES | NO | 5. Can one glorify the Lord if he does not wear his name? |

Please give correct answers:

1. How did some of the man-made names come about?
.....
2. List some reasons why man-made names and titles are wrong.
.....
3. For what did Christ pray?

4. Tell what Paul did when he found out that his brethren were dividing into parties.
.....
5. Why should the church wear the name of Christ?
.....
6. Quote Romans 16:16.
.....
7. What is the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:27?
.....
8. Give some other names of the church.
.....
9. If the church was not the church of Christ, whose church would it be?
.....
10. What were the members of the church called?
.....
11. List three references that speak of the name Christian.
.....
12. What would the Lord have us be today?
.....

13. Is it possible to be a certain kind of Christian?

.....

14. Why are we to exalt the name of Christ?

.....

15. What are we to do in the name of Christ?

.....

Lesson Six

Organization of the Church

Christ established the church (Matthew 16:18). That church is made up of the called out, the world over (Colossians 1:13,14). It consists of the saved (Acts 2:47). It is his spiritual body (Colossians 1:18), and there is but one (Ephesians 4:4).

While the church is universal in nature, it is made up of hundreds and thousands of individual congregations, and each congregation is made up of many individual members. This means that the government of the church is local and not national or international. In other words, the Lord's church does not have an earthly head or earthly headquarters.

The scriptures teach that Christ is the head of the church. Let us observe the following verses: *"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all"* (Ephesians 1:22,23). *"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23). *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18). Now what do these verses teach? As already stated, that Christ is the head of the body, which is the church. How many heads are there? Just one, and Christ is that one, sharing that position with no other.

With the church being made up of many local congregations, since Christ is the head of the church, then that means he is the head of each local congregation or local church, as well as being the head of each

member of the church. In keeping with this, Paul said, *"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Next, each local congregation is to have its own organization. With Christ as the head, from among the members, elders and deacons are to be appointed to see after the spiritual and physical needs of the church. The elders are to watch for the souls of the members (Hebrews 13:17); the deacons look after the physical side of things (Acts 6). Notice too that the scriptures always speak of a plurality of elders and deacons over each congregation instead of one elder and one deacon ruling over them. Neither do you ever have the elders and deacons of one congregation taking control of another, or of a group of congregations. Congregations are to fellowship one another but do not exercise control over each other.

The words elder, pastor, bishop, shepherd, and presbyter all have reference to the same office. Thus, an elder is a pastor, a bishop, etc. In Titus 1:5-9, Paul listed a number of qualifications: *"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you — if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict."* These qualifications are also stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. So not everyone in the church could be an elder. Only the qualified ones could be appointed, and even then, there must always be a plurality of such men. In congregations where no members are qualified to be elders, the men of the church must take care of the business matters until they grow and develop enough for elders to be appointed.

Deacons are also to be appointed to serve with the elders. They

are known as servants and work under the direction of the local elders. Paul lists their qualifications: *"Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Now this is the divine organization of the church. Christ is the head, with each congregation having its own elders and deacons. Under their authority would be the preachers and teachers and members. In the Lord's way, if one congregation drifts into error, the others may continue faithful. Or if all of the congregations depart from the truth but one, then it is possible for that one to be faithful. In the Lord's plan of organization each congregation is autonomous or independent from the others. They are not tied together by man-made laws, but by love. They have fellowship with one another, and work together, being one in Christ. His way cannot be improved on.

Nowhere in the scriptures do you read of Peter or any other man being the head of the church. Nowhere do you read of a bishop ruling over a number of congregations, or a "pastor" (preacher) being head over a congregation. Nowhere do you read of a "clergy" or "laity". The majority of the religious world has departed from God's organization of the church and that is one reason why there is so much division in the world. Let us therefore determine to return to the Bible for the true scriptural pattern for church organization.

Questions

Please give correct answers to the following:

1. Who established the church?
2. Of what is the church made up?
3. Is the body of Christ physical or spiritual?
4. How many churches are there?
5. The church is in nature
6. The church is made up of hundreds of thousands
of individual
7. Is the government of the church local, national, or
international?
8. Does the Lord's church have an earthly head or earthly
headquarters?
9. Who is the head of the church?
10. What are the leaders of the local church called?
-
11. What is the work of the elders and deacons?
-
12. How many elders and deacons are to be over each
congregation?

13. By what other names are elders called?
-
14. Where are the qualifications of elders listed?
15. Where are the qualifications of deacons listed?
16. Can a congregation have elders and deacons if there are no members qualified to be appointed?
17. In this case, who would lead the church?
18. How are the congregations bound together?
-
19. Can God's pattern of organization be improved on?
20. Is Peter the head of the church, according to the scriptures?
-
21. Do we read of offices in the church in which one man called a bishop is over a number of congregation?
22. Do we read of a Pastor being over one church?
23. Do we read in the Bible of the clergy or laity?
24. Why is there so much division in the world?
-
25. Where should we go for the pattern for church organization?
-

Lesson Seven

Entering The Church

In our studies so far we have seen the importance of the church. This is supported by the fact that the scriptures teach that Christ died for the church (Ephesians 5:25), that he purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28), and that he is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23). These questions are raised: Would Christ die for something that is unimportant? Would he shed his blood to buy a church that is worthless? Would he be the saviour of it if one can be saved outside of it? Surely you would say no to each one of these questions, and rightly so. Then why is it said that the church is unimportant and that one can be saved without ever being a member of it? Simply because such people misunderstand the church and they have been deceived into so thinking.

Certainly the Bible does not teach that the church is the saviour, but at the same time it teaches that one must be in the church to be saved. Just as the ark was not the saviour, yet Noah and his family had to be in the ark to be saved from the flood, so it is with the church. Not only so but as one is saved the Lord adds him to the church. When the people heard the gospel and obeyed it on the day of Pentecost, and the days following, the record says, *"praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:47). So if one is saved he is a member of the Lord's church. If he is not a member, he is not saved. It is just that simple. In other words, there is no such thing as being saved outside the church. One can be saved without being a member of a denomination or the sects of men, but he cannot be saved without being a member of the church of Christ.

Continuing our study, one cannot join the Lord's church. Instead, the Lord adds the saved to his church. Since he adds only the saved to the church, then the church is made up of the saved. The Lord looks on the heart, motives, etc., that produce the person's actions to see if he is sincerely obeying. If he is sincere, then God adds him to the church. If he is not, then he is not added by God even though we may accept him, because he has gone through the outward acts of obedience, and since we are unable to look into his heart. If one could join the church, all would be accepted regardless of their motives. This is why the Lord is responsible for each addition. He makes no mistake as to who should be among the saved and who is only going through a form.

Since Christ is the Saviour of the church, and he adds only the saved to it, one would naturally want to know what the Lord requires of one so that he might enter it. This is clearly set forth in God's word. Especially is this made clear in the various cases of conversion in the book of Acts. But note the specific terms or steps of entering the Lord's church:

1. **One must hear the truth.** *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).
2. **He must believe in God and Christ.** *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me"* (John 14:1).
3. **He must repent of his sins.** *"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3).
4. **He must confess Christ to be the Son of God.** Christ said himself, *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32).
5. **And he must be baptized for the remission of his sins.** This baptism is a burial in water (Romans 6:3,4; Acts 8:26-39). *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). *"Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the*

remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Now what did we learn earlier in this lesson? We found that the Lord adds the saved to the church. This means that when one obeys the Lord and is saved, he is automatically added to the church. We have just seen that by hearing the truth, believing it, repenting of sin, confessing Christ, and being baptized, one is saved. Thus, when an individual does this he is added to the church, since obedience to God is the plan by which we may be saved, and then the Lord adds the saved to the church.

Another way of putting it, the Lord said that the only way one can enter the kingdom of God is through being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:3-5). But what is the kingdom? It is the church (Matthew 16:18,19). Does the Lord have two ways for one to enter the church? Certainly not. Therefore, when one believes and is baptized (having been begotten by the Spirit through the word and thereby obeying its teaching) one is born into the kingdom of God, or the family of God, which is the Lord's church.

Again, Paul says that we are baptized into the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). But what is the body? It is the church (Colossians 1:18). How many are there? Just one (Ephesians 4:4; Ephesians 1:22,23). How does one enter it? Through being baptized. Christ says that one must believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16). That is what the Corinthians did (Acts 18:8). Therefore when one is baptized into the church he becomes a part of it or is added to it.

There is just one way to be saved, as we have seen, and the Lord adds the saved to the church. Are you a member of the church that you can read about in the Bible? If not, you are not saved. Investigate, study, and obey the Lord, and he will personally add you to his church.

Questions

Please give correct answers:

1. What have we seen in our studies of the church?
2. Who died for the church?
3. With what was the church purchased?
4. Who is the saviour of the church?
5. How do we know that the church is important?
6. Why do some say that the church is unimportant?
7. Does the church save?
8. Must one be a member of the church to be saved?
9. Where did Noah and his family have to be in order to be saved from the flood?
10. Was there any salvation outside the ark?
11. Who added the saved to the church?

12. Give the verse of scripture that teaches this.
13. If one is saved he is automatically a member of what church?
.....
14. Can one join the Lord's church?
15. What are the five steps that one must take to enter the church?
.....
.....
16. Can one be saved without obeying these commands?
17. What is baptism?
18. What is the purpose of baptism?
19. What is the kingdom?
20. How is the only way one can enter the kingdom?
21. What is the body?
22. How many bodies are there?
23. How can one enter it?

24. How many ways are there to be saved? _____
25. How many ways are there into the church? _____

Lesson Eight

Worship Of The Church

The church is made up of the saved. Its purpose is to worship and serve God through Jesus Christ. Paul said, "*And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*" (Colossians 3:17).

There are three kinds of worship set forth in the New Testament. First, we read of ignorant worship. When Paul was in the midst of Mar's hill in Athens, he observed the many idols around him, and said, "*for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you*" (Acts 17:23). Just as there were those who worshipped ignorantly then, many do the same today. There are not only millions bowing down to idols and images, but many millions more are following various religious practices out of ignorance of the scriptures.

Second, the Lord's word speaks of those whose worship is vain. Christ said, "*And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9). The majority of people worship in this manner today. They worship the Lord, it is true, but their worship is vain or void because it is according to the teachings and traditions of men rather than in harmony with the will of God.

Third, the word of God speaks of true worship, that which is in spirit and truth. We read the words of Christ, "*God is Spirit: and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). This is the only kind of worship that God will accept. This was true in the days of Christ and it is true in our present day. It is worship that is

directed to God in spirit (in humility and understanding) and in truth (as it is written). God does not force anyone to worship him, but those who worship him must do so on his terms.

1. **They assembled to study.** Although Timothy had been taught the scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 3:15), Paul exhorted him as a young preacher, "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). This would apply to all Christians and especially as they gather for worship. This is a time in which God speaks to his children through his word. In Acts 20:7 we read of Paul preaching to the brethren as a means of studying the word of God.

2. **They prayed.** After the people had obeyed the Lord on the day of Pentecost, we read, "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42). Through prayer the Lord's people have the opportunity to speak to their Father in heaven. What Christian would think of assembling with other Christians for worship and not engaging in prayer?

3. **They sang praises.** Paul wrote to his brethren, "*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:19). Also read Colossians 3:16 and Hebrews 13:15. There are two kinds of music. One is **vocal** and the other is **mechanical**. What kind of music does God want? He asks for vocal music. Paul says that we are to make the melody in the heart to the Lord. This eliminates mechanical music. The early Christians sang praises to God. Centuries later man added mechanical music, but God has not ordained it and God will not accept it. Christians cannot praise God with mechanical music any more than they can praise him with mechanical prayers.

4. **They assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper.** We have an example of this in Acts 20:7. In Matthew 26:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 11 we are taught to partake of bread in remembrance of the body of Christ and that we are to partake of the cup, or fruit of the

vine, in remembrance of the blood of Christ. That we are to do even up to this day.

5. **They gave of their money.** Paul commanded the brethren in Galatia and at Corinth, "*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Also read 2 Corinthians 9:7.

These early Christians met on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2) to worship God. They were warned, "*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25). Christians today are to engage in the same acts of worship on the same day, and therefore have the same admonition. The worship of the church is so simple and to the point that many stumble at its simplicity. They think it should be long and drawn out with much tradition and formality, going through monotonous actions, the repetition of prayers, etc. But this is not so. God has revealed his will concerning worship and it is not given to man to alter it in the least. It cannot be added to or subtracted from without having the Lord's curse pronounced upon those who do so. God has spoken, and his people must obey. Then and only then can God be worshipped, praised, and honored.

Questions

Please give correct answers:

1. Of what is the church made?

.....

2. What is the purpose of the church? _____
.....
3. What is to be done in the name of the Lord? _____
.....
4. How many kinds of worship do we read about in the New Testament? _____
5. Where was Paul when he observed so many idols? _____
.....
6. What did he say of their worship? _____
.....
7. Are there people today worshipping in this way? _____
8. Who said they were worshipping God in vain? _____
.....
9. Why was their worship vain? _____
.....
10. Give the scripture reference. _____
11. Are there any people today who are worshipping the Lord in vain? _____
12. What is true worship? _____

13. Quote John 4:24.
.....
14. What does it mean to worship God in spirit?
.....
15. What does it mean to worship God in truth?
.....
16. What is the type of worship that God requires of his people?
.....
17. Where do we read of the way the Lord's people are to
worship?
18. Give the five items of worship.
.....
19. How does God speak to man today?
20. How do children of God speak to God?
21. What two kinds of music are there?
-
22. Name the type of music that God requires.
23. What is the Lord's Supper?
-

24. On what day of the week are Christians to assemble?
25. Can God's plan of worship be added to or subtracted from?

.....

Lesson Nine

Work Of The Church

Why does the church exist? What is the purpose of it? What is its work? To find out, we will go to God's word.

First of all, let us observe that the church is not to be in secular business, running and operating secular schools and hospitals. Neither is it in the publishing and book selling business for the purpose of making money. While all of these things may be good, and individual Christians certainly have the right to engage in them, it is simply not the work of the church. More and more the religious world has come to concentrate upon such activities and thus take another step away from the Bible plan of God's purpose and work for his people.

1. **Preaching the gospel.** Christ taught the apostles, just after his resurrection and just prior to his ascension to heaven, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19,20). *"And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved: but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Later Paul exhorted the young Timothy, *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Timothy 4:2). Other verses could be given but these basically indicate the Lord's desire for the gospel to be taught.

What did the church do in the days of the apostles? The members did what the Lord asked them to do. They preached the word. The

book of Acts, for instance, is full of examples of this. In all of the cases of conversion, a preacher was on hand to teach the will of the Lord. Read Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, and 16. But who did the preaching and teaching? After a great persecution came upon the Lord's people in Jerusalem, the record says, *"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4).

Next, what did they preach? Again, all you have to do is to read the cases of conversion in the book of Acts and you will see for yourself. But briefly, they taught the divinity of Christ, what one should do to be saved, the importance of the church, the items of worship, the importance of the Christian life, etc. Paul summed it up by saying, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Aside from the fact that the Lord commanded that his word be preached, Paul says that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Again Christ said, *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). Again, *"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Romans 10:14). All of this is to say that man is lost (Romans 3:23; 6:23), so the love of God must be preached (Romans 5:8), showing that man has a saviour (John 3:16), and that through obedience to God man may be saved from his sins (Romans 1:16,17; Mark 16:15,16). Those who are ignorant of God's will or who do not obey it will be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Thus God's word must be preached.

2. Helping the poor. We have examples in the Lord's word showing that the church was concerned about those who were in need of help, and that they were helped as there was the means to do so. In Acts 2:45 we read, *"and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need."* This was on a free will basis, of course. But again in Acts 6 we read of a dispute that came about

between the Grecians and Hebrews because the Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. So the Apostles called the disciples together and had them choose seven men from among them so that they might be appointed to handle this phase of the work of the church.

We read of Paul going to Jerusalem to help the poor saints there. He goes on to say, *"For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem"* (Romans 15:26). So Paul writes to the brethren at Corinth, *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come"* (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

Who is to be helped? Naturally, the needy in the church, first of all. That is, the poor, old people, widows, cases of emergency, orphans of Christians, and so on. We read, *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith"* (Galatians 6:10). But not just everyone is to be helped. In 1 Timothy 5 we note that an individual is to be helped regularly only when that person cannot help himself or herself, has no relative that can help, and that the person must have proved to be a faithful Christian. So the Lord's money must be used discriminately, not just handed out to any one who asks.

Not only are members of the church to be helped but all people who are deserving of assistance can be aided, provided the church has the means to help. Read James 1:27 and James 2. This is a means of reaching people with the gospel.

But from where do the funds come for this type of work? They come from the members, as they are willing to give (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:6,7). That means if Christians fail to give, the church is not provided with the means to assist those who are in need.

3. **Edifying the church.** To edify means to build up, to strengthen, to encourage, to help the members of the church to grow spiritually. What are some of the things that edify? God's word, fellowship, engaging in worship, helping one another, good works, love, etc. Read Acts 9:31; Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 14:26; 2 Corinthians 12:19 and Ephesians 4:12.

In conclusion, many people wonder how the church can do these things without world-wide organization, without a man as the head of the church, and without special fund raisings. But the Lord's way is the best way, being the one and only way to do his work. God can be praised, honoured, and glorified only as we do his will and thus fulfill our purpose for being here. Christ is the head of the church and each congregation, as well as each member, is to do its part. The church therefore can do its work only as the members give of their means to make it possible.

The preaching, the helping of those in need, the edifying of its members, are all for the purpose of saving the souls of men and, that in the end, God might be praised in it all. The church has no work but this. Politics, business, and turning the church into nothing but a social organization are foreign to God's word. The Lord's church is a spiritual body, being in the world but not of the world, seeking to obey God and to serve man, to remain pure and holy, to the salvation of all of its members, and to the glory of its creator. This is the Lord's church, its work, and its mission.

Questions

Please give correct answers

1. The church of the Lord is not in what business?

2. Is the religious world guilty of engaging in various kinds of business for profit?
3. What is the work of the church?
4. Give the Lord's command in Matthew 28:19,20 and Mark 16:16.
5. Tell what the early Christians did when they were scattered abroad.
6. What were some of the things they preached?
7. How does faith come?
8. What makes us free?
9. How can man be saved?
10. Who will be lost?
11. Is the church concerned with those who are in need of help?

12. Who contributed to the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem?
.....
13. Are all to be helped?
14. What group of people is to be helped first?
-
15. Give the limitations for helping.
-
16. Are those outside the church to be helped too?
17. From where do the funds come for helping the needy?
-
18. When are the funds to be raised?
-
19. Define the term edify.
-
20. What are some of the things that edify?
-
21. How can God be praised and honored?
-
22. Who is the head of the church?

23. What is the purpose of the work of the church?

.....

24. Is the church of the world?

25. To what are politics, business in the church, etc., foreign?

.....

Lesson Ten

Unity Of The Church

The religious world today seems to be more concerned than ever with the unity of the church. The ecumenical movement has caught the imagination of man everywhere. The reason for this is because there is so much religious division in the world, and one and all are tired of it. And yet, unity can never be brought about with the religious bodies of men agreeing to disagree. The division will still be there in spite of the fact that there may be some degree of union or harmony. So what is the answer? The answer lies in the Bible itself. In order for true unity to exist men must lay down their teachings, doctrines, names, churches, creed books, etc., and pick up the Bible, read and study it, believe it, and obey it. Then there can be genuine unity, the kind the Lord prayed for in John 17. When men do this, they will all believe the same thing, all obey the same teachings, all wear the scriptural name, all work together, all teach the same thing, and all go to heaven together. It will be so simple for unity to exist when man quits following man and begins to follow Christ.

The scriptures condemn division. The Bible says that God hates those that sow division or discord among the brethren (Proverbs 6:19). In 1 Corinthians 1 we are told of the church at Corinth becoming divided. Instead of commending this sort of thing, the Apostle Paul took immediate steps to destroy the root cause of it. He began by saying, *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Corinthians 1:10). Then he proceeded by asking three questions, any one of which would show the fallacy of their action. The questions were: Is Christ divided? Was Paul cruci-

fied for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? In all three instances they would have to answer in the negative. Therefore, he showed the absurdity of their divided condition.

The same Apostle Paul wrote the brethren at Rome, "*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple*" (Romans 16:17,18). In Colossians 2:20-22, he says, "*Therefore if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men?*"

All of this is to say that the teachings of men, the doctrines and commandments of men, exalting men, accepting and following books other than the Bible, are things that cause division. On the other hand, unity can be had and enjoyed only as one follows Christ. It was Christ who prayed, "*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (John 17:20,21). Now did Christ pray for the impossible? No. Surely then there can be unity. When? When we follow Christ. Man-made teaching will divide us but Bible teaching will unite us.

In Ephesians 4:1-6 we have a formula for unity. Listen to it: "*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*" Notice that this is a plea for

unity. Notice, too, that there is but one of each of the things listed. Whoever got the idea that there was more than one?

The unity of the church is seen in that Christ said he would build his church (Matthew 16:18), meaning **one**, that it is his spiritual body (1 Corinthians 12:27), and that he is the head of it (Colossians 1:8). Surely one would not accuse Christ of having two bodies or two heads. The church is also pictured as the house of God or the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15). But how many houses or families? **One**, of course. We read of the kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of God, with Christ as king (John 3:3-5; Colossians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:15). How many kingdoms does the Lord have and how many kings are there? Just one in either case.

Surely the Bible is opposed to the very thought of denominationalism, that which is division. On the other hand, it pictures unity, oneness, completeness, and wholeness. While the Bible does not picture the church as being a mystical body made up of all religious people regardless of their beliefs and practices, it does picture the church as belonging to Christ, made up of those called out, those who have followed Christ and who have obeyed his teaching, the saved. Christ is not divided and neither is his church divided. To be divided or to uphold division in any way is to oppose Christ and that for which he prayed.

Questions

Please give correct answers:

1. Is there any plea today concerning the unity of the church?

.....

2. What is the reason for so much interest in unity?
.....
3. Can unity ever be brought about with religious bodies
agreeing to disagree?
4. What is the answer to unity?
.....
5. What must men lay down for there to be unity?
.....
6. Who prayed that we might all be one?
7. What will be the result of unity?
.....
8. Do the scriptures condemn division?
9. Who does the Lord hate?
10. Quote 1 Corinthians 1:10.
.....
.....

11. Give the three questions that Paul asked the church at Corinth.
.....
.....
12. What group of people are to be marked?
13. Who do they serve?
14. Are we to avoid them?
15. Who is it that worships the Lord in vain?
16. For what did Christ pray?
17. Did he pray for the impossible?
18. Give the formula for unity.
.....
19. How many are there of each?
20. How many churches did Christ build?
21. What is the church?

22. Who is its head?
23. Does Christ have more than one body or more than one head?
.....
24. How many families does the Lord have?
25. Will God's word divide us or unite us?

Lesson Eleven

Creed Of The Church

The word creed comes from a Latin word, Credo, and is defined to be, "A belief, authoritative formula of religious belief; any formula or confession of religious faith; a summary of principles or opinions professed or adhered to." When one thinks of a creed he usually thinks of "the Apostles' Creed" and "the Nicene Creed." However, neither one is found in the Bible. Furthermore, every man-made church has its own man-made creed in the form of manuals, disciplines, confessions of faith, etc., all of which are additions to God's word.

May it be suggested that any creed book that contains more than the Bible, contains too much. Any creed book that contains less than the Bible, contains too little. And any creed book that contains nothing but the Bible is useless because we already have the Bible. Revelation 22:18,19 and Galatians 1:6-9 stress the fact that we are not to add to God's word, we are not to subtract from it, and we are not to substitute for it. In other words, the scriptures are complete (2 Timothy 3:16,17), they are perfect (James 1:25), and we are to speak only as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11). There is therefore no need for an additional book or books as authorization.

The religious world is divided today not because the people have followed God's word, but because they have accepted the creeds of men. It is argued that every church must have its own set of rules, etc. This within itself is an admission that the Bible has been forsaken. How tragic. Thus our plea is for one and all to lay down their man-made books and return to the Bible, which is the word of God. It will not divide us but will unite us in Christ Jesus.

What is the creed of the Lord's church? We have no saviour but Christ and no creed but the Bible. Our opinions and ideas in religion are worthless. We have no private interpretation of the Bible. All we have is the Bible. We have obeyed its teaching and we point others to it. Our plea is for one and all to read and study it (John 5:39; 2 Timothy 2:15), and we ask people everywhere to do what it teaches.

We have no additional book or books that we follow. We do not believe that there is a man living who can write a book of rules and regulations that would equal the Bible. We do not believe that the Lord has given anyone the right to write such a book. We do not believe that the Holy Spirit has inspired anyone to write such a book.

It is the word of God and the word of God only that has come from God, that has been inspired of God, and that can save us. Furthermore, it is the word of God that will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). You can't find the truth unless you go to the source of the truth. Therefore to believe the truth, you must hear the truth (Romans 10:17). It is no wonder that the majority of the people are deceived in religious matters. It is no wonder that there is so much division and confusion in the religious world. Man has gone to man for help instead of the Lord. Man has turned to the teachings of men instead of the writings of the Bible. Surely, then, man must return to the Bible if he is to be saved.

We would encourage man to go to the Bible to learn the truth about the church. There are many counterfeit churches in the world. Which one is right? Should one make a separate study of each one? No, one should go to the book that tells the truth about the church. Once he learns the truth about the Lord's church, he will have no trouble locating the one that follows the Bible teaching.

We would encourage man to go to the Bible to learn the truth about what one must do to be saved. There are many ways to be saved, according to the teaching of men, but when one goes to God's book he finds that it is simply stated one must hear the truth, believe it,

repent of his sins, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38). What difference does it make what man says? The Lord is the one who saves, and so one must hear and obey him to be saved.

We should encourage man to go to the Bible to learn how to worship God. Contrary to what man says, there are not many ways of worship. The Bible teaches that there is just one way and the Lord so specified how in his word (John 4:24).

Not only on these points, but on all points that pertain to salvation and life and godliness, we would urge one and all to go to the Bible for the truth about it. While man leaves the impression that the Bible cannot be understood, and definitely not understood alike, this is not true. The Devil would have man to stay away from the Bible in order that he might be lost. But to be saved he must come to it, believe it, and let it be his one and only guide in religious matters. Only then can he be saved, because only then will he be right.

What is our creed? Jesus Christ and his word. Beside him there is no other. We believe that Christ is the Son of God and that his word is final. We accept it and follow it alone. We urge all others to do the same. The creeds of man can lead you to but one place — Hell. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6).

Questions

Please give correct answers:

1. Define creed.
.....

2. What does every man-made church (denomination) have?
.....
3. Tell what will happen to those who add to or subtract from the word.
4. Are the scriptures complete?
5. What is perfect?
6. How are we to speak?
7. Is there any need for additional books of authority?
8. Why is the religious world divided today?
-
9. Will the Bible divide us?
10. What is the creed of the Lord's church?
-
11. Are our personal opinions and ideas worth anything?
12. Do we have a right to our own private interpretation?
13. Is there a man living who could write a book that would be equal to the Bible?
14. Has the Lord given anyone the right to write a book and claim it to be equal to the Bible?

15. From where did the word of God come?
16. What word will judge us in the last day?
17. What is the truth?
18. To whom has man gone for help?
-
19. To what book must we go to learn the truth about the church?
.....
20. Are there many ways to be saved?
21. What does the Bible teach that one must do to be saved?
-
-
22. Does the Lord reveal in his word what he would have man to do in worship?
23. Can the Bible be understood?
24. Can we all understand the Bible alike?
25. Who is the one and only way to heaven?
-

Lesson Twelve

History Of The Church

In Acts 2 the stage is set for the establishment or beginning of the Lord's church or kingdom. The Apostles are in Jerusalem, the Spirit is poured out upon them, many nations are represented since they are gathered for Pentecost. Peter and the Apostles proclaim that this is the fulfillment of that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, Christ has died and thus the last days have begun. Repentance and remission of sins are preached, about 3000 souls hearken to the preaching of the gospel and are baptized, and the Lord added them to his church. Then from Jerusalem the gospel goes throughout Judea, on to Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost parts of the earth until every creature under heaven had heard it (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Colossians 1:23).

The church flourished in the days of the Apostles and spread rapidly. After the conversion of Paul, he made three missionary journeys, not only preaching the gospel to the Jews but to the Gentiles as well. As a result there were many converts, and congregations of the Lord's church were established throughout Asia and Europe. But this was not easy, inasmuch as there was much persecution. First, the church began to be persecuted in Jerusalem. Because of this the disciples were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:1-4). As time went by, the Romans blamed the Christians for many of their problems and made sport by punishing them in their arenas in Rome and throughout the Roman world. Paul was finally imprisoned and taken to Rome for trial. Secular history tells us that all the apostles except John were martyred for the cause of Christ. Hundreds and thousands and perhaps millions of Christians also lost their lives.

In spite of the persecution, the church only grew and spread. It was not persecution that gave the greatest blow to the church, but that which took place within the church itself. The Apostle Paul foretold of the day in which there would be a falling away. In other words, he was saying that the day would come in which many of the members of the Lord's church would drift into error. But let us notice what he says: *"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

In speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch,*

and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

As Paul warned, there were those from within the church that rose up and began to lead away many of the followers of Christ. Secular history tells us that the falling away began with an attack on the government, or organization, of the church. The Lord's plan was that each congregation should be independent of the others with its own elders and deacons. However, as time passed many of these congregations began to exalt one elder or bishop over the others, and finally permitted one of these bishops to rule over several congregations, with the eventual outcome being that one was appointed the universal bishop over the entire church. Of course this didn't happen overnight, but over a period of many years, and so by 606 A.D. the first Universal Bishop became the head, or the Pope, of the apostate sector of the church, resulting in the Catholic church as we know it today. What happened to the Lord's church? The faithful few continued, perhaps even unnoticed as a whole, but the Lord had promised that his kingdom or church would stand forever, and that it was to do.

As far as the religious world was concerned, the Catholic church dominated. As a matter of fact it so controlled the world that the next several hundred years came to be known as the Dark Ages. This was because the Catholic church refused to allow the Bible to be read by the common people, saying that only the priests were qualified to read and understand the Bible and thus they would tell the people what the Bible taught. Naturally this meant that they told the people only what they wanted them to know.

During this period of time even the Catholic church divided into the Roman and Greek branches over such teachings as sprinkling and mechanical music. As time went by the Roman Catholic church through her councils, etc., added many other doctrines and teachings to her system. Finally in the fifteen hundreds the Catholic church had become so corrupt doctrinally and morally that a man by the name of Martin Luther sought to reform the church, he himself being a priest.

However, he was excommunicated, and he left the church to teach and practice that which he thought was right. Out of this came what is known as the Reformation movement, or Protestantism, and out of this came what we know to be modern day denominationalism. The course of Luther sparked off an attempt in many parts of the world to return to the Bible. In spite of this, they did not fully succeed.

In the seventeen and eighteen hundreds there were denominational people in Europe and America who grew tired of division and confusion. Gradually they began to leave the errors they were in and to return fully to the Bible. Their desire was not to begin a new church but to return to the one they could read about in the scriptures. That they did, and since that time the plea for pure New Testament Christianity has been heard around the world with millions leaving the teachings of men to simply be Christians and members of the Lord's church, with the Bible as their only guide.

Christians, going into all parts of the world to preach the truth, have discovered the church in its purity already existing in parts of Africa, India, Russia, Poland, and many other places. That church therefore exists today as it has always existed. It is not necessary to trace it all the way back to the beginning to prove that it is the one church of the Bible. The pattern of the church is in the Bible and when we follow it we are the Lord's church. The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11) and it produces the same thing today that it produced in the days of the Apostles — Christians and members of Christ's church. We know the Lord's kingdom was to stand forever. It has therefore been in existence somewhere ever since the day it was established and it will continue to stand forever, with no man or devil having the power to destroy it. This is the Lord's kingdom, his church, being victorious from beginning to end, and finally to dwell ever more with the Lord.

Questions

Please give correct answers:

1. Where in the Bible do we find the story of the establishment of the Lord's church?
2. In what city was it established?
3. How many were added to the church at that time?
.....
4. Where else was the gospel preached?
5. How many missionary journeys did Paul make?
6. Did Paul preach to the Jews only?
7. In what two continents was the church established as a result of Paul's work?
8. What did the disciples do when they were scattered abroad?
.....
9. Who persecuted the Lord's church?
10. How many of the apostles were put to death because of their faith?
11. Did the church grow in spite of the persecution?

12. What did Paul warn would happen in latter times?
-
13. How did the attack on the church begin?
-
14. What had happened by 606 A.D.?
-
15. What happened to the Lord's church?
-
16. Why were the next several hundred years called the dark ages?
-
17. Tell what two branches the Catholic church divided into.
-
18. Name the man who sought to reform the Roman Catholic church.
-
19. Why did he attempt to reform it?
-
20. What great movement came out of all of this?
-
21. Did they succeed in returning fully to the Bible?

22. What happened in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds?
-
23. Did these people begin a new church in returning to the Bible for the pattern of the Lord's church?
24. Has the same church been found by Christians in other parts of the world?
25. Does the true church of Christ exist today?

Lesson Thirteen

The Church Today

The Lord's church was established almost two thousand years ago (Acts 2) but it exists today just as it did then. "But how would this be possible," you might ask. By simply following the New Testament pattern of the church.

Some are under the impression that in order to prove that the church today is the same church as was originally established by the Lord we would have to trace it from year to year all the way back to the day of Pentecost. However, this is not true. In the first place, we have the Lord saying that his kingdom or church would never be destroyed but that it would stand forever (Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:33; Hebrews 12:28). This means that the church has existed somewhere in the world since its beginning on up to this time. It did not have to exist everywhere all the time for this to be true. In the next place, we have the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) preserved in the words of the New Testament. If it produced Christians in the days of the Apostles, it will produce Christians today. If those who became Christians in apostolic times made up the church then, the same would be true today. Hence, it is possible for the Lord's church to exist wherever the New Testament exists, provided those that have it will do what it says.

God has always given his people a pattern to follow. He gave Noah a pattern to follow in building the ark (Genesis 6). He gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle, with the warning, "*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain*" (Hebrews 8:5). And so in the New Testament we have unfolded the perfect pattern of the Lord's church. As Noah and Moses were expect-

ed to follow the patterns that were given to them, so must we follow the pattern for the church. And as Noah and Moses followed God's pattern for the ark and the tabernacle, and God was pleased with the results, so when we follow the pattern of the church, God will be pleased with the results inasmuch as the church will exist just as he intended, without addition or subtraction (Revelation 22:18,19).

All of the marks of identification of the church are clearly laid down in the New Testament. The Lord tells what the church is, who established it, where it was established, when it was established, the name by which it was known, the name of its members, how to become a member of it, the worship of it, and the work of it. It tells who the head is, the purchase price of it, the saviour of it, etc. It leaves no room for doubt as to what it is and its function. The pattern is as clear as God's word is clear.

So all we need to do is to study the Bible that we might know the one true church of the Bible. When we learn the truth about it, and follow it, then we will become members of it, and thus the same church that Christ originally established. Seed produces after its kind and the word of God will produce Christians and members of the Lord's church today just like it always has in the past.

The church of Christ may be found around the world. It is here and everywhere. It may exist anywhere and at any time that man will do what the Bible teaches. It will cease to exist in any part of the world where the people cease to do God's will.

The church of Christ today is growing and spreading because it follows the Bible only. It condemns division and exalts Christ. This is the one church you can read about in the Bible. It is not a denomination or a combination of denominations. It is not protestant, Catholic, or sectarian. Then what is it? Simply the Lord's church. That is all.

The Lord's church has no earthly head or earthly headquarters. It exalts no man. It has no super organization styled by carnal wisdom.

Each congregation is independent with its own local organization of elders and deacons, preachers, teachers, and members. One member is not elevated above the others since the church has no clergy or laity.

Christ's church has always had its enemies and so it has enemies today. The religious organizations of men oppose her because they resent a church that would not follow their example. They resent the church because it will not fellowship them and bid them God speed. They are keenly aware that there is someone trying to follow the Bible only, when they are following the teachings of men. They are conscious that the church of the Bible follows only Christ and wears his name, while they follow men and wear the names of men. Their weapons against Christ's church are not truth, but consist of prejudicing the hearts of the people, misrepresenting it, etc. But their labors are in vain.

The Lord's church has been victorious through the ages. All of the enemies of this world and all of the devils of hell cannot stop her. She may be small in number in comparison to those around her, but it will be the few that will be saved (Matthew 7:13,14). Christ has but one church and he will return one day for that one church (Ephesians 5:27; John 14:1-6). He is the king of his kingdom and will come for it to deliver it up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24). He has but one bride (Revelation 21:9) and he is coming one day to receive that bride, the one that wears his name. What about the others? He will profess unto them that he never knew them. He will root them up (Matthew 15:13). They will be gathered up and cast into the fire.

Our plea today is for pure New Testament Christianity. Return to the word of God and let it be your guide. Know the Bible and then you will know the truth. Do what it says and you will be saved and added to the Lord's church, the one that you read about in the Bible.

If you are not a member of the church of Christ we encourage you to become a member. Believe in God, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God and be baptized that you might be saved

(Mark 16:16; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38). Then the Lord will add you to his church and you will be a Christian (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26). Will you do that? No one is going to force you to do it, but if you will study your Bible we believe that you will want to be just a Christian and thus spend the rest of your life in trying to live for the Lord and to spread the borders of his kingdom.

Questions

Please give correct answers:

1. When was the church established?
2. Does the church exist today?
3. Must one be able to trace the church back through the centuries to prove that it is the Lord's church?
4. How long did the Lord say the kingdom would stand?
.....
5. What is the seed of the kingdom?
6. What will the seed produce today?
7. Tell what God gave Noah and Moses?
8. Where is the pattern of the Lord's church?
9. Where are the marks of identification of the Lord's church set forth?

10. What does the Lord tell us about the church?
-
11. How may we know the one true church of the Bible?
-
12. Where may the church of Christ be found today?
-
13. Is this church a denomination?
14. Does it have an earthly head or headquarters?
15. Who are the enemies of the church?
-
16. What are their weapons?
17. Has the church been victorious through the ages?
18. For what is Christ returning?
19. What is our plea?
-
20. Give the steps that one must take to be a Christian and a member of Christ's church.
-

Please *circle* True or False:

- | | | | |
|------|-------|----|---|
| TRUE | FALSE | 1. | The church that Christ built exists today. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 2. | There is but one true church. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 3. | It wears the name of Christ. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 4. | One must be a member of it to be saved. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 5. | Christ is returning one day for his church. |