

9. THE CHURCH IS YOUR FAMILY

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

This lesson is designed to show the beauty of the church and to emphasize the church's importance.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

CLERGY: a non-biblical term that refers to the people who have been ordained by their denomination to take the lead.

DENOMINATIONS: various Christian sects, each of which has its own creed, organization, and tradition.

ELDERS: the older men who have been selected to lead to and watch over a congregation of Christians.

FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK: Sunday.

FRUIT OF THE VINE: grape juice or wine.

HYMNS: songs in praise of God.

JERUSALEM: the capitol city of Judea.

JUDEA: some of the territory between the Arabian desert and the Mediterranean sea.

LAITY: a non-biblical term that refers to those members

of a denomination, who have not been ordained to take the lead.

LORD'S SUPPER: the memorial meal that should be eaten every Sunday in memory of Jesus.

PSALMS: songs, mostly from the Old Testament.

PRIESTS: an Old Testament term for those men who took care of the worship of God in the temple in Jerusalem.

SAMARIA: the land north of Judea.

SPIRITUAL SONGS: songs that are sung to edify (build up) the members of the church and to glorify God.

THE CHURCH IS YOUR FAMILY

The attractiveness of the church can be seen from the remarkable way it has grown. On the very first day of its existence, three thousand people were baptized into it (Acts 2:41). In a very short time, the number of men in the church in Jerusalem grew to five thousand (Acts 4:4).

After persecution broke over the church in Jerusalem the believers were scattered (Acts 8:1). Everywhere they went, they preached the word about Jesus (Acts 8:4). Very soon churches sprang up in Judea and Samaria. The church continued to grow so that today there are churches all over the globe.

THE CHURCH IS STILL GROWING

The church is still growing numerically and its members are all the time maturing. The church is made up, however, of imperfect people, who are at various stages of their spiritual development. Some of its members are just getting started, and they have a long way to go. Others are well on their way toward spiritual maturity.

God is the one who planned the church and His wisdom is reflected in it (Ephesians 3:10). The church also reflects God's glory (Ephesians 3:21). In spite of the fact that the church may look flawed, when viewed from the outside; from God's point of view, it is beautiful and glorious.

THE CHURCH WAS BUILT BY JESUS

From the beginning, God's plan has been to call out a people for Himself from the various nations of the world (Acts 15:14). He sent His Son into the world to be a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. He caused the gospel (good news that Jesus is the King) to be preached to all the world. By the gospel, God saves people from sin and damnation. Those whom He saves, He adds to the church (Acts 2:47). Therefore, the church is composed of those who have been saved. That does not mean, however, that it is the church, which saves them. The church is merely the receptacle into which God puts those whom He saves. The way to get into Christ's church is to be saved. There is no other way to get into His church.

THE CHURCH BELONGS TO CHRIST

Jesus knew that the church would come about as a result of His sacrificial death. He prophesied, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18).

Jesus' prophecy about the church shows two things. It shows that the church did not come about accidentally and that Jesus intended to build it. It also shows that the church, which He envisioned would belong to Him, and not to someone else. Since Jesus is both founder and owner of the church, He has the right to say what the church should be like and what it should do.

Some religious organizations have gone their own way, making their own laws and originating their own

traditions. The origin of many of the denominations is connected to the history of the nations of Western Europe.

Religious people do not have to go along with denominational laws and traditions. It is possible to be a Christian without belonging to any of the denominations.

Indeed, it would be better if Christ's people were not divided into various parties, sects, and denominations (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one (John 17:20-21).

EVERYONE IS WELCOME IN THE CHURCH

God wants everyone to be in His church. Everyone is loved by Him and He wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, the church is also not restricted to one nation, race, gender, or color of skin. The Bible says,

“There is neither Jew nor Greek,
there is neither slave nor free,
there is neither male nor female;
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3:28

THERE IS NO CAST SYSTEM IN THE CHURCH

Jesus welcomes people into His church from every cast and level of society. Membership in the church is not restricted to upper class people. People at the bottom of society are just as welcome as are high-class people. Outcasts are also welcome.

THERE IS EQUALITY IN THE CHURCH

Jesus did not plan for a distinction between clergy and laity in His church. According to the Bible every person is a priest (1 Peter 2:5). Even the women are “priests” and have equal value with the men in the church. In the eyes of God, every person in the church is a “son” of His (Galatians 3:26).

Although women are equal with men in the sight of God, they have their own special role to play in the church. For example: Elderly women should teach younger women how they should live (Titus 2:3-5).

The older men should serve as “elders,” or “bishops,” of the flock, provided they are married and have faithful children (Titus 1:5-6). In the New Testament, “elders” are the same as “bishops” (Titus 5,7). The men of the congregation are to take the lead in public teaching and worship (1Timothy 2:8-15).

If anyone desires to have a prominent position in the church, he must become the servant of all (Matthew 20:25-28). He must become like Jesus, who took a wash basin, filled it with water, and washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:3-5,14-16).

Every member of the church is the same before God, but that does not lessen anyone’s unique value. No one loses status by becoming a Christian, no matter how high his earthly status may have been, before becoming a Christian. To the contrary, everyone is made nobler by accepting the gospel of Christ. This is because everyone

that becomes a Christian becomes at the same time a child of the king and an heir of heaven (Romans 8:16-17).

Equality in the church means that each member of the church should be treated with equal respect, whether he wears expensive clothing or not (James 2:2-5).

THE CHURCH IS A CARING COMMUNITY

God wants all of His people to be involved in serving (Galatians 5:13). He provides in the church an opportunity for each person to give useful service to others. The apostle Paul said that Christians fulfill the law of Christ by bearing each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2). When they love each other and serve each other, they live according to the "royal law" (James 2:8). The "royal law" is the law by which kings should live.

The members of the church are taught to care for the sick (James 5:14). They are taught to train their children properly (Ephesians 6:4).

Children have a unique significance in the eyes of Jesus (Matthew 19:14). Indeed, all weak and lowly members of the church, whether young or old, are to be shown special respect and given special attention (1 Corinthians 12:22-23).

The love that members of the church have for each other gives mutual encouragement and comfort. If any member is overtaken by some temptation and falls into sin, those in the church that are spiritual in mind should restore the one that falls (Galatians 6:1).

THE CHURCH IS A WORSHIPPING FELLOWSHIP

Every local congregation of Christian people is supposed to come together on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7). The first day of the week is important because that is the day on which Jesus arose from the dead (Matthew 28:1,6-7). At their weekly meeting, Christians offer prayers to God in the name of Jesus. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are sung (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Usually, there is a reading of some text from the Bible and an explanation is given. The brethren also exhort one another. In addition, the Lord's supper is served (1 Corinthians 17:34).

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is a simple meal, consisting of bread and "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:26-29). The bread that is served represents the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:24); and the "fruit of the vine" represents His blood (1 Corinthians 11:25). Ever since Jesus arose from the grave, no first day of the week has passed without Jesus' disciples gathering somewhere to remember Jesus by eating this memorial meal.

THERE CAN BE GREAT JOY IN THE FAMILY

One of the outstanding characteristics of the church is the joy that can be found in it. The very first congregation was described in the following fashion:

“So continuing daily with one accord
in the temple, and breaking bread
from house to house,
they ate their food with gladness
and simplicity of heart.”

Acts 2:46

The joy experienced by the members of the Jerusalem church helped make that church attractive to others. The Bible says that they had “favor with all the people” (Acts 2:47). This same thing will likely be said about any church that closely follows Jesus’ teaching.

THE GLORIOUS FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

The church also has a glorious future. It is portrayed in the Bible as “the bride of Christ” (Ephesians 5:25-27). She is the one whom Christ saved by His death (Ephesians 5:23). She is the one whom Christ will take home with Him when He returns (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Then, the church will be with Christ forever in heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:17). If anyone hopes to be in the church at that time, he or she must be in it now.

WORKSHEETS

After you have read this lesson and have looked up all the references in the Bible, please read the following sentences. As you read, pay attention to whether or not these statements are true. If you decide a particular statement is true, please write “T” before it. If you decide a statement is false, write “F” before it.

- _____1. Jesus never intended to build the church.
- _____2. God planned the church, and the church shows His glory.
- _____3. The way to get into the church is by being saved.
- _____4. Only men can be “priests” in the church.
- _____5. Elders (bishops) should be married.
- _____6. Rich people are more important than poor people.
- _____7. The members of the church, who are spiritual should try to restore those that have fallen away.
- _____8. The church meets on the first day of the week, because this is the day on which Jesus was resurrected from the dead.
- _____9. The church family can be the source of great joy.

____ 10. The church is the “bride of Christ.”

Please, complete the following scriptures with the help of the New King James Version of the Bible

1 Corinthians 11:23-25

“ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took _____; And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is _____ which is broken for you; do this in _____ of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is _____ in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in _____ of Me.’”

Galatians 5:13

“For you, brethren, have been called to _____; only do not use liberty as an _____ for the flesh, but through _____ one another.

Ephesians 5:25-27

“Husbands, _____ your wives, just as Christ also loved the _____ and gave _____ for her, that He might _____ and _____ her with the washing of _____ by the word, that He might present her to Himself

a _____ church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be _____ and without blemish.”

THOUGHT QUESTIONS: Please, think about the following questions and write a short paragraph about each.

1. Does a person become a low-cast person by becoming a Christian? Please explain.

2. Describe how the church is the bride of Christ.

2. How often should a person meet with the church and partake of the Lord's Supper? Why?