

## ***LESSON 2 - WHAT IS THE CHURCH?***

### **1) INTRODUCTION**

- a) In our first lesson, we focused on why a study of the church is so important. We see God's high estimation of it in scripture
  - i) The church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:23)
  - ii) The church is the fullness of Christ (Eph 1:23)
  - iii) The church is apart of God's eternal purpose (Eph 3:10-11)
  - iv) Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph 5:25)
  - v) Jesus' desire is to present it as a glorious church (Eph 5:26-27)
  - vi) Jesus nourishes and cherishes His church (Eph 5:29-30)
- b) Beginning with this lesson, we'll begin to talk about specifics regarding the church
  - i) In this lesson, we'll attempt to understand exactly what the church is
  - ii) What is the church Jesus promised to build (Matt 16:18), that Jesus nourishes and cherishes (Eph 5:29-30), and that many people have sought to redefine?

### **2) THE CHURCH DEFINED**

- a) What does the word "church" mean?
  - i) The Greek word for "church" is "ekklesia", which is a combination of two words: "ek" (out of) and "kaleo" (called)
  - ii) Therefore, the literal meaning of the word "church" is people that are "called out of" something

**Question 1:** Read **Col 1:13**. Where have Christians been rescued from?

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- iii) The term "darkness" as used here, and many other places in the bible, has reference to "sin" or "error" or "misery" or "spiritual death"
- iv) Therefore Paul is telling these Christians that they have been delivered from the domain of the devil

**Question 2:** In **Col 1:13**, where have Christians been translated/transferred to?

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- v) "Translated/transferred", as used here, carries with it the idea of removing a people from one country to another
- vi) Therefore we have been taken out of the domain and reign of Satan, translated/moved to another, that is to the kingdom of Jesus Christ
- vii) Therefore, in this relationship, having obeyed the gospel, having a relationship with Christ as one of His children, we're in a new kingdom as members of His church.
- viii) We have a new law and we belong to a different community where we enjoy fellowship with other citizens of that kingdom

**Question 3:** Read **1 Pet 2:9-10**. Where does Peter say we were called out from?

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- b) The implication is clear. The church is a group of people who were called out of the realm of sin and death and into a relationship with Jesus Christ, into His body (church)
  - i) But how does this calling take place? The scriptures reveal this as well

**Question 4:** Read **2 Thes 2:14**. Through what means does God call us out of sin and death?

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- ii) The gospel of Christ, or the glad tidings, is the good news concerning the Son of God - the fact that He died, was buried, and was raised on the third day; the fact that He has given us commands by which we can be saved
- iii) We're called by this gospel out of the world (if we respond) into a relationship with Christ, and then we become the people of God, members of His body
- iv) So again, when we talk about the church, we are talking exclusively about Christians; we are talking about the same thing Peter and Paul talked about when they said we were called out of darkness. The church contains those who are saved

### 3) **THE CHURCH DESCRIBED**

- a) Though the term "church" is found in many places in the NT, there are also other descriptions used in place of the word "church"
  - i) Different descriptions of the church are used for the purpose of placing emphasis on the various natures of the church

**Question 5:** Read **Col 1:13**. What other term used for the church does Paul say we have been transferred/translated to?

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- ii) That the "kingdom" is just another description for the church is evident by connecting several verses together:
  - (1) In Mark 9:1, Jesus told his disciples that there were some standing before him who would not die until they saw the kingdom of God come with power
  - (2) In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the Apostles that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them
  - (3) Then in Acts 2:1-4, we read of the Holy Spirit coming upon the Apostles as promised by Christ and it was on Pentecost that this happened
  - (4) This was the same time that Peter preached the very first gospel sermon and where people first obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ and were added to His church (Acts 2:37-38, 41)
  - (5) Therefore, if the kingdom came with power, and the power came with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, then the kingdom came on Pentecost. The kingdom is the same thing as the church
- iii) Every kingdom has four facets:
  - (1) A king. In this kingdom, Christ is king and has all authority in heaven and on earth – **Matt 28:18**
  - (2) Subjects. Christians are the subjects and citizens of Christ's kingdom and must submit to his decrees – **Jas 4:7a**

- (3) Boundaries. In the case of Christ's kingdom, there are no physical boundaries – it's boundaries are defined by the number of subjects who make it up – **Luke 17:21**
- (4) Laws. The laws in Christ's kingdom are called the Apostles' Doctrine and must be learned and applied by those subjects in the kingdom – **Acts 2:42**

b) 2<sup>nd</sup> Description

**Question 6:** Read **Eph 1:22-23**. What term is used here to describe the church?

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- i) Just as the purpose of the term “kingdom” was to describe the authoritative role that Jesus has over His subjects, there is a purpose for this metaphor also
- ii) What is implied by the term “body” is the relationship we enjoy with Jesus Christ and with one another.
- iii) First, Christ is the head from which we, the body, receive the nourishment we need – **Col 2:18-19**
- iv) Second, those who are members of Christ's body are also members of one another – **Rom 12:5**
- v) This implies that there isn't just a relationship between individual Christians and Christ, but individual Christians are to develop relationships with one another because as the body of Christ, we are members of one another
- vi) The relationship we have with one another in the body is for the mutual building up and edification of each individual member – **Eph 4:14-16**

c) 3<sup>rd</sup> Description

**Question 7:** Read **1 Tim 3:15**. What term is used here to describe the church?

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- i) This metaphor depicts the family environment of the church. The church of Jesus Christ is designed by God to be a family
- ii) In this family, God is the Father and Christ is the Son. And through Christ, we also become sons of God – **Gal 4:4-6**

**Question 8:** Read **Matt 12:46-50**. When someone does God's will, how does Christ consider them?

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- iii) There are many Christians in the world who receive terrible persecution from their physical family when they become the kind of Christian the bible talks about. Christ promised that in these instances, Christians would be blessed with another family, a better family – **Mark 10:28-30**
- iv) As a family, Christians are to treat one another accordingly – **1 Tim 5:1-2**

d) 4<sup>th</sup> Description

**Question 9:** Read **Eph 2:19-22**. As Christians are “built” and “fitted together”, what do they grow into according to vs. 21?

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- i) In the OT, the physical tabernacle/temple was built by the Jews at God’s command so that He could have a place to dwell among them
  - ii) This temple was a magnificent, beautiful structure built with most valuable metals contained in all the earth
  - iii) But God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24). Instead, He dwells within Christians (Eph 2:22). This should not surprise us since we have already seen that the church represents the “fullness” of Christ (Eph 1:23)
  - iv) One implication of the church being a holy temple is that God will watch over us and protect us – **1 Cor 3:16-17**;
  - v) Another implication of the church being a holy temple is that we must stay pure so that God will continue to dwell within us – **2 Cor 6:16-7:1**
- e) 5<sup>th</sup> Description

**Question 10:** Read **John 15:1-5**. According to this verse, what is another description of the church?

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- i) As the vineyard, we are connect to Christ in that we receive our ability to bear fruit directly from Him, the vine
  - ii) As the branches, we are required to grow and to bear fruit in the world – **Matt 5:13-16**. If we don’t bear fruit, we are told Christ will cut us off – **John 15:2**
  - iii) To bear fruit, Christ prunes us so that we will grow in the right direction. This means every Christian will experience suffering to a degree. We should come to expect this as children – **Heb 12:7-11**
- f) 6<sup>th</sup> Description

**Question 11:** Read **Eph 5:22-33** and **2 Cor 11:2**. What can we conclude is another natural description of the church?

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- i) Christ nourishes and cherishes His church by seeing to it that it has everything it needs to sustain itself. It is an intimate relationship that we have with Christ
- ii) There is no other earthly relationship that should be as intimate as that of a husband and wife. It is to this degree and more that our relationship should be with Christ
- iii) And it is a relationship that extends on through eternity! – **Rev 19:6-9; 21:2**