

# **Eight week Course for New Members**

**Thursday's 5:45 PM-6:45 PM  
February 1, 2018 - March 22, 2018**

**Week Six: 3/15/2018**

## **Lesson Six The Church**

*NOTE: Please take a notepad, read each scripture given, and make notes to yourself. This is important.*

### **The Church**

#### **I. What Is the Church?**

- A. Meaning of the Word “Church.”
- B. Local and General Significance of the Word

#### **II. The Beginning of the Church**

- A. Predictions of the Coming Church
- B. Establishment of the Church or Kingdom
- C. Evidence from Prophecy

#### **III. The Founder of the Church**

#### **IV. The Foundation of the Church**

#### **V. The Government of the Church**

- A. Jesus Christ Is the Head
- B. Self-government
  - 1. Nature
  - 2. Limitations

#### **VI. Names for the Church**

- A. The “Church.”
- B. The Church of God
- C. House of God
- D. Temple of God

## ***I. What Is the Church?***

### ***A. Meaning of the Word “Church.”***

The word that Jesus chose to describe His people was an ancient Greek word, *ecclesia*. Our word “ecclesiastical” comes out of it, which means “relating to a church especially as an established institution.” The word *ecclesia* originally designated the regular assembly of the citizens in a free city-state. The citizens were “called out” by the herald to transact the public business. Hence, the word means the “*called out ones*.”

The church, therefore, is composed of those who have been called out of sin into righteousness—out of the world into the church. Peter expresses this thought in 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” The Christian has been called through the gospel to come out from the world (2 Cor. 6:17, 18) and into Christ for the purpose of transacting business for God.

Stephen referred to the children of Israel in the Old Testament as God’s assembly or congregation in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). Israel, too, had been called out of Egypt to become God’s chosen people and to do His will. This is a type of the Lord’s church today.

### ***B. Local and General Significance of the Word.***

In the New Testament the term “church” had both a **local** and a **general** significance. It referred both to the individual congregation and to the worldwide community of God’s people.

In Acts 5:11 it speaks of the church in Jerusalem. The term church in Acts 9:31, however, refers to many congregations when Luke says, “So the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified ...” (ASV). Often Paul would address small groups of Christians meeting in a home (Rom. 16:3–5; Col. 4:15; Phlm. 2). Yet Paul speaks of the church in its broad comprehensive sense in 1 Corinthians 10:32 and 1 Timothy 3:15. Each congregation was the church in its community. It was, however, an integral part of the entire fellowship of Christians. Groups of Christians may be

separated by geography but still be one in Christ and His church.

Perhaps Thomas Campbell gave as good a definition of the church as anyone, when he said:

The Church of Christ, upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians. [Richardson, Robert, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, (Cincinnati: Standard Pub. Co. 1890, Vol. 1, Page 268)]

## *II. The Beginning of the Church*

### *A. Predictions of the Coming Church.*

The first mention of the word “church” in the Bible is Matthew 16:18. Peter had confessed Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of God. Jesus blessed Peter and said, “On this rock I will build my church.” By the use of the future tense, Jesus clearly indicates that the church had not yet been established. Jesus continues His thought regarding the church when He says to Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). It is evident from the use of the term “**church**” in verse 18 and the term “**kingdom of heaven**” in verse 19 that these terms are interchangeable. The terms “church” and “kingdom” are also used in a similar way in Colossians 1:13 where Paul speaks of “the kingdom of the Son he loves.” And then in verse 18 without a break in thought, he describes the same entity as “the body, the church.” These terms denote the same body of people.

The establishment of Christ’s kingdom or church had been mentioned before this discussion with Peter. John the Baptist announced the coming kingdom when he preached: Matthew 3:2 (NASB) <sup>2</sup> "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The expression “**at hand**” signifies that it was near. Jesus, soon afterwards, preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17). The Lord told His apostles, “some who are standing here will not taste of death before they see the kingdom of God

come with power” (Mark 9:1). The kingdom was to be established with power during the lifetime of the apostles.

### ***B. Establishment of the Church or Kingdom.***

During Christ’s earthly ministry, He did not establish the church. After His resurrection, the disciples asked Him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you: and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:7, 8). He also commanded them to “stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). The fulfillment of these promises regarding the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the kingdom took place on the first Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection. Read Acts 2:1–42. At that time the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit and received the promised power. Peter preached the first gospel sermon and about 3,000 believed in Christ as their Lord and Messiah, repented of sin and were baptized into Christ (Acts 2:36–41). These were the terms of admission into the Lord’s church. Every reference to the church after the Day of Pentecost shows that it is already in existence (cf. Acts 5:11; 8:1). Peter settled the question as to the beginning of the church in Acts 11:15 when he speaks of Pentecost as being “the beginning.”

### ***C. Evidence from Prophecy.***

The evidence here presented from the New Testament as to the beginning of the church is confirmed by prophecy. Isaiah 2:1–3 predicts that in the last or latter days, which refers to the Christian age, that the mountain of the Lord’s house would be established. It would be great and all nations would flow into it. Then he gives this significant prophecy: “The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3b).

God had given the law of Moses at Mt. Sinai but the gospel of His Son was to go forth from Jerusalem. Jesus corroborates this prophecy in Luke 24:46, 47 when He says, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins

will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Christ’s church or kingdom was established on the Day of Pentecost following Christ’s resurrection and ascension, about 33 A.D.

### ***III. The Founder of the Church***

The church is not a human structure like a political or social institution. It is a divine organism. It has a divine founder and a divine head.

Jesus had told the apostles “*I will build my church.*” It is His church. He is the builder. He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18). Paul calls it “the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is the bride of Christ which has been saved and sanctified by Him for union with Himself (Eph. 5:25ff.). The church is also referred to as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:12; Col. 1:18). As the body, it is the fulness of Christ, who Himself fills all in all (Eph. 1:23).

The church belongs to Christ also because He purchased it with His own precious blood. Paul instructs the Ephesian elders “to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28, ASV; cf. 1 Peter 1:18–19).

### ***IV. The Foundation of the Church***

A divine church with a divine head, needs also a divine foundation. This is it! When Peter confessed Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, Jesus replied, “upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). Throughout the Scripture, Jesus is referred to as a rock. For example, in Isaiah 28:16, God says, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation ...” (ASV). Peter quotes this in 1 Peter 2:6ff., and applies it to Christ. Jesus is referred to as the stone which was cast aside by human builders but God made Him the head of the corner (Acts 4:11, 12). Paul settles the question of the foundation of the church when he says, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the founder of the church. He is the foundation.

## *V. The Government of the Church*

Every properly functioning organization or organism must have some form of government. The church is no exception. When the church is considered universally, its form of government is an absolute monarchy. When it is viewed from the standpoint of a local congregation, it has a limited power of self-government.

### *A. Jesus Christ Is the Head and Absolute Authority of the Church.*

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NASB) <sup>22</sup> And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NASB) <sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 5:23 (NASB) <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.

Colossians 1:18 (NASB) <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (cf. Colossians 2:10).

1. As the supreme authority in the church, *Jesus has all power*. “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and earth has been given me’” (Matt. 28:18).

2. As head of the church *Christ has all legislative power*. Christ has the power to enact laws to govern His church and its activities. [DeWelt Don, *The Church in the Bible* . College Press, Joplin, Missouri. 1958. page 67.]

He has enacted the following laws and they are incorporated in the constitution:

- a. Qualification of citizenship. John 14:6; Mark 16:16;

- b. Qualifications of officers of the kingdom. 1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9;
- c. Duties of citizens. Matt. 5:3–7:27; 1 Pet. 2:21;
- d. Duties of officers. 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 6:1–6;
- e. Laws of finance. 1 Cor. 9:1–13; 16:1–2; 1 Tim. 5:17–18;
- f. Laws of discipline. 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:20;
- g. Laws for the reinstatement of the backslider. Acts 8:18–24; 2 Cor. 2:5–11.

Having this power, one can see the full significance of Jesus' command to His apostles when in the great commission He said to go and teach and baptize, "Teaching them to obey *everything* I have commanded you ..." (Matt. 28:20, emphasis added). Christ's promise to be with the church depended upon its obedience to this command.

## **B. *Self-government in the Local Church.***

Since the church is composed of human beings, Christ has granted to man limited powers of self-government.

### **1. *The nature of this self-government.***

**This power is democratic.** The membership of the local church is the final authority in matters of self-government. This is seen in such references as Acts 6:5; 11:29, 30; 1 Corinthians 16:3.

This power is exercised through **the elders who are the rulers and overseers of the people**. They are chosen by the church and lead and rule on behalf of the church (cf. 1 Peter 5:1–5). (For qualifications for elders, see 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9).

### **2. *The limitations of this power of self-government.***

There are definite limitations placed upon the church in the area of self-government. The church's authority to make rules and decisions is limited to matters of opinion and expediency where the Scripture has given no definite instructions. For example: The number of elders or deacons the church should select; what kind of building does the church need; etc. These are

matters of importance in the work of the kingdom but there is no “thus saith the Lord” to guide the church. These are areas that Christ has left to human judgment. Even in these areas such decisions should be made in harmony with the spirit and teaching of Christ. W.L. Hayden in his book, *Church Polity*, makes this observation on the subject of self-government:

On what occasion and for what purposes are Christians authorized to vote?

They are not to vote on questions of faith, piety, or morality. Truth is not to be settled by a vote, nor is any divine institution respecting the worship or morality of the Christian Church to be decided by a majority. These are matters of revelation, of divine authority, and are to be regulated by a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and not by a ‘thus saith the majority.’ But in all matters not of faith, piety or morality, in all matters of expediency, there is no other way of deciding but by a vote of the brotherhood. [W.L. Hayden, *Church Polity*, Cincinnati, Ohio, S.J. Clarke. 1894. page 138.]

## ***VI. Names for the Church***

### ***A. The “Church.”***

This is the most often used designation for the church in the New Testament. Sometimes it is used with the location of the church. For example: “the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria” (Acts 9:31) or “The church of the Thessalonians” (2 Thess. 1:1). The use of this term without any qualifying phrase indicates the uniqueness of the church. There was nothing like it in society. There was only one. Christ built only one. The church might be extended over many countries and many continents but it was still “The Church.” All Christians were members of this one body (1 Cor. 1:2).

### ***B. The Church of God.***

The next most often used term was the “church of God,” or “churches of God” (2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:14, NASB). This name indicates the planner and originator of the church. It also indicates ownership because the church belongs to God as well as to Christ.

### ***C. House of God.***

1 Timothy 3:15, KJV. This name presents the church as a family. It reminds us that God dwells in His church and He is Father of all. Jesus also dwells with us and is somewhat like our elder brother. Romans 8:17 reminds us that as children of God we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Galatians 3:26, 27 reveals how we become sons of God. “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

### ***D. Temple of God.***

1 Corinthians 3:16, 17. This name describes the worship feature of the church. God dwells in His holy temple the church and is worshiped there. Peter says that Christians “as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5, ASV). The church then is a spiritual temple made up of living stones (cf. Eph. 2:19–22). God dwells in each believer through the Holy Spirit which is given to every obedient believer (Acts 2:38). If the believer is faithful to Christ, the head, then some day he will see Him personally as He is (1 John 3:2). In that day God will dwell with His people and be their God (Rev. 21:3). This is the grand purpose and goal for the church.

## Questions on The Church

### TRUE-FALSE

- T F 1. Christ's kingdom is spiritual rather than temporal.
- T F 2. The church and the kingdom are different bodies.
- T F 3. Isaiah foretold that the kingdom would be established in Zion.
- T F 4. The term "church" always refers to the local congregation.
- T F 5. Faith is the only requirement for admission to the Lord's church.
- T F 6. The kingdom was established at the Passover.
- T F 7. The church was started by John the Baptist.
- T F 8. The word "ecclesia" originally referred to an assembly of Greek citizens.
- T F 9. All Christians are members of Christ's church.
- T F 10. A person can be saved without being a member of Christ's church.

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The government of the Church in its universal sense is an \_\_\_\_\_ . The local church however has some \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what areas of life does the church lack the authority to vote or make rules?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. List two names for the church and give the significance of each.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Books referenced can be downloaded from [www.OrcuttChristian.Org](http://www.OrcuttChristian.Org)