

THE CHURCH – LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. The church was instituted in time (A.D. 30-33) but inseparable from God's eternal purpose for man (Acts 2:47 (KJV), Ephesians 3:8-12)
 - a. Eternal purpose of salvation in Christ (v.11, Eph. 1:4, Isa. 2:3, Acts 2:5, 2:47)
 - b. Eternal purpose of God's wisdom of salvation for man on earth, made known to angels in heaven (v.10, I Cor. 1:23-25, 30).
 - c. Eternal purpose made known through the preaching of Christ (v. 8-9, Acts 26:18-19)
2. In this first lesson we will establish in our minds the definition of the word "church," the focus of our study.
 - a. We seek to also see how the word church is used in our New Testaments.
 - b. We seek to understand the church in the context of religious unity.

I. "CHURCH" DEFINED:

- A. "Old English *cir(i)ce*, *cyr(i)ce*, related to Dutch *kerk* and German *Kirche*, based on medieval Greek *kurikon*, from Greek *kuriakon* (*dōma*) 'Lord's (house)', from *kurios* 'master or lord'. "
 1. Not the Greek word translated "church" in the New Testament"
- B. The Greek word ("Ekklesia" – "ek"- out + "Kaleo" – to call)
 1. Translated "assembly" denoting a tumultuous confused gathering (Acts 19:32,41); A legal secular governmental gathering (Acts 19:39)
 2. Translated "congregation" – "church" (KJV) "assembly" (NIV) denoting the "called-out people of Israel" who wandered in the wilderness (Acts 7:38)
 3. Denotes the saints in Christ "called out of the world of sin" (I Pet. 2:9)
 - a. Those who comprise the body of the saved (Eph. 5:23)
 - b. Jesus promised to build this collection of people (Matt. 16:18)
 - c. Saul made havoc of this collectivity of people through persecution (Acts 8:3)
 - d. Comprised of saints (I Cor. 1:1-2).

II. CHURCH IN ITS "UNIVERSAL" AND "LOCAL" SENSE: (Adapted from an article by Robert F. Turner – Collection of Plain talk articles: Plain Talk About God's Church, p. 9-10)

- A. Universal- relationship of individuals with God
 1. Entered by baptism (I Cor. 12:13)
 2. Lord "add" members (Acts 2:47)
 3. All saints are located here (Gal. 3:27)
 4. Assembled figuratively (Heb. 12:23)
 5. Satan cannot prevail against it (Matt. 16:18)

- B. Local – relationship of individuals with Saints
 - 1. “join” ourselves to (Acts 9:26)
 - 2. By agreement with fellow saints (3 Jn. 10)
 - 3. Certain saints are located here (I Cor. 1:2)
 - 4. Assembled literally (I Cor. 14:23)
 - 5. Satan can and does prevail (Rev. 2:5)

III. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH

- A. One Body:
 - 1. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in in one hope of your calling; one Lord one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).
- B. One Head:
 - 1. “...and He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23).
- C. The foundation for UNITY
 - 1. One body comprised by members who have been called through the revelation and confirming power of the One Spirit of God unto one hope of eternal inheritance in heaven
 - 2. One body with all its members having become members through one faith and one baptism unto one Lord, Jesus Christ.
 - 3. One body with all its members being filled by one God who fills all in all.

DISCUSSION:

- 1. While Christians recognize all three institutions of God to be honored, what is their order of priority in the mind of the Christian when he or she views the institution of the family, church, and government?
 - 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
 - a. Why would you refuse to rank them by priority?
 - b. Why do you rank them the way you do in your list

2. What Scriptural truth is the spiritual exhortation “*Join the church of your choice*” missing?

3. What Scriptural distinction does one understand to believe all saved people today are members of one church?
 - a. What barriers exist keeping one from thinking that “*only members of the church of Christ are going to heaven?*”
 - b. How do you cast down these barriers to establish the Scriptural Truth of God?

4. In what sense can Satan prevail against the church?

5. How has the foundation of God’s spiritual unity among His people today been fractured?