



Online Bible Study Course

Presented by the church of Christ at Terre Haute, Indiana

Lesson 3: The Church

In the midst of so many religious bodies teaching conflicting doctrines, one finds himself with the difficult task of locating the true church. We can easily locate the right church by examining the distinct marks of identification of the church as revealed in the New Testament, and then finding one today that has these same marks of identification.

Salvation and the Church

We see the importance of the church when we realize that salvation and the church are connected. One cannot be saved outside of the church. Jesus is the “..._____ of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). “...and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be _____” (Acts 2:47). To be in the church is the same as being in Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), where salvation is (2 Timothy 2:10).

Some Things the Church Is Not

Sometimes we can better understand what a thing is if we first know what it is not.

The church is not a material building. “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made by _____” (Acts 17:24). What was it that came upon the church in Acts 5:11? _____ The church is a group of Christians, not a physical building.

The church is not a social club. “For the kingdom of God is not _____ and _____; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). It is not the business of the church to be involved in social affairs, such as providing entertainment and recreation.

The church is not a denomination. The church of the Lord is not a part of anything, as “denomination” implies. The Bible church is a nondenominational body.

Now that we know what the church is not, let’s notice some things the Bible teaches about the church.

Some Things the Bible Teaches About the Church

The church was planned by God. The church was in the “..._____”

purpose of God” (Ephesians 3:10-11). The church was not just an afterthought, but planned by God from the beginning.

The church was predicted in the Old Testament. The prophets of the Old Testament predicted that the church would be established. One outstanding prophecy is that of Isaiah 2:2-3: “And it shall come to pass in the _____ days, that the mountain of the Lord’s _____ shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and _____ shall flow unto it...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

The church is revealed in the New Testament. The prophecy of Isaiah 2 is fulfilled in the establishment of the church as recorded in Acts 2. Read Acts 2 and notice the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel. Men heard it, believed it, and obeyed it. As a result, the Lord”...added to the _____ daily such as should be _____” (Acts 2:47). For the first time the church is said to be in existence. Always before this time the church was spoken of as being in the future. This was shortly after Christ arose from the dead around AD 33.

The church was built by Christ. The psalmist said, “Except the Lord _____ the _____, they labour in vain that build it...” (Psalm 127:1). The house is the church (1 Timothy 3:15). Jesus said, “...and upon this rock I will _____ my church” (Matthew 16:18). Christ is the foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11). Any church built by somebody else is not the Lord’s church.

The church is headed by Christ. Paul said, “And he (Christ) is the _____ of the body, the _____...” (Colossians 1:18). Christ is the head and the church is His body. Since this is true, then the church must be in subjection to its head, Christ. “Therefore as the church is _____ unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Ephesians 5:24). The church has no man for its head here on earth. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18), which leaves none for anyone else.

The church was purchased with the blood of Christ. The great value of the church can be seen when we realize that it took the blood of Christ to purchase it. Paul told the Ephesian elders, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock,...to feed the church of God which he hath _____ with his own _____” (Acts 20:28). Peter said that we were purchased “...with the precious _____ of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The church is Christ possessed. The church belongs to Christ. There is no exclusive name given to the Lord’s church. It is certainly proper to refer to the Lord’s church by the names given in the Scriptures. Paul said, “...the churches _____ Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16). A church that does not wear the name of Christ

must not belong to Him. The members of the church belong to Christ and thus wear the name God gave His people to wear, that is, Christian (Acts 11:26; Isaiah 62:2; 1 Peter 4:16). The Bible will make you only a Christian, nothing else. Let us respect Christ by wearing only His name for the church.

The church is independently organized. Every church in New Testament times was independent of every other church. Elders were ordained in “every church” (Acts 14:23). Each church had its own elders, deacons, and members. Paul’s letter to the Philippians was addressed to “...all the _____ in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the _____ and _____” (Philippians 1:1). Elders and deacons are men who meet qualifications laid down in 1 Timothy 3. The elders oversee the flock, only their own (1 Peter 5:1-3), while the deacons serve the local church. There is no organization larger or smaller than the local church through which the church is to function. State and nation-wide church groups are foreign to the Bible. Elders are also called bishops, or pastors, not the preachers.

The church is guided by the Bible. The Bible completely furnishes us with all that we need religiously (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The church has no other creed book to follow.

The church worships in truth. Worship must be as God has directed, or it is vain (Matthew 15:9). “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in _____” (John 4:24). The church worships only as Christ has authorized. More on worship in our next lesson.

The church teaches the Lord’s plan of salvation. In our last lesson, we learned that God’s plan for saving us involves hearing, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and being faithful. A church that teaches anything other than this is not the Lord’s church.

The Work of the Church

The work of the church is given to us by Christ and is of a spiritual nature. It involves basically three things: preaching the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20), helping needy saints (Romans 15:25-26; 1 Timothy 5:16), and teaching Christians (Acts 20:32; Ephesians 4:11-16). The church can use its money to provide for these things. The church has no business being involved in social affairs, social reforms, political affairs, or providing entertainment and recreation. These are things which belong to the home (1 Corinthians 11:22-34).

The Lord Established One Church

The New Testament teaches that there is only one body. “But now are there many members, yet but _____ body” (1 Corinthians 12:20). “There is _____ body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians

4:4). There is only one body and the body is the church (Colossians 1:18). If there is only one body and the body is the church, then how many churches did Jesus establish? _____

We have learned about the church of the Bible, the Lord's church. Jesus established His church to provide salvation. It is vital then that we be part of the Lord's church. We encourage you to search for a church that has these marks of identification. Investigate the church of Christ at Terre Haute. Many churches claim to be true, but simply do not follow the Bible in these matters.