

LESSON 4: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION: THE CHURCH IN THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

1. Having studied in previous lessons the meaning and importance of your commitment, your new relationship to God and man and a brief review of the Old Testament, you are now ready to take a closer look at the church and its place in the eternal purpose of God. This lesson is an illustration of the basic idea stressed in Lesson 3, i.e., that a working knowledge of the Old Testament is necessary for full understanding of the New Testament.

2. The Purpose of this lesson is to study the place and importance of the church in the eternal purpose of God. An attempt will be made to answer such questions as the following:

- A. Do the O.T. writers have anything to say about the church?
- B. Do the N.T. writers tell us when the church was established? Where it was established? Upon whom established?
- C. What does the Bible say about the relationship between Christ and the church?
- D. How important is the church?
- E. Is church membership essential for salvation?

(Question):

- A. To study the place and importance of the church in the eternal purpose of God.

True or False

3. You have already learned that Christ has a place in God's scheme of redemption. Paul reaffirms it this way in Eph. 3: 10, 11: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Question):

- A. God had an eternal purpose in Christ.

True or False

4. Notice that Paul mentions both Christ and the church in verse of frame 3. There is a very intimate relationship between Christ, the church and the gospel.

(Question):

- A. The relationship between Christ, the church and the gospel is a loose association. **True or False**
- B. The relationship between Christ, the church and the gospel is an intimate one.

True or False

5. Actually the story of the church and Christ is so interdependent that it is necessary to view them together. The story of these things involves the culmination of God's well-laid plans.

(Question):

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A. The story of the church and Christ represent the culmination of God's scheme of redemption. **True or False**

6. When did God promise a redeemer? The promise of redeemer was made in Gen. 3:15. The promise made to Abraham – that through him all nations of the earth would be blessed – is an enlargement of the Messianic promise of Genesis 3:15.

(Question):

A. A redeemer was necessary because of sin. **True or False**

B. A redeemer was necessary because of transgression. **True or False**

7. In the remainder of the O.T., the development and preparation of the Jewish nation is traced and recorded. These were, of course, the progenitors of Christ. Many of the events recorded concerning this nation e.g., the tabernacle and its furniture, are types or shadows of the church or kingdom which is to come.

(Question):

A. Great Biblical principles can be learned from the O.T. because many of the recorded events are types or shadows. **True or False**

8. Many of the prophets spoke concerning the church. Perhaps a close study of some of the

major prophecies will increase your faith in the church.

(Question):

A. How can you profit from a study of prophets?

9. The great prophet, Isaiah, prophesied concerning the time and place of its establishment as follows: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2,3).

(Question):

A. Isaiah said the church would be established in the last _____.

10. Thus, Isaiah predicts that the church will be established in the latter days in Jerusalem. This being true, the time and place of the establishment of the church becomes very important.

(Question):

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- A. The time and place of the establishment of the church are important. **True or False**

11. The prophet Micah speaks concerning the church in Micah 4: 1,2 as follows; "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow into it. And many nations shall come, and say, come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

12. During the period of the Babylonian captivity when the future of the Jews was bleak, Daniel prophesied that "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up kingdom, which shall not be left to the other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever". (Daniel 2:44). The "days of these kings" refers to the days of the Roman emperors.

(Question):

- A. Daniel said the kingdom would be established in A.D. 33. **True or False**
B. Daniel said the kingdom would be established in the days of these kings. **True or False**

13. Thus, the great prophets of old prophesied about and looked forward to the establishment of the church. The actions of these men of God should greatly increase your faith in God's word. Now the question is, "Were these prophecies fulfilled?" Let's see.

14. Jesus made an enlighten statement regarding the church (kingdom) in Mark 1:15 – "And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." John the Baptist echoed this same sentiment in Matthew 3:2.

(Question):

- A. What was the common exhortation of Jesus and John the Baptist?

15. For approximately three years Jesus taught concerning the kingdom. During this time he proved that His Word was true by the miracles he performed. His teaching was impressive as indicated by the remarks of the multitude, "He taught them as one having authority, and not as scribes" (Matthew 7:29).

(Question):

- A. Jesus taught about the kingdom in the same manner as the scribes. **True or False**

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16. Late in the public ministry Christ, he came to His apostles and asked, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" After further questioning by Christ, Peter, one of the apostles, replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the greatest confession that one can make in life. If you will recall, this is the same confession you make in committing yourself to Christ.

(Question):

A. What is the great confession?

17. Christ then, upon the great confession or foundation principle expressed by Peter, proceeded to instruct the disciples concerning the church as follows: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The "rock" refers to the confession made by Peter.

(Question):

A. According to Matthew 16:18 was the church in the existence at this time?

18. If you will note carefully the verse in the previous statement you will note that the Lord promised, "I will build my church", thus indicating that it was to be established at some future date.

(Question):

A. Why was Jesus interested in the building or establishing the church?

19. Soon after the statement was made near the time of the transfiguration of Christ, Jesus informed his apostles according to Mark 9:1 that some of them standing with Him would not see death until the kingdom of God should come with power. (The term "kingdom" and "church" are used interchangeably in Matthew 16:18,19).

(Question):

A. The kingdom and the church are one and the same. **True or False**

20. Christ, the Redeemer, was rejected by mankind and was condemned to die on the cross. He died at the hands of false accusers; Himself pure and clean. Christ did this in order that He might reconcile or reunite fallen man and his Creator.

(Question):

A. Why did Christ die?

21. Thus this reconciliation was made possible by His death and the reconciled are placed in His body, the church. Paul specifically states that Christ died for the church in Ephesians 3:25. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."

(Question):

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A. How much did Christ love the church?

22. After three days in the tomb, Christ arose and appeared to many witnesses. He gave instructions to His disciples concerning the kingdom which was to be established. In Luke 24:49, He said "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

(Question):

- A. The apostles were instructed to forget religion and return to former ways. **True or False**
- B. The apostles were instructed to tarry in the city of Jerusalem. **True or False**

23. As you pursue the establishment of the church further, note the statement of Jesus to the apostles as recorded in Acts 1:4,5: "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

(Fill in):

The apostles were to be baptized with the _____.

24. The apostles received the power as promised and were baptized with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Thus, the church was established as promised.

(Study):

Read the entire second chapter of Acts to review this story.

25. In verse 47 of Acts, chapter 2, you noted the following: "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," or as one version puts it, "those that were saved." For the first time, then, the church is spoken of as being in existence.

(Question):

- A. What did the Lord do for those who obeyed the Gospel?

26. Thus, sometime between the time Jesus made the promise recorded in Mark 9:1 and the statement of Acts 2:47, the church was established. The great event occurred on Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ.

(Question):

- A. The church is spoken of as being in existence prior to Acts 2:47. **True or False**

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27. Thus far in this lesson you have studied the answers to three of the five questions raised in paragraph two. These questions are as follows:

(Question):

- A. Do the Old Testament writers say anything about the church?

- B. Do the New Testament writers tell us when the church was established? Where it was established? Upon whom established?

- C. What does the Bible say about the relationship between Christ and the church?

Can you match the correct answers to the above questions from the tabulation at right?

Questions	Answers
A_____	1. Yes, "in latter days" on Pentecost
B_____	2. In Jerusalem
C_____	3. Christ
	4. Yes
	5. A very close relationship

28. Another pertinent question proposed in paragraph two which needs to be answered is, "How important is the church?"

During this period of history when church affiliation and attendance are on the decline, you should not be surprised if you are labeled a "religious fanatic" for your devotion. People in general do not view the church as being important and thus may use it only in cases of emergency.

29. This lighthearted approach to the church has forced it to take a secondary role in the lives of many. These comments aptly apply to the condition of the religious world in general, but how do you view the church. How important is it to you?

(Question):

- A. People frequently use the church in cases of emergency and forget it at other times. **True or False**

30. Evidently the church is important since Christ died for it. Paul states it like this, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Surely He would not die for something unless it was important.

(Question):

- A. Christ _____ for the church.

31. You have noted that the church is an important and expensive institution (it cost Christ His life). With this in mind, consider the question, "Why is the church important?" The most

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accurate answer to this question is that God chose to use the church as a part of His plan for redeeming mankind.

(Question):

A. Why is the church important?

32. The above statement in no way minimizes the importance of Christ. The church is His and He is the head of it; He is the savior of the body, the church. Consequently, the relationship between Christ and the church is intimate, and for one to be in Christ is to be in the church.

(Question):

A. Is the church a segment of God's scheme of redemption or does it constitute the full plan?

33. The last question to be considered in this lesson is as follows: "Is church membership essential to salvation?" To correctly answer this question, you should reflect on the previous comments regarding the importance of the church.

(Question):

A. What is the last question to be considered in this lesson?

34. Also, it is important to understand the use of the word church in the question. Membership in a denomination is not important, but his

question is asked of the church that Jesus promised to build and the one of which you are now a member.

(Question):

A. Is membership in a denomination necessary for salvation?

35. If you are to enjoy spiritual blessings, then you must be in Christ or in the church. According to Eph. 1:3, "Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

(Question):

A. Where are spiritual blessing found?

36. Paul informed the Corinthians, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new", (2 Cor. 5:17). Thus, for one to be a Christian, one must be in Christ where all scriptural blessings are to be found.

(Question):

A. To be a Christian, new creature, one must be in _____.

37. Now, with the additional information, are you ready to answer the question? Membership in the Lord's church is essential to salvation because (1) God chose to use the church as part

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of His scheme of redemption, (2) if one is a Christian he must be in Christ, (3) all spiritual blessings are in Christ or in the church, and (4) because the church is important.

(Question):

A. Membership in the Lord's church is essential to salvation. **True or False**

38. In this lesson, an attempt has been made to point out the place and importance of the church in the eternal purpose of God. A good understanding of the church is as essential and beneficial to you as a foundation to a house. Consider these things prayerfully and carefully because your destiny hinges on a proper relationship to Christ and his church!

(Question):

A. What is the purpose of this lesson?

39. Furthermore, a proper understanding of this lesson is important because it serves as an introduction to several lessons to follow on the church. Your next study will be "The Organization of the Church." The more you learn and understand the church the more you will appreciate what Christ did to purchase it.