

The Church Jesus Built

Lesson 5: Who: Who Are Part Of The Church Jesus Has Built

Jesus has been building His church for a couple thousand years (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:41, 47), adding living stones who come to Him into this glorious temple of the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-22). Yet, there is another question to consider: Who? That is, who are part of the church Jesus is building? Namely, what we will discover is that those who submit themselves to Jesus's authority are part of this church and those who rebel against His authority are not.

1) Determined by the King. As King, Jesus is the only one who adds people to His church (Acts 2:47) and has the authority to tell people how to live (James 4:12). As Head of His body (the church, Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23), only He can set the criteria people must follow to be part of His "universal" church. Then, He will also be the only Judge (James 4:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). One Day, there will be a great separation of all those who are part of Jesus's kingdom and those who are not (Matthew 13:41-43; 25:31-46), with Jesus's word serving as the criteria for judgment (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). Throughout the New Testament, the criteria for being a citizen of God's kingdom is revealed. This criteria is simple: Submission to the King (Matthew 7:21-23; Colossians 3:17)! Those who rebel against Him are in sin and separated from God, while those who submit to Him are covered by His blood and in fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7). The only judgments people are authorized to make are limited in two areas: Our individual fellowship (who we associate with and recognize as members of Jesus's church, Ephesians 5:6-11; 2 John 1:9-11) and the local church fellowship (who is accepted as a member of a local church, Acts 9:26-28; 20:28-31). In these, we must be careful not to accept those Jesus has not accepted or to reject those Jesus has accepted.

2) Initial obedience required. Of all the Jews present in Jerusalem on Pentecost in Acts 2, Jesus only added about 3,000 to His church (v. 41). These were different than all the rest in that they were pierced to the heart by the message about the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ (v. 37), inquired what they needed to do (v. 37), and accepted the message of truth from God so as to be obedient to it (vv. 38-41). Such people as these who hear, believe, and obey the gospel of Christ are born again to become citizens of the kingdom of God (John 3:3-6; 1 Peter 1:22-25), through the word of God revealed by the Spirit and being immersed in water.

The Scriptures show what a person must do for Jesus to add him/her to the church and be counted among His saved people. First, people must hear the word of Christ (the gospel, Romans 10:17; Acts 18:8). Second, people must believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24; Acts 8:12-13). Third, people must repent of their sin (Acts 2:38; 17:30). Fourth, people must confess Jesus Christ as Lord (Son of God, Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10). Fifth, people must be baptized (immersed) in water for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16). Upon this baptism, the Bible teaches that one is now "in Christ" (in His body/church, Acts 2:41, 47; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13, as we are baptized by obeying the message the Spirit has revealed). Any other action or obedience to any other teaching fails to obey King Jesus (i.e. faith only, Sinner's Prayer," baptism as an outward sign of inward grace, baptism by sprinkling, etc.). Even if these are devoutly religious people who believe in Jesus, they are not part of Jesus's church (Matthew 7:21-23)!

3) Faithfulness Required. Acts 2:42-47 demonstrates how those who were baptized and added to Jesus's church continued to learn about the King's laws and live as members of this kingdom. In fact, the

word that summarizes Jesus's expectation for members of His kingdom/church is: Faithfulness. That is, you must continue to submit yourself to the King throughout your life. Being faithful or unfaithful to the Master is the way Jesus will judge us all (Matthew 25:14-30; Revelation 2:10).

Each follower of Jesus must carefully evaluate his/her own life continually to make sure he/she is living faithfully in submission to Jesus (2 Corinthians 13:5; Philippians 2:12; Colossians 3:17). For, if one experiences the initial salvation Jesus provides by obeying the gospel and then does not practice self-discipline, he/she will be disqualified from that salvation (1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 10:26-39; 2 Peter 2:20-22). Instead, Jesus expects each Christian to truly follow Him by continuing to learn what He teaches and then put this teaching into application by imitating Him (John 8:31-32; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16). Even among those who have been obedient to the requirements of the gospel to experience initial salvation, not all will continue to obey the King so as to be saved. For example, some individuals depart from the law of the King (1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15). Then, there are also entire churches that have departed from the teaching and pattern for local churches Jesus has revealed in the Scriptures (Revelation 2:4-6, 14-16; 2 Timothy 1:13)!

Jesus is the only one who gets to decide who are part of His church. However, He has shown us in the Scriptures that His church consists of those who live in submission to King Jesus. This involves initially submitting to Him by obeying His requirements for salvation. Then, this involves continuing to submit to Him by living faithfully throughout one's life. Therefore, you must carefully evaluate your life to see whether you are part of His church or not!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What are some key lessons learned from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this teaching to be trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work?