

The Church Jesus Built



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

The Church Jesus Built

Lesson 1: What: What Is The Church Jesus Has Built

When Jesus lived on earth, He promised He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). Unfortunately, there is a lot of confusion surrounding the church today – as there are many different ideas about the church. But, it does not have to be this way if we will simply look into the pages of Scripture to shape our understanding of this church. So, throughout this study, we will be examining how the Bible answers six critical questions concerning Jesus’s church: What? Why? How? When? Who? Where? To begin, we need to consider the question of: What? That is, we need to develop the proper understanding of the church Jesus has built. Namely, we will discover that Jesus’s church is His special group of saved people.

1) False ideas of Jesus’s church. First, Jesus did not build a building. He is simply not focused on where His people meet and has not given particular standards for the type of structure they meet in. Second, Jesus did not build a business. He is simply not concerned about raising a lot of money, building fancy facilities, having large staffs, and a wide variety of earthly ministries. Third, Jesus did not build a social club. He is simply not focused on how to create opportunities for people to be entertained, have fun, socialize, or exercise. Fourth, Jesus did not build a humanitarian organization. He simply did not create an organization that is focused on relieving physical needs/suffering on earth. Fifth, Jesus did not build a political machine. He simply is not focused on His people pushing for political reforms and changes. Sixth, Jesus did not build a group of denominations. His followers simply are not to be divided into churches that believe, teach, and practice different things. Seventh, Jesus did not build a single denomination. He simply never desired for His church to become an organization that would be viewed as the Savior or lawgiver.

2) Jesus’s saved people. The Greek word translated “church” (*ekklesia*) refers to a collection of people. It is used in the New Testament regarding an assembly of Israelites (Acts 7:38) and an assembly of people who were upset at Paul’s teaching (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). However, it is used in the New Testament to primarily identify a special group of people who belong to Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 9:31). In particular, a few things distinguish Jesus’s church from all other collections of people. First, Jesus’s church has been called out of the darkness of sin into the light of God’s holiness (1 Peter 2:9-10). Second, Jesus’s church has been adopted as children of God and receive the spiritual blessings available in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-8). Third, Jesus’s church has submitted to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and been saved from sin by obeying the gospel’s plan of salvation (Acts 2:37-41, 47). Fourth, Jesus’s church has embraced Jesus’s mission for their lives to bring glory to God (Ephesians 3:8-11, 14-21).

3) Two dimensions of Jesus’s church. There are two primary variations of how this word is used in the New Testament regarding Jesus’s saved people. First, this word can be used in a “universal” sense that refers to all saved people who belong to Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4). When the word is used in this way, it is always singular in its form, as there is only one group of saved people who belong to Jesus. This includes all who have submitted their lives to Jesus in faith-filled obedience to the gospel’s requirements for salvation (i.e. Acts 2:38) throughout this world and includes those who have died in the Lord.

Second, this word can be used in a “local” sense that refers to a group of Jesus’s saved people in a particular region who have joined themselves together to accomplish God’s mission (Acts 11:22; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). In this form,

we can see Jesus's people referred to in a plural sense, as there are many groups of people who submit to His Lordship throughout the world (1 Corinthians 16:19; Galatians 1:2; Romans 16:16). Each local church, then, has the responsibility to follow the pattern God has given for local churches (i.e. regarding the teaching, assemblies, leadership, and work of the church as outlined in the Bible; 2 Timothy 1:13).

4) Other descriptions of Jesus's church.

Sometimes the members of Jesus's church who submit to the rule of Jesus Christ in their lives are referred to as a kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Sometimes the members of Jesus's church are pictured as being a family in God's household (Romans 8:16-17; Hebrews 2:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). Sometimes those who are in Jesus's church are described as being members of Jesus's body who each have a unique role to fill and submit to Jesus as the Head (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Sometimes Jesus's special group of saved people in His church are identified as being Jesus's bride that must be faithful to Him (Revelation 19:6-8; 2 Corinthians 11:2). Sometimes Jesus's collection of saved people are called the temple of God who bring glory to God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:19-22).

While there are many different perspectives people have of what Jesus's church is today, we must always go back to the Bible to discover what Jesus says about His church. When we do, we find that His church is a special group of saved people belonging to Him. Then, the other terms that can be used in reference to His church cause us to think about various dimensions of this church in helpful ways. Certainly, as we embrace what Jesus's church is, these things should result in desiring to be counted among those in His church!

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?

The Church Jesus Built

Lesson 2: Why: Why Did Jesus Build His Church

During Jesus's earthly ministry, He promised He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). As we explore the church from a Biblical perspective, we need to consider another critical question: Why? That is, we need to consider the purpose behind why God has built His church. Namely, what we will discover is that God has always had a purpose for the people He has created in His image and has always desired to have a special people who will be committed to glorifying Him.

1) God has always had a purpose for humankind. God has created all people as spiritual beings (Genesis 1:26-27; John 4:24). God's desire has always been for those He created in this special way to choose to glorify Him (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Acts 17:26-28). Sadly, people often choose to glorify something/someone created rather than the Creator (Romans 1:21-23). In fact, all people who reach a point of spiritual accountability choose this way of sin that fails to glorify God (Romans 3:10-18, 23). Sin is a big problem because it separates (creates hostility between) the sinner and God (Isaiah 59:1-2; James 4:4), which is spiritual death (Romans 6:23). Thankfully, God had a plan so we could be forgiven of our sins and fulfill our purpose of glorifying Him through Jesus (John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:18-21)!

2) Physical Israel in God's purpose. God used a man named Abraham in a special way to fulfill His plan (Genesis 12:1-3, 7): To make a great nation of his descendants (the nation of Israel), to give that nation a special land (the land of Canaan), and to bless all people on earth through his Seed (Jesus Christ). Later, God entered a covenant (agreement) with the physical nation descended from Abraham (Israel, Exodus 19:3-8; 34:10-14). This agreement involved two parts. First, God would bless His special people. Second, these people were to honor God by keeping His commandments. Therefore, God wanted a

people in Israel who were truly devoted to glorifying Him (Deuteronomy 10:12-18; Isaiah 43:7; 44:23; 49:3). Through them, He would demonstrate His glory even to other people and nations so His name would be glorified (Deuteronomy 4:4-8; Psalm 115:1-8). So, God wanted Israel to be a people for His own special possession who would have hearts that desired to seek and glorify Him by keeping His commandments.

However, they often failed to live according to this great purpose. For example, they often failed to heed God's warnings and would worship and serve the gods of other nations (Judges 2:11-13; 2 Kings 17:7-20). Then, they would often pollute themselves with the things of this world contrary to the covenant they had made with God (Isaiah 1:2-4). In addition, they would often go through the motions of being God's special people without having hearts truly devoted to Him (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:7-9). So, rather than Israel glorifying God's holy name, His name was often despised and blasphemed among the Gentiles (Malachi 1:6-14; Romans 2:17-24). Because of this, God would punish them for not keeping their covenant with Him (only a remnant would be saved, Isaiah 10:20-23).

3) Spiritual Israel in God's purpose. God's plan for Israel involved using them to bring the Messiah into the world (Genesis 12:1-3, who is Jesus Christ; Galatians 3:8, 16). Unfortunately, some Jewish people seemed view themselves as being righteous just because they were children of Abraham (Matthew 3:7-10). However, although God used physical Israel to bring Jesus into the world, being God's special people was never about physical ancestry – and was always about people who would devote themselves to honoring Him (Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 9:6-8, 22-33). So, it is not about being from physical Israel (or being physically circumcised)

but about being part of spiritual Israel (and being spiritually circumcised, Romans 2:25-29). For, spiritual Israel simply consists of all those whose hearts are loyal to God by being faithfully obedient to Him – whether physically Jews or Gentiles (Romans 11:11-32).

Today, we can call spiritual Israel Jesus's church. For, these are those who come to truly know God and devote their lives to Him (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13). These have entered a covenant relationship with God, received His blessings (i.e. forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:38) and committed themselves to glorifying Him (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)! And, God has blessed spiritual Israel so that others will also come to know and glorify Him (Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; 3:8-11, 20-21). Today, Jesus desires His special people to live to the glory of God in all things (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31), which includes setting a godly example (Matthew 5:14-16) and sharing His good news of salvation (Colossians 1:25-28). Those who do this will both glorify Jesus and be glorified when Jesus comes again (2 Thessalonians 1:5-12)!

Jesus built His church so that God would be glorified! His church is not based on physical ancestry or any other physical factor. Rather, these are people who are in a covenant relationship with God. So, as God has made His rich blessings available through Jesus, Jesus's church has responded by giving their hearts and lives in faith-filled obedience to Him. This all works to glorify God – and makes God's great glory known to others!

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?

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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The Church Jesus Built

Lesson 3: How: How Has Jesus Build His Church

Jesus is the Master Builder who has built His church (Matthew 16:18). This church is a special group of people who belong to God and fulfill a special purpose God has designed for them. Still, we need to consider another question: How? That is, we need to consider the way in which Jesus has built His church and how He continues to build His church today. Namely, what we will discover is that Jesus uses the imagery of the church as a living temple building, consisting of a Cornerstone, a foundation, and a building (Ephesians 2:19-22).

1) The Cornerstone: Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6-8). First, Jesus is the Messiah. The Old Testament is focused on God fulfilling the promises He made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 7). The Jewish people were taught to expect the coming of the Anointed One (Messiah) God would send (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1-3; Luke 2:25-26; John 4:25). When Jesus came, He came as the Messiah (translated in Greek as “Christ,” John 4:25-26). Jesus of Nazareth was God living in the flesh (Matthew 1:23), anointed, chosen, and sent by the Father (Galatians 3:16). This was the bedrock truth Jesus would build His church upon (Matthew 16:13-18).

Second, Jesus is the Savior. The Old Testament had prophesied that the Messiah would be a great Savior/Deliverer (Isaiah 9:6-7). Though many were looking for the Messiah to save the physical nation of Israel, God had a plan for a much greater deliverance in mind (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:7-9)! This was deliverance from sin (Romans 3:9-18)! Jesus’s mission on this earth was focused on doing His Father’s will so as to seek and to save those lost in sin (John 3:16; Luke 19:10). For, this salvation required Jesus’s sacrifice (John 1:29; Matthew 26:26-29; John 19:30). Through His blood sacrifice, Jesus has purchased His church by

redeeming (ransoming) those who were enslaved to sin (Acts 20:28; Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Third, Jesus is the King. The Old Testament gave clear expectations that God would establish a kingdom that would never end with a King from the lineage of King David (2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 2:1-12; Isaiah 9:1-7; Daniel 2:44). So, people lived with the expectation of a coming King (Isaiah 62:11; Zechariah 9:9). Yet, rather than establishing an earthly kingdom, God had in His mind a superior kingdom that was spiritual and eternal! Jesus was the One who would fulfill all the prophecies and be installed as this King (John 18:36; Matthew 21:1-11). This King’s glory, though, would only come through suffering and dying on the cross (Philippians 2:5-11)! Now, God has forever declared Jesus as His Son, the Lord, and King by raising Him from the dead and His ascension to Heaven (Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 1:9-11; 2:22-36; Acts 13:16-41; Romans 1:1-6; Ephesians 1:20-23)!

2) The foundation: The apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to His apostles (John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15). Prior to Jesus’s ascension to Heaven, He told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-5). Then, they were to help spread this message throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). In spreading this God-inspired message of salvation from Jesus, they would bind on earth what God had bound as His kingdom laws in Heaven (Matthew 16:18-19)! To aid in this work of making God’s message known, God would also use some who would be called “prophets” (Ephesians 3:3-6). Through their work, “the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27) has now been fully delivered to God’s people (Jude 1:3). This is the perfect and single

revelation of truth God expects all who are part of His church/kingdom to be united in (Ephesians 4:1-6). This revelation is now contained in the pages of the Bible (particularly, the New Testament – which is Christ’s new law, Hebrews 8:7-13).

3) The building: Saints (Ephesians 2:19-22). Jesus’s church (God’s temple) is built on no other Cornerstone besides Jesus (Acts 4:12) and no other foundation besides the apostles and prophets who delivered God’s word of truth (Galatians 1:6-10). In the Old Testament, the temple (and tabernacle before it) was constructed as a place to worship God and offer the required sacrifices. It was a place where God’s glory was on display. However, it was made of lifeless objects and could never bring God the kind of glory He deserves (as its builder, King Solomon, recognized, 1 Kings 8:27). Now, rather than a temple of lifeless quarried stones (1 Kings 6:7), Jesus’s church is a temple of living spiritual stones (1 Peter 2:4-5). Every person who is cut by the Spirit’s message of truth so as to believe and obey the gospel of the kingdom, submitting to King Jesus, is now made into God’s dwelling in the Spirit (as He lives in His people through His word). Through the spiritual sacrifices of the lives of these people (called “saints,” “Christians,” etc.), God is glorified (Romans 12:1-2). And, all those in the church are to be equipped to do their individual parts in God’s service (Ephesians 4:11-16)!

Jesus has built (and continues to build) His church in the way that will accomplish the mission of glorifying God! This involves Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone, the word of truth through the apostles and prophets as the foundation, and the saints as living stones in this temple of God. So, while the imagery depicts the concept of a building (temple), the reality is not a lifeless structure; but a people who are dedicated to bringing glory to God and their King!

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?

The Church Jesus Built

Lesson 4: When: When Did Jesus Build His Church

Jesus built His church by giving Himself as the Chief Cornerstone, the word of truth given to the apostles and prophets as the foundation, and then people responding in faith-filled obedience to that message being the church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19-22). Still, we need to consider another question: When? That is, we need to consider when the church came into existence and the circumstances surrounding it. Namely, what we will discover is that Acts 2 marked a special day in human history that resulted in Jesus's church being in existence.

1) The preparation for the kingdom. The Old Testament contains various prophecies that pointed to a greater authority and kingdom that was going to be established. As we have already seen, God had foretold that He was going to establish a kingdom that would never end with a King from the lineage of King David (Isaiah 9:6-7). In Daniel 2, Daniel gives the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerning a colossal statue made up of four distinct sections (representative of four kingdoms – Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, Roman) that was struck and crushed by a stone (representative of God's kingdom) in the days of the fourth kingdom (Roman, v. 44). Isaiah 2:1-4 also adds prophecy concerning this kingdom that pictures God's rule as a mountain above all others that all people can flow to and identifies Jerusalem as the specific place where the word of God would flow from (Micah 4:1-8). Then, Joel 2:28-32 speaks of a time of judgment for the enemies of God and a time of deliverance for those who will submit to God's rule and call on Him.

In the New Testament, the preaching of John (the baptizer) declared the nearness of the kingdom (Matthew 3:1-3). Then, during Jesus's ministry on earth, He often spoke about the kingdom of heaven (i.e. in His parables, Matthew 13), including the fact

that some who were living would see the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1). After Jesus's resurrection and prior to His ascension, He gave His apostles special instructions concerning the work of taking the gospel throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Therefore, by Acts 1, something big was getting ready to happen – and it was going to begin in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-8; Luke 24:44-49)! After giving these instructions to His apostles, Jesus ascended to Heaven – and was seated as King on His throne, at the Father's right hand (Acts 1:9-11; Daniel 7:13-14)!

2) The Father's promise. As the apostles were waiting in Jerusalem, Acts 2:1 then begins the record of the events on the day of Pentecost (festival of weeks occurring 50 days after Passover; requiring all males to appear before God, Deuteronomy 16:16). As many Jews were gathered for this occasion in Jerusalem, Jesus baptized the apostles with the Holy Spirit and enabled them to speak in different languages (tongues) miraculously (Acts 2:2-4). The crowd came together to see what was happening when they heard the sound (Acts 2:5-6) and were confused because they heard the apostles speak the magnificent acts of God in their own languages (Acts 2:6-11). Some were astounded and wondered what this all meant, while others mocked (Acts 2:12-13). However, Peter and the other apostles made it known that what was happening was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy concerning the last days, as God's enemies will be defeated and those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved (Acts 2:14-21)! Note this all happened during the Roman empire and in Jerusalem, according to prophecy.

3) Jesus is proclaimed as King. As Peter's sermon on Pentecost is recorded, he urged his fellow Israelites to listen to his words about Jesus of Nazareth, who God declared to be His Son (Acts 2:22-

23). Yet, the Jews had killed Him, according to God's eternal plan of redemption (Ephesians 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:20-21). God raised this Jesus from the dead, according to the prophecy that God would seat one of David's descendants on his throne (Acts 2:24-31; Psalm 16:8-11). Now, Jesus (the Messiah) has been raised and the apostles and others were eyewitnesses to this (Acts 2:32; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). The significance of this is that God has now exalted Jesus to His right hand and given Him the authority as King (Acts 2:33-35)! Then, Peter declares that God has made this Jesus (whom the Jews had killed but God has made King) to be both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36)! Therefore, Jesus's authority as King was now established and proclaimed! This is what was *established* on Pentecost in Acts 2!

4) The authority of Jesus is recognized.

Hearing this message of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, Lord, and King resulted in *some* seeking to know what they must now do (Acts 2:37). In response, Peter told them they must repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38-40). Then, those who submitted to Jesus's authority were now the "church" (Acts 2:41-47). All who continue to submit to the authority of Jesus from this day forward are also added to Jesus's church!

Jesus's church began in Acts 2, as people submitted themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (the Messiah and King)! This was the fulfillment of numerous prophecies that had been made that pointed to this time. Today, Jesus's church is continuing to be built every time someone responds in submission to King Jesus and the gospel of the kingdom (as we see happening throughout the book of Acts). For, the message of Jesus as King that began in Jerusalem on this Pentecost would spread throughout the world until the end of time!

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?

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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?

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The Church Jesus Built

Lesson 6: Where: Where Has Jesus Built His Church

Jesus has been building His church consisting of those who submit their lives to His authority and have been saved (Matthew 16:18). Still, we need to consider another question: Where? That is, where are these people who submit themselves to Jesus's authority located in this world. Namely, what we will discover is that the people who submitted to King Jesus would start out small, but then spread throughout the entire world (Matthew 13:31-33; Acts 1:8).

1) In Jerusalem. Jerusalem was identified as the place something special was going to begin (Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-8; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8). It was here that Jesus's authority as King was first declared and people obeyed the gospel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2, v. 41). Jesus's church was now established and growing (Acts 2:42-47). While those who had traveled to Jerusalem for Pentecost and turned to Jesus may have likely traveled back home and taken the gospel with them (establishing local churches there), the story of Acts focuses on Jerusalem for a time (Acts 2-7). For example, the number of those who believed in King Jesus came to be around 5,000 by Acts 4:4. In fact, the gospel was spreading so much in Jerusalem that the Jewish leaders who put Jesus to death wanted to stop the apostles from filling Jerusalem with this teaching (Acts 5:27-28). Interestingly, a Pharisee teacher named Gamaliel advised the Sanhedrin (highest Jewish council) that if this movement was of human origin, it would fail; but if it was of God, it would not be stopped (Acts 5:38-39). Every day, there was more teaching being done in Jesus's name throughout Jerusalem, despite persecution (Acts 5:41-42).

2) In Judea and Samaria. God's plan was not for the gospel and His church to remain just in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Through persecution that hit the church in Jerusalem, God's people were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1-3).

However, these who had submitted to King Jesus were not abandoning the faith. Rather, they were taking the gospel's message with them wherever they went (Acts 8:4). Particularly, Acts shows the work of an evangelist named Philip coming to a city of Samaria and preaching Jesus to them, which resulted in people responding in obedience (Acts 8:5-13). After Peter and John were sent to Samaria and preached there, they then returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans (Acts 8:14, 25). Later, Philip was sent to meet a man from Ethiopia as he was traveling back to Ethiopia from Jerusalem, who responded in obedience (Acts 8:26-40). Philip also preached from Azotus to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). Then, even the great persecutor Saul was converted to Christ and began to preach (Acts 9:28). The church was growing (Acts 9:31, 35).

3) To the ends of the earth. The gospel of the kingdom was spreading in many places throughout Palestine. However, Jesus's mission concerning His gospel and His people involved more (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). The book of Acts then demonstrates how Jesus's gospel and church then spread throughout the world by giving us snapshots of how it spread. We see the gospel spreading in Caesarea (Acts 8:40), including the Gentiles being welcomed into Jesus's church (Acts 10-11; 11:18). Those who were scattered from the persecution made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word (Acts 11:19-24). The church in Antioch grew and sent Saul (Paul) and Barnabas to preach the gospel in other places (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-27). The apostle Paul's journeys and preaching work are the primary focus of Acts 13-28, showing how the gospel spread throughout many places (i.e. 19:8-10). However, other apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, and saints were also working to spread God's message of salvation. This happened so much that Paul said the gospel had spread throughout the world about

30 years after the Great Commission (Colossians 1:23)!

4) The mission continues today. Jesus's church is clearly not limited to any one specific place. Rather, Jesus's mission has always been to fill the world with the gospel that calls people to submit to Him as King and experience salvation through Him (Mark 16:15-16). Although this mission was accomplished in the first century, it has continued throughout the centuries. Today, you can know the gospel's message and choose to submit yourself to King Jesus so as to be added to His church. In doing so, you can join others who have submitted themselves to Jesus as part of His church, thereby forming a local church in your community – just like people did throughout the book of Acts and the New Testament. This church should follow the pattern of belief, teaching, and practice outlined in the New Testament God has given for local churches (2 Timothy 1:13). This local church then becomes an outpost for building up Christians in that area and for continuing Jesus's mission to spread the gospel of the kingdom throughout that community and beyond (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10; 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:2; Romans 10:13-18). For, Jesus has given His church everything needed to grow and be equipped to continue His mission of spreading the gospel in every generation (Ephesians 4:11-16)!

Jesus has built and is continuing to build His church (Matthew 16:18)! He invites you to be part of this special group of saved people who will live on mission to glorify God and spread the message about the kingdom of God today. There is certainly no mission on earth that comes close to the importance of the mission of Jesus's kingdom! For, you can be part of planting the seed of the kingdom of God that will have an eternal impact on others!

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?

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Written by Eric Krieg

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