
NOTES ON LESSON 5: THE CHURCH

(Also see “The Church” and “Answer Guide for Teachers”)

The final lesson starts with Matthew 7:13–27. The startling facts in this section of Scripture should encourage a strong commitment to obey the will of God. It is emphasized throughout this study that Jesus is the head of the church and that our goal should be to be a part of His church. Since Jesus purchased the church with His blood, it is proper to teach “Jesus’ church Jesus’ way.”

Five Fearful Facts

Matthew 7:13–27. This pointed passage from the mouth of Jesus lists five fearful facts. Jesus, the loving shepherd, taught that (1) not everyone will be saved, (2) more will be lost than saved, (3) not everyone is telling the truth, (4) some who expect to be saved will be lost, and (5) it is not enough just to call Jesus Lord; you must obey His will.

John 8:32; Galatians 1:8. Only truth can set us free. Although it is a frightening thought, a lie sincerely believed will not set us free. If necessary, go back to the cross and the three nails. Specifically, remind your student of the nail of obedience (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Galatians 1:8 says that if even an angel preaches a different gospel, it should be rejected. Sometimes it is effective to remind the student that the first lesson pointed out that we should prove all things. You might ask, “How can we know if an angel, a preacher, or even a loved one is preaching a different gospel?” The proper response is “By examining the Word of God.”

Jesus Is the Head of the Church

Matthew 16:16–18 through *Acts 8:1–3; 20:28.* This section allows us to see that Jesus only promised to build one church. It would be built upon the “rock,” that is, the truth that Peter confessed when he proclaimed that Jesus is the Son of God. Acts 2:36–47 shows how sinners were saved and how they were added to the church of Christ. God added them; one cannot “join” the church of Christ. It is also made clear in this part of the study that the church was established on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus. Before Acts 2 the church is spoken of as being in the future; after Acts 2 it is always spoken of as being in existence. At this point ask, “If there is only one God and one Bible, and Jesus promised to build only one church,

why do you think there are so many different churches?”

The church of the Bible does not have a manmade head; Jesus is the head of the body (the church). Not only is He the head, but He is also the Savior of the body. It is only reasonable that Jesus should have first place in everything, including the name His followers wear. It is an insult to wear a religious name that does not honor Christ. It is an insult to designate the church in a way that does not give Jesus first place. Naming a church after men, doctrines, or forms of church government does not put Jesus in first place. Why would we not want to keep Jesus’ church Jesus’ way? (Keep these truths in mind as you teach the lesson, but avoid lecturing. Try to keep the study student-centered. Ask questions that will help the student discover these truths and apply the Word of God.)

The church is not a physical building. Saul persecuted the people of the church, not a physical structure. The church is made up of those who have obeyed the gospel. The saved are added by the Lord to the blood-bought church (Acts 2:47).

Jesus’ Church Jesus’ Way

Matthew 23:9; Acts 10:25, 26. Jesus did not approve of religious titles. We never read in the Bible about “Reverend” Peter or “Father” James. Even the apostles would not allow people to worship them (Acts 10:25, 26). While Peter was a wonderful man, he was just a man in need of the blood of Christ. Peter knew that we should worship only the Lord God (Matthew 4:10). Be sure to read the open question that asks, “How would you feel about being part of a church that ignores Jesus’ teaching on such an important matter?”

Acts 2:38–42; Hebrews 10:24–27. Spend some time looking at the devotion of those baptized in Acts 2. One of the great evidences for the inspiration of the Bible is that it records the good *and* bad about those in the church. Hebrews 10:25 shows that some were failing to assemble with the church and were not pleasing to God. In fact, one of the strongest statements in the Bible is found in Hebrews 10:26, 27 in connection with forsaking the assembling of the church. The opportunity to worship and fellowship with the church is one of the

greatest blessings God gives us here on the earth. Those who love Jesus will love His church.

Acts 17:10, 11. The Bereans set a wonderful example for us to follow. They were noble because they searched the Scriptures to check what they were being taught. (Remember: Will an honest person change without evidence? No!) Finding Paul's teaching true, they received it. Ask, "How can you and I be noble?" A "wise man" must love God (John 14:15), love the truth (John 8:32), and be willing to learn (John 7:17).

Matthew 26:26–29; Acts 20:6, 7 and *1 Corinthians 11:18–30; 16:1, 2.* Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night of His betrayal. He wanted His disciples to eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine. Christians in the first century, like those in Troas (Act 20:27), met on the first day of the week to break bread (take the Lord's Supper). Every week has a first day (Sunday), so it is clear that they met each Lord's Day to participate in the Lord's Supper. Regular participation in the Lord's Supper shows faith in the Lord's resurrection and His sure return. It is important to take the Lord's Supper in the right manner (1 Corinthians 11:18–30).

Not only did Christians in the first century take the Lord's Supper when they came together on the first day of the week, but they also were instructed to give as they had prospered. Emphasize the question "Can you think of a biblical reason why the Lord's Supper should not be observed each first day of the week?"

Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16. While instruments of music were used under the old law, Christians are instructed to sing and make music in their hearts to the Lord. Those who are committed to the idea of "Jesus' Church Jesus' Way" will follow the example and teaching of the New Testament. The use of mechanical instruments was foreign to the practice and worship of the New Testament church. Singing is the only form of music identified in the New Testament as being practiced in the New Testament church.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 through *1 Timothy 3:1–6.* Those seeking to worship God acceptably will also be committed to prayer. Preaching is also very much a part of the church that Jesus established. Women cannot preach, because they are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men. While this may not be popular in today's world, those seeking to follow the Bible will embrace the teaching of the Scriptures on this and every subject. (Remember to emphasize the idea of "Jesus' Church Jesus' Way.") If a church has women

preachers or pastors, it is operating in contradiction to the teachings of truth. In John 16:13 Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into truth. If a certain practice or belief was not taught by the apostles or the inspired writers of the New Testament, then it is not a part of "all truth."

Matthew 28:18–20; Luke 6:46. Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and earth. If a church council, synod, organization, or religious leader teaches something different than what Jesus taught, should that teaching be followed? No! Jesus said that it is not enough just to call Him Lord; we must do the things that He has commanded.

Romans 10:13; Acts 2:21, 38; 22:16. For those who did not obey the gospel after the previous lesson, these Scriptures offer another opportunity for obedience. Those from denominational backgrounds will have heard that to be saved you have to "call on the name of the Lord." Romans 10:13 says just that. Two examples of calling on the name of the Lord are recorded in the Book of Acts. In Acts 2:14–21, Peter quoted from Joel the prophet, including the words "Everyone who calls on the name of Lord will be saved." In Acts 2:37, when the crowd asked what they must do to be saved, Peter said in verse thirty-eight to repent and be baptized. We read in Acts 22:16 that Paul himself was told to "arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord." After reading these passages, ask, "How did those who were saved in Acts 2:38 and the apostle Paul 'call upon the name of the Lord'? What does it mean, then, to 'call upon the name of the Lord'?"

Review & Summary

Explain that those who obey the gospel are added to the church of Christ. Since Jesus is to have first place in everything (including the way His church is designated), man-exalting titles must be rejected. The church of Christ assembles upon the first day of the week to sing, pray, teach, give, and remember the Lord's death by partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Conclude this study with the question "Have you called upon the name of the Lord?" Wait silently for the answer. If the student acknowledges that he has not "called upon the name of the Lord," ask him if he is ready to do so. If he says that he is not ready, try to find out what is keeping him from obeying Jesus. Review appropriate parts of previous studies and encourage him to show his love for Jesus by obeying His will. ❖