

What Is The Church – Lesson 1: Foundation

Ephesians 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

Church 1. A building used for public Christian worship and assembly

- Is the definition of a Church accurate?
- Is the public understanding of 'Church' simply to identify a location and religious intent?
- If this is the secular definition, how does that affect the believer?

The concept of a church is different for many people, even people of faith, as the term has come to represent several aspects of Christianity, society/culture and economics.

In this lesson set, the church will be examined to determine what is the scriptural guidance, and how the believer should consider the significance of the Church.

The lessons will be segmented into three parts:

1. Foundation
2. What the Church is to God
3. What the Church is to man

Lesson 1 – Foundation: What the Church is, and is not

To understand the church, attention must be given to how the definition is applied (the context) – First, a look at the book of Revelation to determine God's use:

Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Revelation 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Revelation 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Revelation 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

Revelation 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Revelation 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Several key facts defined by Christ:

- Each 'church' is accountable through an angel of the Lord – Accountable to God
- Each church is called 'the church of/in' – Identified by region
- Each salutation begins with a clear definition of who is addressing the church – The Son of God
 - o In authority (in the midst of the seven chandelsticks)
 - o Eternal (the first and the last)
 - o As judge (He which hath the sword with two edges)

What is not present:

- There is no mention of a denomination
 - o Not Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Pentecostal, Episcopal, etc.

Denominations are an invention of man (Christ never called any by a title)

- There is no reference to any building
 - o Not to the temple in...
 - o Not to the cathedral in...
- Buildings are creations of man (Christ never constructed a building)

The Church is not merely a building or site dedicated to facilitate Christian rituals

Note – There is a difference between ‘church’ and ‘assembly’:

- ‘Church’ is used in 79 verses – All are in the New Testament only
- ‘Churches’ is used in 36 verses - All are in the New Testament only
- ‘Assembly’ is used in 49 verses – Only 5 are in the New Testament (each referring to a public gathering)
- ‘Assemblies’ is used in 6 verses - All are in the Old Testament only

An ‘assembly’ does not constitute the ‘Church’

The Beginning

Matthew 16:18 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.

Is the ‘rock’ (foundation) of the ‘Church’ Peter?

- **1 Corinthians 3:11** For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ
 - o Christ is the only foundation to be built upon – Not Peter
- **Matthew 21:42** Jesus saith unto them, **Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?**
- **Ephesians 2:20** And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;
 - o Christ is the component that binds the entire Church together – Not Peter
- **1 Corinthians 10:4** And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.
 - o Christ is the rock giving water to the children of Israel in the wilderness
 - o Christ is the only rock to build on for life – Not Peter

Christ describes Peter

John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, **Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas**, which is by interpretation, A stone.

- Christ defines Peter as a ‘stone’ – To bring Peter into a new life as His disciple:
 - o ‘Simon’ means hot tempered, volatile, violent
 - o ‘Cephas’ – Aramaic for ‘stable as a stone/rock
 - o A stone or rock in this context is part of, but not the reason for (Peter is part of the church, but not its reason for being)

Peter provides guidance to the believer

1 Peter 2:5-8 - The ‘stones’ of the Church

(5) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

- All believers are ‘living stones’ in the building of the Church, integrated into the body of Christ

(6) Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHIEF CORNER STONE, ELECT, PRECIOUS: AND HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM SHALL NOT BE CONFOUNDED.

- Only one 'corner stone' - Christ

(7) Unto you therefore which believe *he is precious*: but unto them which be disobedient, THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS DISALLOWED, THE SAME IS MADE THE HEAD OF THE CORNER,

(8) And A STONE OF STUMBLING, AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

- The corner stone of Christ – Rejected by the world (disallowed by Israel but acceptable to God)
- Peter clearly defines the head of the Church as Christ, and makes no attempt to take the Church as his own creation or possession (he does not exercise lordship over the Church)

Matthew 19:27-28 - Christ defines the role of the Apostles (including Peter)

(27) Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

- Peter asks Christ what will become of the disciples? – Leaving all behind to follow Christ

(28) And Jesus said unto them, *Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

- The 12 Apostles, to include Peter, will be the judges of Israel – Not the foundation of the Church

Revelation 21:12-14 - Christ defines when the Apostles will judge (in the new Jerusalem)

(12) And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

(14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Peter is honored and respected – A chosen Apostle of Jesus Christ (as are all the Apostles). However, Peter is not the Church, and the Church is not founded upon Peter – Only Christ.

The Church is not:

- A building
- A religion or denomination
- Resting on the shoulders of a man (the Apostle Peter)

The Church is:

- Defined by Christ
- Built upon Christ (He is the foundation)
- Part of Christ

As there are many definitions of 'church' by humanity, governments, society – These are all worldly labels intended to separate humanity from the true Church, which is the body of Christ.

This is not an admonishment to not refer to your place of worship as a 'church', but to remind the believer they are always 'at Church', as Christ dwells within you, to make you a 'living stone'.

Next Lesson: What the Church is to God

What Is The Church – Lesson 1: Foundation

Study Questions

1. According to Revelation 2:1, who is Christ addressing?

2. According to Revelation 2:8, how does Christ refer to Himself?

3. According to 1 Corinthians 3:11, who is the only acceptable foundation?

4. According to 1 Peter 2:5, how is a believer described?

5. Complete the following scripture:

Ephesians 5:32 This is a great _____: but I speak concerning _____ and the Church.

True / False

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | Christ describes Himself as having divine authority. |
| T | F | Christ describes Himself as eternal. |
| T | F | The Church is founded upon Peter. |
| T | F | Peter is honored as a Judge of Israel in the New Jerusalem. |