

Know Your Bible

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON 4

I. The New Testament Church

There is only one true church! It is the church we read about in the Bible which was bought by the blood of Christ ([Acts 20:28](#)) and was begun by the apostles. All the saved people are in this church and no one can be saved outside of it. These are the things we wish to show to the student in this lesson.

We are studying the church as it was **originally**. To do this we must go to the New Testament. We must go back beyond the Roman Catholic Church, which began hundreds of years after the original church. We must go back beyond the Protestant Churches, which began over a thousand years after the original church. We must go back 2,000 years to the time of the apostles. Then we can see what Christ's church is.

QUESTIONS

1. The church was purchased by the of ([Acts 20:28](#)).
2. A study of the original church shows what the church should be like today. **True** **False**
3. The first church was the Roman Catholic Church. **True** **False**

II. What is the Church?

The word "church" means "assembly" or "congregation." When Jesus said, "**Upon this rock I will build my church**" ([Matthew 16:18](#)) He was promising to assemble a people who would belong to Him. He died on the cross to pay for their sins. This is why Paul said that He purchased the church with His blood ([Acts 20:28](#))--Jesus purchased the salvation of His people with His blood. The church of Christ is the group of people who belong to Christ.

This means that all the saved people are a part of the church of the Lord. [Acts 2:47](#) says, "**And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**" That means that when the Lord saves a person He

makes that person a part of His group of people, the church. No saved person is left outside of that church. The church is all the saved people.

QUESTIONS

4. What does the word "church" mean?
5. Which people are in the church?
6. Who adds them to the church?
7. Who promised to build His church?
8. Are ALL saved people in the church of the Lord?

III. Pentecost--The Day the Church Began--Acts 2

After Jesus was raised from the dead He was on the earth for 40 days before He went back to heaven. During those days He told the apostles, **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."** ([Acts 1:8](#)) A few days later was the Jewish feast day called "Pentecost." **"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."** ([Acts 2:1-2](#)) This was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. He was in heaven and had sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

QUESTIONS

9. Jesus was on earth days after He was raised from the dead.
10. Jesus promised the apostles after they received the Holy Ghost.
11. The apostles received the Holy Ghost on the Day of .

At once the apostles began to preach the gospel--the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was raised from the dead, and is sitting at the right hand of God; the good news that now all men can have forgiveness of sins. Peter's sermon is written in Acts 2 and it caused people to be "pricked in their heart" and ask what they must do (v. 37). When Peter answered, **"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"** (v. 38), he was announcing for the first time what men must do to be saved. He was opening the door to the church. The people who gladly received his word were baptized (v. 41) and added to the church (v. 47).

QUESTIONS

12. When Peter preached, his hearers were in their .
13. Peter told them, " and be .
14. Those who gladly received his word were .
15. What did the Lord do to those who were saved? ([Acts 2:47](#))

The church began on that Sunday morning, the first Pentecost Day after the resurrection of Christ. When Peter's hearers did what the apostles told them to do to be saved (repent and be baptized--v. 38), they were saved by the blood of Christ and were added to Christ's group of people. His church has been in existence ever since that time and entrance into His group of people has always been the same. You, too, can be part of Christ's church if you will listen to the words of the apostles. When you believe, repent and are baptized, you will be saved. Then the Lord will add you to His church.

QUESTIONS

16. Who are purchased by the blood of Christ? ([Acts 20:28](#))
17. Who are added to the church by the Lord?

IV. The Local Church

All the saved everywhere are in the church of Christ, therefore we call this "the universal church." Jesus is head of His body, the church ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#)); Christians are the members of the body. There is one body ([Ephesians 4:4](#)).

Yet we read of "churches of Christ" ([Romans 16:16](#)) and the "churches of Galatia" ([Galatians 1:2](#)). These are not denominations; they are local churches. A local church is the group of saved people in one place who work and worship together as God directs.

QUESTIONS

18. The body which contains all the saved people is the church.
19. The group of saved people who work and worship together in one place is the church.

V. The Worship of the Local Church

When the church began in Jerusalem, **"they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in**

prayers." ([Acts 2:42](#)) These saved ones assembled regularly together for WORSHIP. Let us consider the four things this verse says that they did.

A. The Apostles' Doctrine

The early Christians heard and obeyed the teachings of the apostles. They were not following the traditions of their ancestors or the teachings of other men. The apostles had received the Holy Spirit; therefore their doctrine was the teaching of Christ. When the brethren continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, they were continuing in the teaching which came from Jesus Christ.

The apostles (and prophets--[Ephesians 2:20](#)) were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the books of the New Testament. We continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine when we study and follow the New Testament.

QUESTIONS

20. The apostles' doctrine is the teaching of .

21. We find the apostles' doctrine in the .

B. Fellowship

The word "fellowship" means: "joint participation toward a common goal." In other words, when people join together so that they can accomplish something that they all want to do, they are having "fellowship."

These things are necessary for something to be fellowship: 1) action, 2) common action, and 3) common motive. The saved ones in Jerusalem were working together so that God's will could be done.

One special way in which the local church has fellowship is in giving money for the work of the church. The early Christians were generous in giving for poor Christians ([Acts 4:32,34,35](#)). Our giving is to be done on the first day of every week according our prosperity ([1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#)).

No other way for getting money for the church is given in the New Testament. The church is not told to ask other people for money, nor to sell things for a profit. The only way the New Testament church got money to do its work was by its own members giving cheerfully each first day of the week.

QUESTIONS

22. "Fellowship" means:

23. The three things necessary for fellowship are: 1) 2)
3)

24. [1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#) told the Christians at Corinth to give on the day of the week.

C. Breaking of Bread

The "breaking of bread" of [Acts 2:42](#) is the Lord's supper. Just before He was betrayed and crucified Jesus gave instructions to the apostles concerning eating this supper. (See [Matthew 26:26-30](#)) The local church is to assemble to eat. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "**When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.**" ([1 Corinthians 11:20](#)) They thought they were eating the Lord's supper, but since they were doing wrong things in connection with their eating, Paul says that it was no longer the Lord's supper.

Then Paul told them what they were to do ([1 Corinthians 11:23-29](#)) when they came together into one place. They were to eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine in remembrance of Jesus until He comes again. This is what the church in Jerusalem was doing ([Acts 2:42](#)).

The church at Troas came together to break bread "**on the first day of the week.**" ([Acts 20:7](#)) [1 Corinthians 16:1-3](#) shows that there was an assembly on each first day of the week at Corinth and at other churches. [Acts 20:7](#) tells us that it was in order to eat the Lord's supper. As no other day is given for this supper, faithful Christians today follow the teaching of the apostles by assembling each first day of the week to break bread.

QUESTIONS

25. On what day of the week did the church at Troas come together to break bread? ([Acts 20:7](#))

26. What do Christians eat and drink in the Lord's supper?

D. Prayer

[Acts 2:42](#) says that the brethren at Jerusalem continued steadfastly in prayer. Prayer is the blessed privilege of the saved. God answers the prayers of those who want to do His will ([1 Peter 3:12](#)).

When we are gathered together to pray, men are to pray ([1 Timothy 2:8](#)) in such a way that those listening can understand and say "amen" ([1 Corinthians 14:15-16](#)).

QUESTIONS

27. God's ears are open to the prayers of the ([1 Peter 3:12](#)).

28. "I will therefore that pray everywhere, lifting up .

E. Singing

Singing, though not mentioned in [Acts 2:42](#), must be included in the worship of early Christians. In [Colossians 3:16](#) we read, "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**"

Although David in the Old Testament times used musical instruments in praise to God, in the New Testament we read only that Christians **sang**. It is clear that they used no instruments to accompany their singing.

QUESTIONS

29. In singing we are to and one another.

30. The command and example in each place in the New Testament is to "sing." **True** **False**

VI. New Testament Unity

As the Jerusalem church is a model to be followed in worship, so it is also in its display of unity: "**And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul**" ([Acts 4:32](#)). Such harmony was not an accident, but rather an answer to Christ's prayer that all His disciples might "be one" ([John 17:21-23](#)).

QUESTIONS

31. In [John 17:20-21](#) Jesus prayed that all believers may be .

32. The unity of the church in Jerusalem was so great that they were of one and of one .

It was never Christ's intention that there should be many churches. Indeed, the New Testament recognizes only ONE. "**I will build my church,**" Jesus said. Years later, as the church spread all over the world, Paul wrote the Ephesians and exhorted them to "**keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**" because there is only "**one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism**" ([Ephesians 4:3-6](#)). Paul told the Corinthians that there is "**but one body**" ([1 Corinthians 12:12,13,20](#)).

QUESTIONS

33. How many churches did Jesus build?

34. How many bodies does He have?

Possibly the closest we can come to finding denominationalism in the Bible is [1 Corinthians 1:10-13](#), where religious division is scathingly rebuked. To the parties **within** the Corinthian church Paul asked: "**Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?**" As the answer to all these questions is clearly "**No!**" it must follow that: 1) Christ's disciples ought not to be divided; 2) Christ's disciples ought not to wear men's names; 3) Christ's disciples ought not to follow men (even great ones like Paul or Peter). If people would keep these things in mind there could be no divisions, no denominations!

QUESTIONS (Read [1 Corinthians 1:10-13](#) then answer the following)

35. Verse 10 shows that Christians must have no divisions among them.

True False

36. The division in the church at Corinth was because they were all following Christ. True False

37. The answer to the three questions in verse 13 is "no." True False

The amazing unity of the early church came about because "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine." The creeds and doctrines of men always produce strife and division, but God's word provides a basis of true fellowship: "**But, if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin**" ([1 John 1:7](#)).

QUESTIONS

38. Do the creeds written by men produce unity?

39. What provides a basis of true fellowship?

VII. Church Organization

Jesus has no organization for the universal church. He is the Head ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#)) and every Christian must listen to Him and carry out His will daily. Since the Head of the church is in heaven we cannot address a letter to Him. There is no earthly headquarters on Christ's universal church.

But Jesus has given an organization for the local church. Each local church

(congregation) is independent of all others in rule, yet closely tied together by love. Officers were appointed in each congregation: "**and when they had ordained them elders in every church**" ([Acts 14:23](#)). "**Ordain elders in every city**" ([Titus 1:5](#)). Elders are also called "**bishops**" ([1 Timothy 3:1](#)). The **qualifications** for this office are given in [Titus 1:5-9](#).

Their **work** is discussed in [1 Peter 5:1-4](#) where Peter talks of three separate jobs: 1) Feeding the flock of God, 2) Taking the oversight of that flock, 3) Being an example.

QUESTIONS

40. Where is the headquarters of the church?

41. Who have the oversight of the local church?

The modern denominational practice is to place one bishop over many churches, but the New Testament order is **many** bishops (elders) over **one church** ([Acts 14:23](#); [Titus 1:5](#); [Philippians 1:1](#)). The New Testament does not speak of higher officers such as "archbishop," "cardinal," or "pope." The elders were the **only** rulers, and their rule was only over a local group: "**the flock of God which is among you**" ([1 Peter 5:2](#)).

QUESTIONS

42. Elders were ordained in every church. **True** **False**

43. Elders were also called "bishops." **True** **False**

44. The New Testament order was one bishop over many churches. **True** **False**

45. The elders' rule was only over a local group. **True** **False**

VIII. The Work of the Church

The **universal church** does not have any work except the work of each Christian carrying out Christ's will in his life every day. This is why no organization is required for the universal church. Each Christian takes his direction from Christ in the New Testament. That is everything that is needed.

The **local church**, however, has three great works to perform. This is why God has given an organization to the local church, for the members must work together in carrying out these tasks. These three jobs are: 1) To preach the gospel to the lost ([1 Timothy 3:15](#)), 2) To build up Christians by teaching, worship and discipline ([Ephesians 4:11-12](#)), 3) To help poor Christians ([Acts 11:27-30](#)). These are the **ONLY** works which Jesus has given to the local church.

Some people want to change the work of the church to make it a "social" work. They believe that the church exists as a centre to provide companionship, entertainment, and fun. Others see the church as a kind of relief organization, designed to meet the material needs of the world. Many also think the church should provide schools. But Jesus did not give these works to the local church. He gave a much higher and more glorious mission. Paul said, "**For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**" ([Romans 14:17](#))

QUESTIONS

46. What are the three great works which Jesus gave to the local church? 1)
2) 3)

We have studied the church as it is revealed in scripture and as it existed 2,000 years ago. Does that church exist today? We do not mean some denomination that is somewhat like it, but the **exact** church of Christ.

We are glad to say, "**YES!**"

We know this first because the Bible tells us that Christ's church was to continue throughout all ages ([Ephesians 3:21](#)). It **MUST** still exist because the Bible says it does. We know how to get into it--by being saved. If we believe, repent, and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins we will be added to the church by the Lord.

Second, we have a description of the church of Christ in the Bible. All those who want to pattern themselves after it may do so. In fact, this is just the way you can identify the true church today: Study the Bible, noting all the characteristics of the church. You will want to consider its **NAME, DOCTRINE, ORGANIZATION, UNITY, MISSION and WORSHIP**. Then seek out the local church that fits the Bible pattern. Don't be satisfied with anything else. There are new Testament Christians meeting throughout Southern Africa, and you should want to be worshiping and working with those in your area. We will be glad to assist you in finding the church of Christ nearest you.

If you are interested in becoming simply a Christian, we want to help you. Write us today and let us know your desire.

QUESTIONS

47. Do you think it is possible for Christ's church to exist today?

48. Would you expect Christ's church to be a denomination?

49. Is it possible to follow only the Bible?

50. If we follow the description of the church found in the New Testament, what church will we be today?

MAY WE HELP YOU?

We want to help you to be saved. If your conversion is not the same as the conversions we have studied, you need to do what they did. We want to help you become a New Testament Christian. Let us hear from you.

Write here any Bible question you have:

First Name:

Last Name:

Email address (**You must enter this.**): [Privacy Policy](#)