



Basic Bible Course

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THE CHURCH

We Read about in the
NEW TESTAMENT



Lesson Twenty-Four

INTRODUCTION: On the day that God's NEW TESTAMENT PLAN OF SALVATION went into effect, those people who OBSERVED it were "ADDED" to something. As you will recall, it was on "THE DAY OF PENTECOST" in Acts 2. The GREAT COMMISSION had been given just a few days before. The apostles were TARRYING IN JERUSALEM, as they had been commanded, until they should be "ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH." When the day of Pentecost was fully come, about 9 o'clock in the morning, God baptized these apostles with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak in other tongues which they had learned. So remarkable was this demonstration of "power from on high" that a huge multitude came together to see what was happening. The apostle Peter, standing up with the eleven other apostles, preached the FIRST GOSPEL SERMON introducing the NEW TESTAMENT DISPENSATION. Not only did he explain this magnificent outpouring of the Spirit as from God, but he persuaded the multitude so convincingly that Jesus is "both Lord and Christ" that they were "PRICKED IN THEIR HEART" (i.e., BELIEVED) and asked of Peter and the rest of the apostles, "MEN AND BRETHREN, WHAT SHALL WE DO?"

Peter did not hesitate in his reply to these newly-made believers. He said unto them, "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." Further words of explanation and exhortation followed, and "they that GLADLY received his word WERE BAPTIZED: and the same day there were ADDED UNTO THEM about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). To WHAT were they "ADDED?" To the APOSTLES, yes; but to WHAT ELSE? Reading on down to verse 47, "And the Lord ADDED to THE CHURCH daily such as should be SAVED." Thus we conclude that those people who obeyed God's NEW TESTAMENT PLAN OF SALVATION, which we studied in our last lesson, not only were "ADDED" unto the APOSTLES but to THE CHURCH as well.

- I. "THE CHURCH" is strictly a NEW TESTAMENT concept of religion.
 - A. The word "church" is translated from the Greek term *EKKLESIA*, meaning "A called out body."
 1. In the sense that the children of Israel were "called out" of Egypt, the NEW Testament (although not the OLD) styles them as the "CHURCH in the wilderness."
 - a. This use of the word is GENERIC and in no way refers to that institution peculiar to the NEW TESTAMENT, **also** called the "CHURCH."
 - B. Coming to the New Testament, we read Jesus' promise (in Matthew 16:18), "I will build my *EKKLESIA* [i.e., church]."
 1. The fact that He used the verb "**WILL** build" proves that He had not yet built the church at that time.
 2. The children of Israel long since had come out of the wilderness.
 3. John the Baptist was already dead. (See Matthew 14).

4. Still Jesus said, “I **WILL** build my church” so the church Jesus referred to was YET FUTURE from Matthew 16, not something previously established (1) in the wilderness or (2) by John the Baptist.
- C. Since “the church” means “the called out body,” how, then, are the MEMBERS of that BODY “called out”?
 1. For this purpose was the “GOSPEL” given. READ 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-14: “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - a. Christian “brethren” are “CHOSEN” to “salvation” (verse 13).
 - b. God “CALLED” them thereunto by the “gospel” (verse 14).
- D. NOT EVERYONE responds to the call of the gospel.
 1. “For many are CALLED, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).
- E. Those who respond to the gospel are “called.”
 1. The preaching of “Christ crucified” is “unto them which are CALLED” the power and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).
 2. But “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26).
- F. The CALLING is according to God’s PURPOSE.
 1. “CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE” (Romans 8:28).
 2. “Saved and CALLED...ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PURPOSE” (1 Timothy 1:9).

NOTE: If those comprising the *EKKLESIA* or “CHURCH” of God are “CALLED” according to His “PURPOSE,” then what IS His PURPOSE? Is it not the NEW TESTAMENT? Everything we have studied in previous lessons would lead us unmistakably to this conclusion. Then, if the NEW TESTAMENT is the DECLARATION OF GOD’S “PURPOSE,” and we are “CALLED” according to His PURPOSE, it follows that we are CALLED ACCORDING TO and BY the TEACHING of the NEW TESTAMENT. Since we are “CALLED” unto “SALVATION,” what does the NEW TESTAMENT TEACH FOR SALVATION? That Jesus is the AUTHOR of “SALVATION” to all those that “OBEY” Him (Hebrews 5:9). We “OBEY” COMMANDS. Then what has Jesus COMMANDED for SALVATION according to GOD’S PURPOSE, the NEW TESTAMENT? That we should HEAR the gospel, BELIEVE in Jesus Christ, REPENT of our sins, CONFESS Christ before men and BE BAPTIZED into Christ. Those who so do are thus “CALLED” and “SAVED.”

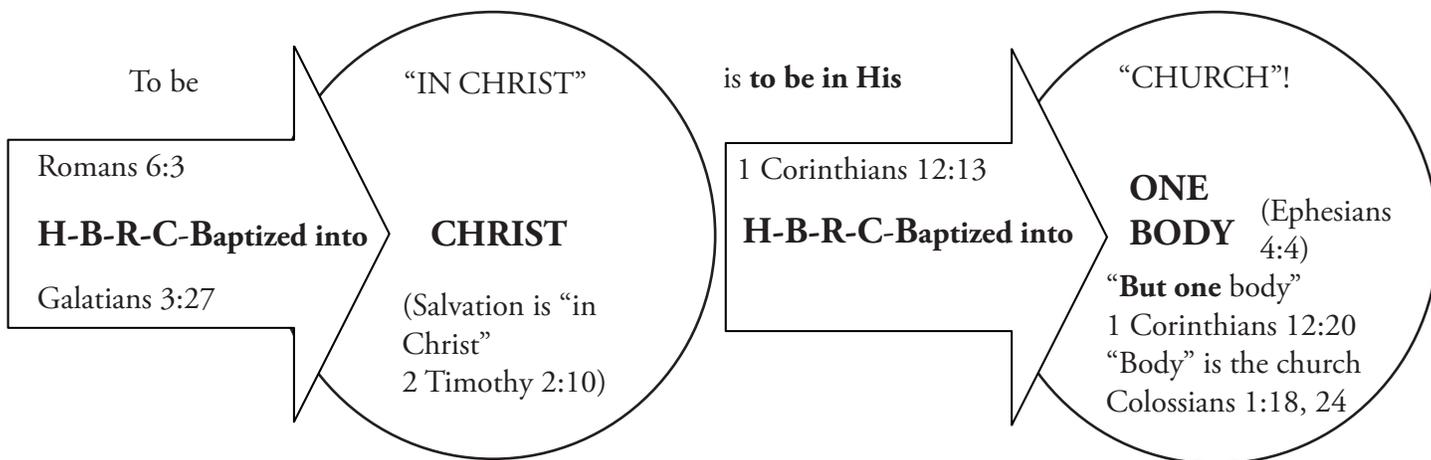
- G. The “called” are blessed.
 1. All things work together for their good (Romans 8:28).
 2. The “called” are justified (Romans 8:30).
 3. The “calling” is “unto SALVATION” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).
 4. The “saved” are ADDED TO THE CHURCH daily by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

NOTE: Hence we see a direct connection between men being “called” of God and being “added” to His “church.” Remember that the word “church” (*EKKLESIA*) means “called out body”! So, when God “CALLS” men through the PREACHING of His NEW TESTAMENT (i.e., “gospel”), into what does He call them? Into the CHURCH—the *EKKLESIA*, the “called out” body.

DISCUSSION: Nowadays, when people who think of themselves as “CHRISTIANS” have grown accustomed to DENOMINATIONALISM, NO ONE DENOMINATION claiming to be “THE BODY OF CHRIST,” it is often heard that “it makes NO DIFFERENCE WHAT CHURCH YOU ARE A MEMBER of, the CHURCH DOES NOT SAVE YOU ANYWAY!” How FOREIGN such talk is from the plain simple teaching of the New Testament! By “CHURCH,” of course, they are referring to the various DENOMINATIONAL bodies, each of which differs from the other in origin, name, doctrine, organization

and practice. But, when the NEW TESTAMENT was written, NOT ONE OF THESE MODERN DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES (SO-CALLED) EXISTED! They ALL had their beginnings CENTURIES later. But the church (or *EKKLESIA*) you read about in the NEW TESTAMENT existed from the day of Pentecost in Acts 1 (A.D. 33) onward. Jesus had promised to build His “CALLED OUT BODY,” THE CHURCH. He did NOT promise to build all these bodies MEN call CHURCHES. From Pentecost onward, “the LORD added to the CHURCH [the one HE built!] daily such as should be SAVED” (Acts 2:47). So the “saved” are in the LORD’S CHURCH, for HE PUT THEM THERE!

- II. To be “IN CHRIST” (where “salvation” is) is to be in His CHURCH! (Study carefully the following Scriptures as charted, and you will see this clearly...)

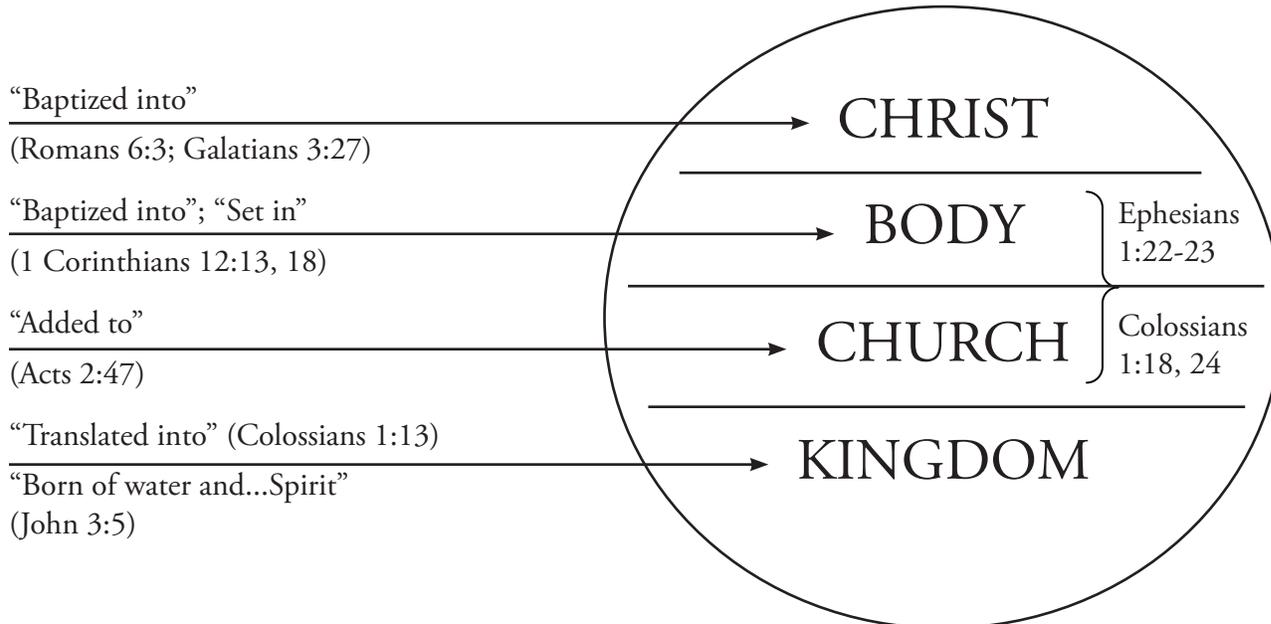


EXPLANATION: In the foregoing chart, we have drawn TWO CIRCLES with identical arrows pointing into each. Inside the first circle we have CHRIST with the applicable Scripture citations showing that SALVATION is “IN CHRIST.” The question is: HOW DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH US to get “INTO CHRIST”? There are but TWO PASSAGES in the ENTIRE BIBLE which discuss this matter: ROMANS 6:3 and GALATIANS 3:27. Please OPEN YOUR BIBLE and READ EACH OF THESE SCRIPTURES VERY CAREFULLY. What do they SAY? They BOTH say we are “BAPTIZED INTO” CHRIST. Read them again just to make doubly sure.

From previous lessons we have learned already that before one CAN be BAPTIZED according to the New Testament, he must first HEAR the gospel, BELIEVE in Jesus Christ, REPENT of his sins, and CONFESS his faith in Christ before men. In the chart the letters H, B, R and C stand for HEAR, BELIEVE, REPENT and CONFESS. The arrows after each of these letters signify that one leads to the next in sequence. HEARING the gospel causes us to BELIEVE in Christ, leading us to REPENT of our sins and CONFESS His name before men, AFTER which we may then be “BAPTIZED into” Christ. BAPTISM, thus, is neither BEFORE these other four requirements nor WITHOUT them. They ALL FIVE combine into “THAT FORM OF DOCTRINE” which not only puts men INTO CHRIST but also FREES FROM SIN (Romans 6:16-18).

But BAPTISM not only PUTS US “INTO CHRIST” (when PRECEDED by HEARING, BELIEF, REPENTANCE and CONFESSION OF FAITH), it ALSO puts us INTO CHRIST’S “CHURCH.” Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that “we all (are) BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY.” Verse 20 says there is “BUT ONE BODY.” Well, what IS that “ONE BODY”? Colossians 1:18 and 24 teach us it is “THE CHURCH.” Read both verses closely and see. If there is BUT ONE BODY, and that ONE BODY is the CHURCH, then how many CHURCHES? If Christ authorized BUT ONE BODY (i.e., CHURCH) then who authorized all these MANY DIFFERING DENOMINATIONAL “BODIES”? SOMEONE is responsible—BUT DON’T BLAME CHRIST!!!

III. To be IN CHRIST, IN HIS BODY, IN HIS CHURCH and IN HIS KINGDOM is all one and the same thing. Study the following Scriptures carefully, according to the chart:



EXPLANATION: Surely there can be no greater source of CONFUSION than to try to MAKE DISTINCTIONS WHERE THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE. Many seemingly honest religious teachers try to distinguish between being “IN CHRIST” and being IN HIS CHURCH. They say “salvation is IN CHRIST,” NOT in His CHURCH. From the Scriptures charted we see how ridiculous such teaching is. Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 show we are “baptized into Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12 says we are “baptized into” ONE BODY or “set” in the body. So the same thing that puts us INTO CHRIST likewise puts us INTO HIS BODY. But His “BODY” is the “CHURCH” (Colossians 1:18, 24; Ephesians 1:22-23). But what holds true for the BODY (“baptized into”...“set...in”), the CHURCH (“added to”—Acts 2:47), also is true for Christ’s “KINGDOM.” John 3:5 shows the way into the kingdom leads through being “born of WATER and of the SPIRIT.” Most teachers nowadays teach we must be born “of the SPIRIT,” but they leave out the WATER. Jesus did not say “of the SPIRIT,” (ONLY), but “born of WATER and of the SPIRIT.” Since the ONLY WATER connected with the Christian Scriptures is the WATER OF BAPTISM, this HAS to mean we must not only have a birth of the Spirit, but we must be BAPTIZED ALSO to ENTER THE KINGDOM. The same chapter of Colossians—Chapter 1—which identifies the “BODY” as the “CHURCH” (verses 18, 24) also says of Christians that God “hath TRANSLATED us into the KINGDOM of His dear Son” (verse 13). Thus the process (baptism) which puts us “INTO CHRIST,” not only “sets” us in His BODY and “adds” us to His CHURCH but also “TRANSLATES” us into His KINGDOM. Since it is GOD who does the SETTING IN, the ADDING TO, and the TRANSLATING INTO the body, church or kingdom upon our being BAPTIZED, it is clearly seen that the POWER OF BAPTISM rests NOT IN ITSELF but GOD HIMSELF, who COMMANDED it FOR THESE REASONS. Also, inasmuch as Ephesians 4:5 teaches there is “ONE baptism,” it follows that one cannot be baptized into CHRIST without also being baptized into His BODY. His body is His church; thus to be baptized into CHRIST is to be baptized into His CHURCH. But to get into the KINGDOM requires birth of WATER and Spirit, so when baptized INTO CHRIST, INTO HIS BODY, INTO HIS CHURCH, it follows we LIKEWISE are thus “BORN” INTO HIS KINGDOM. Thus, to be IN CHRIST, IN HIS BODY, IN HIS CHURCH and IN HIS KINGDOM is all equal to ONE and THE SAME thing.

IV. JESUS CHRIST HAS ONE CHURCH ONLY (not “YOUR” church or “MY” church, but HIS!) Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-15.

- A. Jesus Christ—
1. Promised to **build** but ONE (Matthew 16:18).
 2. **Gave Himself** for ONE (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25).
 3. **Adds** the SAVED to ONE (Acts 2:47).
 4. Is the **savior** of ONE (Ephesians 5:23).
 5. Is the **head** of ONE (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23).
 6. **Sanctified** ONE (Ephesians 5:26).
 7. **Cleansed** ONE (Ephesians 5:26).
 8. **Presented** ONE to Himself (Ephesians 5:27).
 9. **Nourishes** and **cherishes** ONE (Ephesians 5:19).

NOTE: Just how it is possible for the New Testament to teach ONE CHURCH so clearly and unmistakably, and yet for many of those claiming to be Christ’s disciples to BELIEVE IN and CONTEND for MANY CHURCHES is almost impossible to understand or explain. They CLAIM to be HIS churches; yet HE claims but ONE! They differ among themselves—and they thank God for it. Yet GOD commanded that “ye all speak the SAME THING, and *that* there be NO DIVISIONS among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the SAME MIND and in the SAME JUDGMENT” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

As long as Christians think in terms of “your” church and “my” church, forgetting that THE CHURCH belongs to CHRIST, we shall continue this foolish denominationalism that keeps us apart, disunited as brothers and sisters in ONE BODY. If Jesus promised to build but ONE, gave Himself for ONE, adds the saved to ONE, is the savior of ONE, is the head of ONE, sanctified and cleansed ONE, presented ONE to himself, and nourishes and cherishes ONE CHURCH, then we who claim to be His disciples should both abandon and abolish all man-made churches not authorized in the New Testament and get into the ONE and ONLY church belonging to HIM.

V. If Jesus has ONLY ONE CHURCH, then WHICH ONE is it?

- A. WORLD-WIDE it is called variously as follows:
1. “general assembly”—Hebrews 12:23
 2. “the body”—Ephesians 1:23
 3. “church”—Matthew 16:18
 4. “church of God”—Acts 20:28
 5. “church of the living God”—1 Timothy 3:15
 6. “church of the firstborn”—Hebrews 12:23
 7. “the whole family in heaven and earth”—Ephesians 3:15
 8. “kingdom”—Colossians 1:13—and many other things like these.
- B. In the LOCAL or CONGREGATIONAL sense, individual congregations are styled by the New Testament as follows:
1. “assembly”—James 2:2
 2. “church” (as “the church which is at Cenchrea”)—Romans 16:1
 3. “churches” (i.e., congregations)—Acts 9:31
 4. “churches of God”—1 Corinthians 11:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:4
 5. “churches of Christ”—Romans 16:16
 6. “churches of the saints”—1 Corinthians 14:33
 7. “flock”—Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3; etc.
- C. Individual members, whether locally or world-wide, called—
1. “brethren”—Acts 6:3
 2. “the called”—Romans 1:6

3. “the elect”—Romans 8:33
4. “believers”—Acts 5:14; 1 Timothy 4:12
5. “children of God”—Romans 8:16
6. “partakers”—Hebrews 3:14
7. “disciples”—Acts 6:1
8. “Christians”—Acts 11:26—and scores of other terms.

NOTE: The church in the New Testament is referred to in its LOCAL sense or its WORLD-WIDE sense, but NEVER in some “DENOMINATIONAL” sense. Its MEMBERS are referred to by SCORES of terms, but NOT ONCE by a single one of the DENOMINATIONAL designations so prevalent all about us. Why? Because DENOMINATIONS are NOT OF GOD but rather OF MAN. Thus they call themselves and their members and congregations by MAN-MADE names, in harmony with their MAN-MADE creeds and MAN-MADE status. The church we read about in the New Testament is LARGER THAN ANY DENOMINATION in its WORLD-WIDE sense, yet SMALLER THAN ANY DENOMINATION in its LOCAL, CONGREGATIONAL sense. Thus the church that Jesus built does not fit DENOMINATIONALISM in ANY sense. DENOMINATIONS ARE NOT THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. NEITHER IS THERE ANY CONNECTION OR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM AND IT.

VI. How does one become a member of the church you read about in the New Testament?

ANSWER: From all our studies foregoing, we are now to conclude as follows: 1) God “calls” men by having the “gospel” preached unto them. 2) Men, in turn, can either HEED God’s call by obeying the gospel or else they can REJECT IT. 3) Those who respond to God’s call do so by HEARING the gospel, BELIEVING in Christ, REPENTING of sins, CONFESSING their faith and BEING BAPTIZED. 4) When they thus “obey from the heart” this form of doctrine which is “delivered” in the New Testament, they are “SAVED” from the consequences of their PAST SINS. 5) The “SAVED” are “ADDED” by the LORD to the CHURCH... That is how one becomes a member of the church you read about in the New Testament. It is NOT the way one becomes a member of any denomination under the sun. But, then, no single denomination (nor any combination of denominations) makes up the church in the New Testament. All denominations are completely separate and apart from that church.

NOTE: One often hears the word “church” used in reference to the PHYSICAL BUILDING in which church assemblies are held. As with most other DENOMINATIONAL things, THIS MANNER OF SPEAKING ALSO IS CONTRARY TO THE ORACLES OF GOD (read 1 Peter 4:11). The word “church,” as used in the New Testament, NEVER OCCURS IN THIS SENSE. Both LOCALLY as well as WORLD-WIDE the word “church” ALWAYS refers to the PEOPLE who make up the BODY OF CHRIST, NEVER to the PHYSICAL BUILDING in which they meet. A few Scriptures will illustrate this as follows:

- 1) “Saved” are added to the CHURCH—Acts 2:47—PEOPLE are saved.
- 2) “Fear” came on the CHURCH—Acts 5:11—PEOPLE experience fear.
- 3) “Persecution” against the CHURCH—Acts 8:11—PEOPLE (not buildings) suffer persecution.

So it goes all the way through the New Testament. CHRISTIANS (PEOPLE) make up THE CHURCH. Locally, the people (CHRISTIANS) may meet in a building. Thus the CHURCH meets IN the building. The building is NOT THE CHURCH but merely where the church MEETS.