

The Church (Part One)

Note: This lesson was developed around the diagram sheet, evaluation sheet, and Lesson six (Part 2) Using AI and Voiced by AI. We are seeking a surviving Lesson 5 Tape.

Introduction

Hello once again friends. It's good to be with you again for Lesson 5. We've simply entitled this lesson The Church. You'll remember that in our last study we saw how a person responds to God's love — hearing, believing, repenting, confessing Jesus as Lord, and being baptized into Christ. We also saw that the moment a person is baptized into Christ he is added by the Lord to the number of the saved.

That number is what the New Testament calls the church. So today we're going to look carefully at what the Bible actually says about the church. Our lesson page organizes everything around eight key headings. You'll see them listed clearly at the top of the sheet. Let's walk through them together. Keep your Bibles open and follow along with me.

The Church (The Builder)

Let's begin by looking at the Builder of the church. The verse we're going to read is in Matthew chapter 16, verse 18. If you don't know where Matthew is, it's the first book of the New Testament, right after the Old Testament ends, and just before the book of Mark. Are you there? Good, let's continue reading then. "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

This comes right after Peter's confession in verses 13 to 18. Jesus asks the disciples who people say He is. Peter answers, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replies that this truth came from the Father in heaven. Then He says, "You are Peter" — the Greek word is petros, a stone — "and on this rock" — the greek word is petra, bedrock — "I will build my church." You'll notice on the lower left of the sheet the three key points: Peter's confession. Jesus identifies it as coming from God.

The church is built on the solid rock of the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and ultimately on Christ himself. Jesus is both the builder and the foundation. The church belongs to him and not even the gates of Hades can prevail against it.

The Church (Time/Place)

Next, let's look at the beginning of the church — both the time and the place. First, the time: "In the last days..." — the Day of Pentecost. The prophecy we're going to read is in Isaiah chapter 2, verses 2 and 3. If you don't know where Isaiah is, it's in the Old Testament, after the book of Song of Solomon, and right before the book of Jeremiah. Are you there? Good, let's continue reading then.

“In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains... The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. You’ll find Acts immediately after the four Gospels. The Holy Spirit came with power — that’s Acts 2:1-4 — Peter preached the first gospel message, and he quoted Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” — you can find that in Acts 2:16-17.

About three thousand people were baptized and added that day — Acts 2:41 — and the Lord kept adding daily those who were being saved — Acts 2:47. Now the place: “...out of Zion” — Jerusalem. Exactly as Isaiah foretold, and as Jesus had instructed the apostles to wait in Jerusalem — that’s Acts 1:4 and 8. The church began in Jerusalem on Pentecost, just as prophesied.

The Church (Owner/Head)

Let’s now take a look at who the Owner and Head of the church is. First, the Owner. Jesus calls it “My church” — Matthew 16:18. The verse we’re going to read is in Acts chapter 20, verse 28. If you don’t know where Acts is, it’s right after the four Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — and just before the book of Romans. Are you there? Good, let’s continue reading then. “Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

It is Jesus’ body — “the church, which is his body” — that’s Ephesians 1:22-23 and First Corinthians 12:27. Now the Head. Jesus has all authority — Matthew 28:18. God “appointed him to be head over everything for the church” — Ephesians 1:22-23. The next verse we’re going to look at is in Colossians chapter 1, verse 18.

If you don’t know where Colossians is, it’s in the New Testament, after the book of Philippians, and right before First Thessalonians. Are you there? Good, let’s continue reading then. “And he is the head of the body, the church... so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” Jesus purchased the church with His blood. He is its owner and its head. He has first place in all things.

The Church (Designations)

Next, let’s consider the designations — what the Bible actually calls the church and its members. First, the individual. We are called disciples, Christians — that’s Acts 11:26 — saints, and children of God — Galatians 3:26 and First Corinthians 1:2. Now the group.

The Bible uses many beautiful names: The church of God / of Christ, The body of Christ — First Corinthians 12:27, The kingdom of Christ, The house of God — First Timothy 3:15 No single man-made name captures it all. These designations describe our relationship to Christ and to one another. We are family, a body, a kingdom, and God’s household.

The Church (Organization)

Let's move on now to the organization of the church. Christ is the head — Ephesians 1:22-23. Locally, the New Testament shows simple, Spirit-led organization: • Philippians 1:1 — letters addressed “together with the overseers and deacons.” Acts 14:23 — Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders in every church.” • Acts 20:17 and 28 — Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian church and told them the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, or shepherds and pastors, to care for the flock.

Each congregation is autonomous — self-governing under Christ — with qualified elders, or overseers, and deacons serving. There is no earthly headquarters or central hierarchy beyond Christ and His word in the New Testament pattern. The organization is simple, relational, and focused on shepherding God's people.

The Church (Worship)

Now let's talk about how the church worships. The verse we're going to read is in John chapter 4, verse 24. If you don't know where John is, it's the fourth Gospel, right after Luke, and just before the book of Acts. Are you there? Good, let's continue reading then. “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” The early church met on the first day of the week — that's Acts 20:7 — to break bread — the Lord's Supper.

Jesus Himself instituted it. The passage we're going to read is in First Corinthians chapter 11, verses 23 through 26. If you don't know where First Corinthians is, it's in the New Testament, after the book of Romans, and right before Second Corinthians. Are you there? Good, let's continue reading then.

“This is my body... This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this in remembrance of me.” They also sang and prayed with both spirit and understanding — First Corinthians 14:15 — taught the word, and gave generously. Worship is not about ritual or entertainment. It is heartfelt, Spirit-led, and grounded in truth — centered on remembering Jesus' death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper, in particular, keeps the cross at the center every first day of the week.

The Church (Work)

Let's now consider the work of the church. The verse we're going to read is in First Timothy chapter 3, verse 15. If you don't know where First Timothy is, it's in the New Testament, after Second Thessalonians, and right before Second Timothy. Are you there? Good, let's continue reading then. “The church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” We uphold, proclaim, and defend the gospel.

James chapter 1, verse 27 adds: If you don't know where James is, it's near the end of the New Testament, after the book of Hebrews, and right before First Peter. Are you there? Good, let's continue reading then. “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the

world.” The church’s work is to stand for truth and to show practical love — caring for the vulnerable while living holy lives. It is both doctrinal and compassionate.

The Church (Membership)

Finally, let’s look at membership — how do we become part of the church? On the Day of Pentecost, Peter answered that very question. The verse we’re going to read is in Acts chapter 2, verse 38. If you don’t know where Acts is, it’s right after the four Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — and just before the book of Romans. Are you there? Good, let’s continue reading then. “Repent and be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the holy spirit.”

Those who received his word were baptized, and about three thousand souls were added that day — Acts 2:41. Verse 47 tells us the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. You’ll notice on the sheet the other references: Acts 20:28 — the church purchased with His blood; Ephesians 5:23 and 25 — Christ is the Savior of the body and gave Himself up for her. When a person is saved, he is added by the Lord to the church. To be in Christ is to be in His body.

We’ve covered a good deal of ground today. The church is not a building or a man-made organization. It is the people Jesus is building, the people He purchased with His own blood, the people He adds to every time someone responds in faith and is baptized. There’s still more we need to see about the church — especially about the individual’s place in it, the special works God has given, and how the early Christians lived and served together.

That will be the subject of our next lesson. For now, take the evaluation sheet and follow the usual procedure. Look back over the diagram and the passages we’ve read. When you’re ready, fill in the answers. I commend you for the careful attention you’ve given this study. I look forward to being with you for Lesson 6. Best wishes to you in your continuing study.