

The Church of Christ

A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study

by Jeff S. Smith



Introduction

The church of Christ is so different from the various denominations and religious bodies of the world that many are left in confusion as to the reasons her members take their peculiar stands. Reading the Bible should alleviate much of this confusion, though. This series of lessons is intended to train the Christian to answer effectively questions regarding his beliefs and practices.

Syllabus

1. The Founding of the Church of Christ	1
2. Recognition of Bible Authority	3
3. Udenominational Nature of the Church of Christ	5
4. Organization of the Church of Christ	7
5. Work of the Church of Christ	9
6. Concerning Salvation	11
7. Worship by the Church of Christ.....	13
8. Place of Old Testament.....	15
9. Attitudes Toward Holy Spirit	17
10. Church Discipline	19
11. Past Controversies	21
12. Current Controversies.....	23
13. Review.....	25

Copyright

- This Title is Copyright © 2000, Jeff S. Smith, All Rights Reserved
- All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Lesson 1: *Founding of the Church of Christ*

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Toward the end of Christ’s earthly ministry, he made this prediction that he would build the church of Christ. It had not yet been established when he spoke thus, but was certain to be built nonetheless.

That the Lord founded his church cannot be denied. As the president’s bride is the wife of Bush, so the bride of Jesus is the church of Christ. He is her founder and there is no other.

Additionally, each denomination can trace its roots to a point sometime during the Reformation, when Luther’s spiritual descendants were attempting to correct the failures of the Roman Catholic Church. The church that Jesus promised to build, however, was constructed on the day of Pentecost when Peter made converts out of Christ’s crucifiers. On that day 3000 souls were immersed in water for the remission of sins and as the gospel was preached from then on, “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Any church not established until the eighteenth or nineteenth century is not an authentic church belonging to Jesus Christ, for it was established far too late to qualify. If any denomination cares to argue that it is merely a sect of the original, let its representatives strip away its sectarian name and be like the congregations of the Bible.

In Matthew 16:16-18, Jesus promises to build his church and to give the keys of the kingdom to the apostles. Kingdom prophecies existed from the Old Testament and indicated that the Messiah’s mission was to establish the unbreakable kingdom of God. Many Jews assumed this would mean a renewed earthly kingdom and rejected Christ when it became apparent he was not working toward such a thing. The nature of the kingdom was largely misunderstood and modern Premillennialism continues the error, believing that the kingdom of God is not yet in existence for Jesus failed this part of his objective.

Two important passages dispute this idea and suggest that the church is the kingdom. Mark 9:1 is a prophecy of Christ that the kingdom would come soon and can only be negated if the Lord is a false prophet. Colossians 1:13 argues that living Christians were instantly conveyed into the kingdom at conversion. Christ’s prayer that God’s kingdom would come has been answered affirmatively. Additionally, Acts 2:29-33 makes it clear that the resurrection of Christ placed him upon the throne of David over this kingdom.

1. Who is the founder of Christian Science? Who is the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints? Who is the founder of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society? Who is the founder of the church of Christ?

2. Why is Alexander Campbell not identified as the founder of the church of Christ?

3. What event marked the foundation of the church of Christ?

4. How did Christ connect the church and the kingdom in Matthew 16:16-18?

5. What prediction was made in Mark 9:1? Did the church come with power (Luke 24:49, Acts 2:1-13)?

6. The coronation of the Messiah to David's throne is an important part of kingdom prophecy. How do we know Jesus ascended that throne (Acts 2:29-33)?

7. When would the kingdom of God come? Was the church established in this era?

Lesson 2: *Recognition of Bible Authority*

The authority of God in men's lives has always been an important principle, but one just as often neglected or ignored. Bible authority for the church and its individual members is established on the pages of the New Testament, but important lessons can be gleaned from the Old Testament, too.

A classic lesson is learned from God's command to Noah to build the ark. The Lord specified that his servant should use gopher wood, without explicitly prohibiting other types of wood. Noah, recognizing the authority and wisdom of the Lord, used gopher wood and "did according to all that God commanded him" (Genesis 6:22). God does not have to condemn things explicitly for when he has explicitly commanded one thing, all else is necessarily excluded.

Good intentions do not negate the power of God's authority either. In 2 Samuel 6, Uzzah reached out his hand to catch a toppling ark of the covenant and was struck dead on the spot for his well-intentioned transgression.

Neither can personal preference ascend God's authority. In Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu offered God worship in a way that he had not specified, but which evidently appealed to these priests. Their incense was called "perverse" because God "had not commanded them."

The primary authority for worship and life in the Old Testament was the law of Moses, delivered at Sinai in the form of the ten commandments and many subsequent regulations.

Jesus asserted his privilege to total authority over his disciples just before his ascension into heaven: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). James concurred that there was "one lawgiver for the church" (4:12). And so we also heed the decree of Peter that "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (First Peter 4:11).

Christians must recognize the authority of the written word revealed in the New Testament as an infallible expression of God's will. Many denominations resort to creeds, which originated as attempts to express what certain groups interpreted the New Testament to mean. After one or two centuries however, most of these artificial creeds have mutated further and further away from the Bible. Many, for instance, are condoning homosexuality and unscriptural marriages, things clearly condemned in the New Testament (First Corinthians 6, Matthew 19). Catholicism openly admits that it does not consider the Bible as a sole authority and relies instead on oral tradition handed down by her popes. Catholicism often finds itself contradicting the Bible (Matthew 23).

1. What principle can be gleaned from Noah's obedience to God's command to build the ark with gopher wood? How might this principle affect the way we view God's command to sing in Ephesians 5:19?

2. What are some examples of things done in the name of religion that are defended against questions of authority as being good works, too good to neglect? How does the case of Uzzah affect this principle?

3. What things are done in the name of religion that can only be traced to personal preference, rather than scriptural mandate? What does the case of Nadab and Abihu add to this concept?

4. Summarize what each of the following passages contributes to an understanding of Bible authority:

- Matthew 28:18:
- Matthew 15:7-9:
- James 4:12:
- First Peter 4:11:
- Colossians 3:17:

5. Why are denominational creeds unnecessary? What does Catholicism claim as an additional authority to the Bible?

6. Why is it improper to appeal to the Old Testament to use instrumental music, animal sacrifice and the burning of incense (Galatians 5:3, James 2:10)?

Lesson 3: *Undenominational Nature of the Church*

In the first century, not a single denomination existed among Christians anywhere. There existed only the church that Jesus built, with her individual members assembled in local congregations. Denominationalism began to rise during the Protestant Reformation and today there are hundreds of major sects. Because this division is not authorized in the New Testament, it is not a proper state for Christ's church. The church of Christ today endeavors to foster unity under no creed but the Bible and no name but Christ's. The church of Christ does not have a denominational hierarchy and structure; it is not a denomination.

Some of the sectarian persuasion will point to John 15:1-8 to provide prophecy of the division of the church Jesus was building. The Lord refers to himself as the vine and his apostles as the branches who bear him fruit. The sectarian interprets this to mean that the vine is the universal church and the branches are all the denominations. Of course, that does not fit the context in any possible way. To contend that this passage authorizes sectarianism, one must accept the following premises as well:

First, since Christ was speaking to the apostles, you have to believe that the twelve would leave Jesus and begin teaching different doctrines as modern denominations do (Galatians 2:6-10).

Second, you must believe that Christ was kidding when he said that abiding in him was a condition of faithfulness, for one denomination today will contend that the doctrines of all others contain at least some unscriptural element (John 15:9-11).

Third, you must accept the proposition that the bitter divisions that exist between many denominations actually glorify God.

Finally, you must accept that Christ's prayer for unity (John 17:17-21) was wishing the impossible.

If denominationalism were authorized and accepted by God, the apostle Paul would have had the perfect opportunity to inaugurate it when the Corinthian church began fracturing. He began his first letter to them instead by upbraiding them for dividing under the banners of various unwilling preachers. Here was the opportunity to sanction the Pauline convention, the Petrine convention and the Apollonian convention. They were dividing as believers divide today into the Baptist convention, the Lutheran denomination or the Presbyterian society. Paul told them this attitude was carnal and that they should "all speak the same thing, and that there should be no divisions among you" (1:10).

1. In what era did denominationalism take hold? Was it before or after the advent of the Roman Catholic church? Should members of the church of Christ be considered as part of a denomination?

2. Whom does Jesus identify as the vine in John 15:1-8? Whom does he identify as the branches?

3. The seeds of denominationalism were present in first century Corinth and the apostle Paul did what he could to dig them up (First Corinthians 1:10-13). On what basis were they dividing? What does Paul advise instead of sectarianism?

4. Is it possible to be saved from your sins without benefit of a denomination or eventual membership in one? If not, how could the early saints have been saved then? If so, why do we need denominations at all?

5. What would be thought of a woman who opted not to be called after her husband but his best man instead? Is this not the case with the Baptist church, since the church is to be the bride of Christ (John 3:25-30)?

6. How does the Holy Spirit refer to the church in these Scriptures?

a. Romans 16:16:

c. Ephesians 1:22-23:

b. First Corinthians 1:2:

d. First Timothy 3:15-16:

7. Give the designation and its meaning by which Christ's followers were called in these scriptures.

a. Acts 11:26:

d. Acts 16:1:

b. Acts 26:28:

e. Colossians 1:2:

c. Philippians 4:21:

f. First Peter 4:16:

Lesson 4: *Organization of The Church*

The Catholic church is famous for its worldwide hierarchy which peaks in the office of “Pope,” a seat fully unknown to Peter or any of the other apostles who walked with Jesus. Protestantism has generally erected a similar type of organization in which local congregations forfeit their scriptural autonomy to leaders with power over regions or the whole. Any church that follows the New Testament, however, will respect the pattern for organization and governing found in God’s will.

When there were no denominations during the writing of the New Testament, every church was of Christ and was autonomous (self-ruling) from every other local congregation. In Catholicism today, local groups are part of a regional diocese which answers ultimately to one man with total authority over every member, the Pope. Protestant denominations also contribute funds and authority to regional and universal powers that direct the local groups from afar.

There were numerous congregations in the New Testament but it is impossible to identify anything approaching the forfeiture of local congregational autonomy that we witness today. A local church chooses its own elders, deacons and preachers. It disciplines its own members and chooses how to expend its treasury according to Bible authority and expediency. No outside board or convention has any right to mandate what these decisions should be.

“And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12). The office of apostle was filled by a finite number of men on the pages of the New Testament and individual seats were not filled once that apostle died (Acts 12:2), save for that of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1). Because prophecy involves a miraculous gift and all those have now ceased (First Corinthians 13:8-13), the only prophets in the church of Christ are found in the New Testament and all are deceased.

Evangelists are those who proclaim the gospel and we have numerous examples of them (Barnabas, Philip, Timothy, etc.). They may be itinerant or located in their work and have the right to be supported by those whom they teach (First Corinthians 9:14). He may also choose to labor in secular work to aid in his support, as did Paul who sometimes made tents for a living. Paul carefully lays out the role of the evangelist in writing the young evangelist in 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Evangelists who strayed into false teaching were openly reprov'd or exposed if they refused to make correction (Second Timothy 2:16-18).

1. Who is the head of the church of Christ (Ephesians 1:1:22-23)? Who is the head of the Catholic church?

2. How has Protestantism mimicked the unscriptural organization of the Roman Catholic apostasy?

3. What does “local congregational autonomy” mean?

4. Does the history of the church of Christ include apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:19-20)? Explain.

5. Consider Second Timothy 4:1-5. What are evangelists to preach? What does it mean to be “ready in season and out of season”?

6. Some churches forbid their preachers to do any secular work while others demand it. What is the proper scriptural position?

7. Give the four terms that can be used interchangeably with “pastors”. What is their role, according to First Peter 5:2-3? What does this include?

8. Catholicism appoints one bishop to rule all the churches of a region. Give the scripture that authorizes this plan.

Lesson 5: *Work of the Church of Christ*

It is easy to see that the work of most denominations is infected with the social gospel ideals of serving the felt needs of the whole man, rather than focusing upon the true needs of his spirit. The New Testament epistles and the book of the Acts of the Apostles gives modern man a pattern for the scope and limitations of the church's work, showing us those things that are authorized and those that are human innovations. The work of the church can be summed up in three categories: edification of the saved, evangelism to the lost and benevolence to the needy saint. When the work of the church is discussed, we primarily have in mind the use of the local treasury and assemblies.

The apostles constantly encouraged Christians to strive after personal growth and the local congregation was given a role in that objective. The Hebrew writer marked those who forsook the assembling of the saints, because such an attitude showed apathy toward the souls of one's brethren (Hebrews 10:24-25). The assembling of the saints is to exhort one another and stir up love and good works.

In addition, the local church is to be overseen by elders, who take the special responsibility of shepherding that flock and watching out for its souls (Acts 20:28-31, Hebrews 13:7-17). They are to ensure that the flock among them is well fed with the milk and meat of God's word (Titus 2:1-8) through competent and scriptural preaching and teaching. The local church may expend funds to meet this objective through supporting preaching (First Corinthians 9:14, First Timothy 5:17-18), purchasing teaching materials and funding a meeting place.

The early church at Philippi provides an example of supporting men who evangelize the lost in that they supported Paul on his journeys (Phil. 4:15-16). He explained this to the Corinthians, making it plain that local churches were authorized and obligated to support such evangelistic efforts (Second Corinthians 11:8-9). An evangelist is needed wherever there are lost souls (Romans 10:14-15) and the church may support those men who make this their life's work.

It is important to note that the support of preaching, if perverted, can provide the seeds of denominationalism, or at least digression from scriptural authority. Funds were never transferred from one church to another to support evangelism. The concept of a missionary society, a separate organization supported by any number of churches to do what should have been the work of the church, is foreign to God's word. The modern concept of the sponsoring church, in which one church receives contributions from a number of churches, to evangelize on a greater scale is equally unauthorized.

1. How are the elders of a local church to provide for the edification of the flock among them?

2. How does assembling help in edification (Hebrews 10:24-25, Colossians 3:16-17)?

3. What authority does a local church have to provide a meeting place?

4. What authority does the church have to pay someone to preach?

5. What does it mean that Paul robbed other churches in Second Corinthians 11:8-9?

6. How did he sum up the preacher's importance in Romans 10:14-15?

7. What is a missionary society? What is a sponsoring church? Are they scriptural methods? Why?

8. In what ways is a congregation limited in its work of benevolence?

Lesson 6: *Concerning Salvation*

Most of Protestantism is centered on the ideals of Calvinism, the theology of John Calvin, a Presbyterian who formulated the concept of salvation by faith alone. His doctrine, like the reformation effort of contemporary Martin Luther, was an extreme reaction to the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church, in which salvation is attained through meritorious works. Calvinism went to the opposite extreme and said that man had no responsibility in his salvation. Catholicism and Calvinism are opposite swings of the same pendulum. Truly man cannot merit his own salvation by himself, but he does have some responsibility in the matter.

Many passages affirm the idea that salvation is by faith (Ephesians 2:8-10) and yet just as many show that it is not by faith *alone* (James 2:14-24). The only passage in the Bible that contains Calvin's phrase, "faith only" is James 2:24: "You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only."

Christ's own teaching makes it clear that obedience to God's terms and will are vital to one's salvation. Such obedience is a part of God's grace and does not negate it. Listen to Jesus: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). It is more than belief; it is also obedience. To those who claimed belief but proved otherwise in disobedience, he said, "But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

Three times the Holy Spirit ties obeying the gospel to salvation (Romans 10:16, Second Thessalonians 1:8, First Peter 4:17). God has done his part in sending his son to die on the cross; it remains for man to work out his own salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Salvation is by faith, but not by faith alone.

The roots of salvation exist in the preaching and hearing of the gospel. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:14, 17).

Once the gospel has been heard, every auditor must decide whether or not he believes the message, for faith comes from hearing God's word. For this reason, infants and the mentally incompetent are not proper subjects for obedience to the gospel; they are unable to believe anything. "But without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Believing the gospel message means believing that Jesus is the son of God and that he is the savior of souls.

One who has this belief should be willing to confess it before others. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

1. What is the source of Calvinism (its originator and logic)?

2. Is salvation by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9)? Is salvation by faith only?

3. What does it mean for a sinner to be justified? Could one be justified and sent to hell anyway?

4. Calvinism pushes something called the sinner's prayer to obtain salvation. Is calling Jesus "Lord" sufficient for obtaining salvation?

5. What do the following passages say about obedience to the gospel?
 - Romans 10:15-17:

 - Second Thessalonians 1:8:

 - First Peter 4:17:

6. From whence does faith come (Romans 1:16, 10:17)?

8. Is confession necessary to salvation (Romans 10:9)?

9. What do the following passages say about the necessity of baptism?
 - Mark 16:15-16:
 - Romans 6:3-4:
 - Acts 22:16:
 - First Peter 3:20-21:

12. How can a Christian be lost (Galatians 5:4)?

Lesson 7: *Worship by the Church of Christ*

Religious worship in the early twenty-first century reflects the whims and desire of the masses, especially appealing to youth. There is very little attention to the worship pattern of the New Testament; instead the intent is to please man rather than God with collective worship. Hence, we see dramatic presentations instead of gospel preaching, raps and orchestral performances instead of congregational a Capella singing, and personal testimonials given in the place of objective proofs. Christ demanded that worship be according to spirit and truth. Many have the former, the emotion, without even seeking the latter, scriptural authority.

One will find that sound churches of Christ use no mechanical instruments of music in their worship. Although stringed instruments were used in the Old Testament, with that law taken out of the way (Ephesians 2:14-15), the church looks to the New Testament for its pattern of worship. The two main commands regarding musical worship are found in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. In both places the command is simply “to sing.” There is no indication that we are also to play. Furthermore, the only instrument mentioned in relation to musical worship is the heart. Other passages dealing with musical worship include Hebrews 13:15 (“the fruit of the lips”). Truly, the words of praise reach God’s ears. The plucking and poundings of mechanical instruments appeal only to men.

The tithe is another Old Testament command not found in the New Testament. The church has a mission which requires funding and the only example for raising money is the free will offering of the members. The command for every individual to lay by in store on the first day of the week is found in First Corinthians 16:1-2. “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (Second Corinthians 9:7).

The Lord’s supper consists of unleavened bread and the juice of the fruit of the vine. It is not a meal intended for nutrition, but memorial. Christ inaugurated the custom on the night he was betrayed and the Holy Spirit led the early church to adopt it as a weekly observance of Christ’s death (Acts 20:7). Paul commented on and regulated the practice in First Corinthians 11:23-32. One is to eat worthily by examining himself and focusing upon the body and blood of the savior.

The assembly is implicitly commanded in Hebrews 10:24-25; examples are given in Acts 20, First Corinthians 5, 11 and 14. It is a time for edification and teaching. The gospel should be preached by a competent teacher who speaks as the oracles of God (First Peter 4:11) and does not attempt to tickle itching ears or appeal to human wisdom for authority (Second Timothy 4:1-5).

1. How do we know that the church is supposed to assemble for worship?

2. What makes worship to be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24)?

3. How would modern forms of worship like dramas, puppet shows and performances fit into Christ’s condemnation of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:3-9?

4. What is the New Testament pattern for musical worship?

5. Why is the Old Testament not an authority for instrumental music in worship?

6. What pattern for giving is in place, now that the tithe has been removed?

7. While God appreciates a cheerful giver, what two attitudes does he disdain?

8. What do the two elements of the Lord’s supper represent? When was this commemoration instituted?

9. What should the partaker be careful to observe during the communion?

Lesson 8: *Place of the Old Testament*

The Old Testament is a book of history, law, poetry, wisdom and prophecy. Each of these categories lends instruction to the Christian today and yet it must be remembered that the law under which we live is found exclusively on the pages of the New Testament. What Moses said about divorce and remarriage and the Sabbath are not binding upon those who exist under the law of Christ. David's dance and stringed instruments in worship are not authoritative examples for worship today. The Old Testament has a place in our discipline today, but not as a binding code.

Aside from the tenets of the law of Moses which bound nearly every facet of Hebrew life, the Old Testament is rife with historical lessons, praise in the form of the psalms and the song of Solomon, wisdom from the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and a trove of faith-building prophecies.

One can and should appeal to the historical records of the Old Testament, not as authority for this or a prohibition of that, but as an example of what becomes of those who heed or disregard God's will generally. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). What can we learn from the serpent's deception of Eve in the garden? What can be learned from Joseph in Egypt? What can be learned from King Josiah's reforms? The lessons are all there and truly those who do not know their history—the history of God's relations with man—are doomed to repeat the same mistakes of their patriarchs.

The apostle Paul calls on his brethren to recall the exodus pilgrims of Israel who "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them, God was not well pleased" (First Corinthians 10:4-5). He goes on to explain the precise reasons for God's displeasure and to illustrate how Christians of that, and any age, can similarly fall by making friendships with the world (cf. James 4:4). "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall." (First Corinthians 10:11-12).

Consider also the poetry of the psalms, which aids us in expressing our emotions in various situations. We learn how David and other eloquent men poured out their hearts to an attentive God.

The wisdom found in the proverbs and Ecclesiastes is timeless and touches our lives at every turn. The proverbs are not mere questions of law, but of wisdom.

1. How does Jesus distinguish between Moses's law and his in Matthew 19:7-9?

2. Why was the Old Testament preserved for us, who are not Hebrews?

3. What can we learn from the serpent's deception of Eve in Eden (Genesis 3:1-7)?

4. Why was God not pleased with the exodus pilgrims (First Corinthians 10:1-12)?

5. Consider Psalm 23. What is the benefit of the psalms in general?

6. Since the law of Moses has been taken out of effect, does this mean that the wisdom of the proverbs no longer applies or is useful?

7. What is the value of the prophecies (Second Peter 1:21)?

8. How could Christ be a priest under the law of Moses? Since he is recognized as a priest, what does this prove?

9. Why is it not permissible to appeal to the Old Testament for authority for instrumental music in worship, while rejecting its commands to sacrifice animals and keep the Sabbath?

Lesson 9: *Attitudes Toward Holy Spirit*

Most would agree that the Holy Spirit is the most mysterious of the three persons of the Godhead. We see his presence in the Old Testament but are more deeply introduced to him through Christ's discussion with the apostles and his subsequent work among them. Calvinism holds that the Holy Spirit must directly influence the heart of a person, apart from the Bible, to convince him to accept Christ. Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit still works supernaturally through the inspiration of modern prophecies and so-called tongues speaking. The Bible shows us what the Spirit's true mission was as the Comforter who came to the apostles just after Christ's ascension and what his task is today.

The distinct person of the Holy Spirit is less evident in the Old Testament, although we see him from the beginning (Genesis 1:2). He is often referred to only as the Spirit or the Spirit of God. Several prophecies also point to his arrival on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-32). We learn then that the Spirit had a hand in creation, in communicating God's will to mankind, and in the birth of the church.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit appears immediately again in the incarnation of Christ as Mary was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18). He is credited with part in the miraculous deeds of Christ and his apostles (Matthew 12:28). The Lord explained to Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, this time of water and the Spirit, in order enter the kingdom of God.

We learn of the Holy Spirit's mission from John's record of Christ's last conversation with the apostles in the night he was betrayed (John 14-16). After telling Thomas and the others that he was preparing to go away, he promises to send them another helper to abide with them for good, "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17), who would call to remembrance all things Christ had taught them on Earth (John 14:26). Fallible human memories would not prevent the twelve from delivering Christ's teaching in purity.

The work of the Spirit would involve conviction, righteousness and judgment (16:7-11). He would add to the things Christ had taught the apostles. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12-13). The description of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth is very appropriate in that it indicates what his central mission will be, delivering God's message to mankind. Clearly, there were doctrines about the kingdom and other matters the apostles were not prepared to handle at this moment, but the Spirit of truth would deliver them when they were.

1. When do we first see the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? In the New?

2. How does the Holy Spirit effect conversions, by direct operation or through the agency of his word (Ephesians 6:17, Romans 10:17)?

3. Jesus uses two other designations to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14-16. What are they?

4. What would be his function, according to John 14:26?

5. What would be his function, according to John 16:12-13?

6. What was the purpose of miraculous abilities of the Holy Spirit, like tongues speaking and healing (Mark 16:20 and Hebrews 2:4)?

7. List and describe the only two recorded occurrences of “Holy Spirit baptism.”

8. When were miracles to cease (First Corinthians 13:8-13)? Have they (Jude 3, First Peter 1:3)?

Lesson 10: *Church Discipline*

There are many practices among religious people regarding discipline within their memberships. Many churches today practice no form of correction, for they have little instruction upon which to base reproof. The Bible calls on the local congregation alone to practice discipline among its members, with the oversight of the bishops. Discipline should be proactive (through teaching and example) and reactive (through reproof, rebuke, withdrawal and marking).

In academic circles, one's major focus of learning is called his discipline. Thus mathematics and science are both collegiate disciplines. We find that Christ called his followers "disciples" because they obeyed his teaching, or discipline. That body of instruction was built upon by inspired men like the apostles and collected in our New Testament. Teaching the scriptures provides a form of proactive discipline that guides and warns.

Paul told Timothy to give heed to "reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (First Timothy 4:13). He was to "convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (Second Timothy 4:2). This is the most common form of discipline that the elders of local congregations provide as they endeavor to feed the flock (First Peter 5:2).

Christians are to be obedient to this doctrine, for it originates with God. They should be "showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Titus 2:10). Every time a preacher or teacher instructs an assembly or class, the local church is being disciplined en masse.

Corrective discipline is more widely recognized. It is intended for those who refuse to heed the instruction and warning that comes from the scriptures and their brethren. Paul wrote, "Warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Sin should not be ignored.

The first mention of this corrective discipline is in the context of handling personal, private offenses between two brethren (Matthew 18:15-17). Christ outlines the process of trying to win back a brother who has offended you, but if the problem finds its way before the entire church and the offender still will not repent, he is to be withdrawn from as if a heathen or publican.

The church at Corinth shows the seriousness of sin within the ranks of the redeemed (First Corinthians 5). They were harboring and tolerating a brother who had his father's wife and Paul demanded that, when they assembled, they should deliver his flesh to Satan that he might be ashamed and won back. Paul's fear was that his sin might influence others to lower their own standards and indulge a weakness as well.

1. All discipline is one of two types. What are the two types? Describe them.
2. What does it take to be in the discipline (teaching) of Christ (John 8:31)?
3. How does a congregation receive discipline when it is assembled or in a class?
4. How is this an example of “feeding the flock” (First Peter 2:2, Hebrews 5:12-14)?
5. What are some practical ways in which Christians adorn the teaching of Christ (Galatians 5:22-25)?
6. How should the following types of people be treated?
 - a. unruly:
 - b. fainthearted:
 - c. weak:
 - d. all:
7. List the steps in dealing with personal, private offenses between two brethren in which the offender does not repent (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
8. Why did Paul demand the sinner be withdrawn from at once (First Corinthians 5:6)?
9. What does it mean when Paul forbids them “to keep company with” such brethren?
10. From which brother should we withdraw (2 Thessalonians 3:6)? By what standard of order (Second Thessalonians 2:15)?

Lesson 11: *Past Controversies*

Although Jesus only built one church and prayed that its members might be unified, and although the Holy Spirit sought unity through his revelation, the church of Christ has periodically faced divisive controversies throughout its history.

The original controversy among members of the body of Christ involved the assimilation of Gentile converts into a group that had formerly been exclusively and proudly Jewish. When God was ready to send the gospel to the Gentiles, he proved his intentions to Peter through means of a vision and a miracle in the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion whom the apostle then baptized (Acts 10). Peter's actions were put under scrutiny by Jewish Christians who assumed that Gentiles would be left out as they had been under the law of Moses. When he explained the course of events to them, however, they accepted it (Acts 11:18). Gentile conversions continued in Antioch and elsewhere. Just then some Christians came down from Judea and taught the Gentile converts that they needed to be circumcised according to the custom of Moses in order to be saved (Acts 15:1), leading to no small dissension and dispute.

The parties involved met with the apostles and determined that God's revelation included the Gentiles without mandating they become Jewish proselytes first. The Judaizers were not satisfied with this decision, however, and continued to trouble their Gentile brethren.

The woman's role in the church was also an early source of confusion. Custom and Mosaic tradition seemed to forbid her from taking a leading role in worship and guidance, but the presence of spiritual gifts in her led to an assertion of privilege. The apostle Paul wrote on a couple of occasions to clear up the controversy.

“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church” (First Corinthians 14:34-35). When the church is assembled, women are not permitted to speak as teachers, prayer leaders or song leaders.

He also wrote to Timothy, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence” (First Timothy 2:11-12). This precludes women preachers and mixed gender adult Bible class teachers.

His qualifications for the offices of elder and deacon also forbid women in that they call for officeholders to be husbands and fathers. No woman can.

1. What were some Jewish Christians attempting to lay upon Gentile brethren?

2. Why was division generally contained to small losses in the first century?

3. How did Paul feel about the Judaizing teachers (Galatians 5:11-12)?

4. What does Titus 2:3-5 say about the role of the woman before God?

5. Why cannot a woman be an elder or deacon?

6. Why cannot a woman take a leading role in the worship of the church?

7. Why is this doctrine about women's roles controversial today?

8. How did the early church drift into centralized authority (First Peter 5:2)?

9. What was wrong with the American Christian Missionary Society of the nineteenth century?

Lesson 12: *Present Controversies*

As the twenty-first century and third millennium dawned, the church of Jesus Christ is again faced with some very divisive, controversial issues among its members. The seeds for the present discussions were sown nearly three decades ago as some began to contend for unity-in-doctrinal-diversity like the denominations. Teachings on divorce and remarriage have provided the clearest test scenario for this philosophy.

The sects of men have long championed the concept of unity-in-doctrinal-diversity, whereby people and churches with contradictory beliefs can say they are in fellowship. The Bible, of course, teaches unity-in-doctrinal-conformity (First Corinthians 1:10) while foreseeing a diversity of opinion regarding those things that are best called authorized liberties.

The major vehicle for espousing unity-in-doctrinal-diversity is Romans 14. The context involves disagreements among Christians over matters of authorized liberty, actions which God treated with indifference regarding participation or abstinence. Paul uses the eating of meats and observation of days and makes plain that one was neither better nor worse in either decision on them. The context is limited by its own language to things that meet the following descriptions:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. done by one weak in faith (1) | 6. good (16) |
| 2. sinful to condemn doer (3) | 7. doer received by God (18) |
| 3. each answer equally right (5-6) | 8. pure (20) |
| 4. done "to the Lord" (6) | 9. won't cause stumbling (21) |
| 5. clean (14) | 10. done in faith (22) |

Some today have advocated placing instrumental music, modern dancing, social drinking, pornography, homosexuality and absolutely everything short of the deity of Christ in this context so that every view is protected and deemed viable. This would seem to forge a unity among all believers, but unfortunately, it is a false unity that actually begets enmity with God (James 4:4). Before something can be placed into Romans 14, it must fit the context, which does not include a diversity of beliefs on any matter that could prove costly to the soul.

Romans fourteen has been summoned to protect beloved friends who teach error on divorce and remarriage, as well as to broaden the door to the church that it might include those who do not want to repent of unscriptural marriages or give up worldly lifestyles that are popular in today's society.

1. Define unity-in-doctrinal-diversity and describe why it is appealing (Jude 3).

2. What did Paul say in First Corinthians 1:10 that precludes this form of diversity?

3. Does the context of Romans 14 extend to matters of authorized liberties? What does that mean? Give examples.

4. Does the context of Romans 14 extend to matters of doctrine like baptism (immersion vs. sprinkling), instrumental music in worship and divorce (for adultery vs. any cause)?

5. Are pornography, abortion and social drinking allowed by the context of Romans 14? Explain.

6. What is the single ground given for a scriptural divorce and a subsequent remarriage (Matthew 5:31-32)?

7. What is true of any man who marries a woman who has been put away? What is true of any woman who puts away her husband for a reason short of adultery and then marries someone else?

8. According to First Corinthians 7:10-11, what should spouses who separate for reasons other than adultery do?

Lesson 13: *Review*

1. Give the founder and approximate date of foundation of the church of Christ (Matthew 16:16, Acts 2).
2. What is the relationship of the church to the kingdom (Matthew 16:18, Daniel 2:36-45, Acts 2:29-33, Colossians 1:13)?
3. What are the three ways in which Bible authority can be established?
4. Should the silence of the scriptures on some matter (e.g. using milk in the Lord's Supper) be considered authority to act as one pleases? How should the silence of the scriptures be treated?
5. What does the New Testament say about division and sects (First Corinthians 1:10)?
6. What should disciples of Christ be called? How should the church of Christ be designated?
7. Define the concept of congregation autonomy as seen in the New Testament.
8. Does the church of Christ have any apostles or prophets?

9. What are other terms for “elder”?

10. What are the three facets of the work of the church?

11. Which of these includes authority for social gospel concepts like church sponsored recreation and meals (First Corinthians 11:34) and benevolent programs for needy outsiders (Acts 11:27-30)?

12. What does the Bible say about “faith only” (James 2:24)?

13. List and summarize some passages on the necessity of immersion.

14. List the five acts of authorized worship when the church is assembled and give authority for each.

15. What proper use of the Old Testament should we make today (Romans 15:4, First Corinthians 10:1-11)?

16. Why should we not use the Old Testament to derive authority or find binding law (Ephesians 2:14-15)?

17. What is the Holy Spirit’s masterpiece (Ephesians 6:17)?

Revised December 29, 2016 8:04 AM

Copyright © 2000
Jeff S. Smith
All Rights Reserved
www.electronicgospel.com

Reproductions may be freely made and used, provided proper credit is given to the author and no charge is ever made in association with this material without the express written consent of the author.