

LESSON 15

GREAT BIBLE THEMES

THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

In this group of lessons we are studying the different terms used in the New Testament that apply to the redeemed people of earth. The Old Testament prophets and Jesus used the term "kingdom" very frequently. This term suggests the relationship that Jesus sustains to his followers. Another term that is used more than 100 times in the New Testament is the term "church". This also suggests the relationship that we should sustain to the Lord, because we are a group of people who have been "called out" of the world to serve him.

Number of other terms are used, each of which suggests something of the relationship we sustain to God and our fellow man. We want to center our study on one of these for today's lesson. The following questions serve as an outline for the study:

...

1. What term is used in **Ephesians 1:22-23, and hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, hich is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (AKJV) Colossians 1:18, And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. (AKJV) and Colossians 1:24, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's**

sake, which is the church: (AKJV) in referring to the church?

2. What does this term suggest about the relationship we should sustain to Christ?
3. What does it suggest about our relationship to one another?
4. Who is responsible for the growth and proper functioning of the church?
5. How did people become members of this group in New Testament time?

LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS

What term is applied to the church in each of the following references: . . .

Ephesians 1:22-23, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the _____ to the _____, _____ the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Colossians 1:18, "and he is the _____, the _____: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the _____."

Colossians 1:24, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh

for _____ sake, which _____
_____."

A very important fact is set forth in each of the first two of these references. This suggests the relationship that we should sustain to Christ. This is given in the statement that Christ is the _____ of the body, or church. Let us stop and think for just a moment upon what this implies.

First of all, it suggests his sovereignty, that is, he has supreme dominion over the church just as the brain of man has complete dominion over every member of his body. This sovereignty is suggested in Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, _____

_____."

Would the fact of his sovereignty as head of the body imply that the church has no other head?

The main theme of the letter written by Paul to the church at Colosse is that Christ is to have the first place in everything. We noticed Colossians 1:18 above. The two verses just preceding this show that Christ had the first place in the creation of the world. "For by him were _____
_____, that are in _____, and that are in the _____, _____ and _____, whether they be _____ or _____, or _____; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things and by him all things consist." Immediately following this is the statement that "he is the head of the body, the church." Thus Christ is first in the creation of the

_____.” Does this suggest something of the vital union that every member of the body has to the head? Is it a personal union that gives life and strength? We have previously thought of Christ as a king ruling his kingdom over which he is the sovereign ruler. Does the relationship suggested by Christ being the sovereign head of the church suggest a much closer relationship than that which may be sustained between a king and his subjects? A king may rule over many whose existence may be unknown to him, but can the members of a body be unknown to the head? Does this help us to appreciate the fact that our relationship to Christ is given in a number of different figures of speech, instead of being considered in the light of a king only? The vital relationship suggested by Christ being the head of the body of which we are members is given in many passages in our New Testament. Notice, however, this vital interest and help portrayed in one of the closing scenes in the life of Paul. This great evangelist and missionary had brought many people to Christ and had established many congregations. In spite of the fact that he had given his entire life for others, he was left alone by his friends in the very hour of his trial before the Roman officials, who probably sentenced him to death shortly afterward. Notice what he wrote about it. 2 Timothy 4:16-18, “At my first answer _____, but all _____: I pray God it may not be laid to their charge.” This verse suggests a rather pathetic picture, doesn’t it? But let us continue: “Notwithstanding _____ and _____; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the _____

_____ , and will
 _____ me unto _____
 _____: to whom be glory for ever and ever." You will
 enjoy re-reading these last verses a number of times. Notice the
 very close and vital relationship he sustained to the head of the
 body of which he was a member. Should our relationship be just
 as vital and strengthened in us today?

So far in our study today we have assumed the truth of such
 passages as Romans 12:4-5 which says, "For as we have
 _____ in _____
 _____ and all _____ have not the
 _____: So _____
 (Christians), being many, _____
 _____, and every
 one members one of another." That is, Christ is the head of the
 body which is composed of the individual members (Christians)
 just as the human body is made up of many different parts or
 members.

The last expression in the verse quoted above suggests, also, the
 very close relationship that each member sustains to every other
 member. This is a cooperative relationship. Notice 1 Corinthians
 12:20-21, "But now are they _____,
 yet but _____. And the eye cannot
 say unto the hand, _____
 _____, nor again the
 head to the feet, _____."
 _____." Notice also
 this very close relationship suggested in verses 25 and 26 of this
 same chapter. "That there should be no schism in the body; but
 that the _____ should have the _____
 _____."

And whether one _____, all the _____;
or one _____ be _____, all the _____
_____ with it. Now ye are the _____
_____, and members in particular.”
This suggests the mutual responsibility because we should be
(Ephesians 4:3), “Endeavoring to keep the _____ of
the spirit in the _____.” Notice the admonition given in 1 Corinthians
10:24. “Let no man _____,
_____, but every man _____
_____ (good).” In the light of these passages would it
be correct to feel that each member of the body of Christ is free
to do as he pleases? Or should his actions be a vital concern of
every other member? If the members of this body should meet
together each Lord’s Day to worship God and to receive strength
and encouragement, could one feel that whether he met with
them or not was his own concern and that others should not be
concerned about it?

Another idea that is suggested by the figure of the church being
the body of Christ is very fundamental. This deals with the
proper functioning and growth of the church. Did you ever stop
to consider just what causes the church to grow and carry on its
work efficiently? Would you have an answer if this same question
were asked about your own physical body? Does your body
function properly just because one part of it is doing its work?
Notice the emphasis Paul placed upon the responsibility of each
members contributing a part to the proper functioning of the
whole body in Ephesians 4:16. “From whom the whole body
_____ together and compacted by
that which _____ supplieth,
according to the effectual working in the measure of

_____, maketh _____ of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." The proper functioning of the body depends upon that which every joint supplieth. How should we think of our own part in the church? Should I think that just because I am only one, that it makes no difference what I do? Or should I think that since I am a part of the body of Christ I must do my part because the success and growth of the church depends upon the proper functioning of every part? Would you also say that one part cannot function properly without the help of the other parts?

The body is composed of the saved people of earth. Is this implied in the past part of Ephesians 5:23 which says, "And he is the _____"?

The blessings of the new covenant were foretold and prefigured in the Old Testament, all of which pointed to the blessings that are to be found in the body of Christ. Is this the idea of Colossians 2:16-17? "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of a new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are _____ of _____ to _____; but the _____.

Since the body of Christ is the church we would expect the terms of admission into the body to be the same as into the church. Notice two references at this point. First, Galatians 3:26-27, "for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been _____ have put on Christ." The second is Romans 6:3, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were _____ were baptized into his death?" Thus, to be scripturally baptized places us in Christ's spiritual body where God has placed all spiritual blessings. This last idea is from Ephesians 1:3.

TEST

1. Jesus Christ (does, does not) have supreme authority over the church. _____
2. The body of Christ is: (a) his physical body only, (b) the church, (c) all people, (d) Jews only. _____
3. How many bodies does Christ have? (a) one, (b) 265, (c) two, (d) an innumerable number. _____
4. Christ is the only head of the church. (True or False) _____
5. In our lesson today, we noted that Paul the apostle said Christ was the Savior of: (a) all men, (b) all good men, (c) all who think they are saved, (d) the body. _____
6. How many have put on Christ, or are in Christ? (a) as many as believe, (b) all who are religious, (c) as many as have been baptized into Christ, (d) as many as have related some experience to show they are saved. _____
7. Since there is "but one body", should there be any schism (division) in the church? (Yes or No) _____
8. Since Christ is the head of the body or church, the authority for its doctrine and practice is found: (a) in church manuals, (b) in church disciplines, (c) in written confessions of faith, (d) in Christ and His Word. _____

9. In an hour of trouble, the Christian as a part of the body can receive strength from the head to meet the trouble. (True or False) _____
10. The “many members” of **Romans 12:4-5, For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: ⁵so we, *being many*, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (AKJV)** refers to: (a) many Christians, (b) many churches, (c) many denominations, (d) many divisions.

Score: 10 points for each correct answer _____

Correct answers for questions in lesson 14:

1. (d)
2. (c)
3. (a)
4. (did)
5. (false)
6. (d)
7. (true)
8. (true)
9. (c)
10. (e)

List below others interested in taking this course.

