

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 she takes her 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.

It is a shame when members of Christ's church cannot explain why they believe what they believe. A belief that cannot be traced to scripture is almost as worthless and destructive as outright error. Passion is impossible when reason is a mystery.

Syllabus

- Lesson One** **The Founding of the Church of Christ**
"Upon this rock I will build my church."
- Lesson Two** **Recognition of Bible Authority**
"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."
- Lesson Three** **Udenominational Nature of the Church of Christ**
"Is Christ divided?"
- Lesson Four** **Organization of the Church of Christ**
"Shepherd the church which is among you."
- Lesson Five** **Work of the Church of Christ**
"Now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church."
- Lesson Six** **Concerning Salvation**
"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"
- Lesson Seven** **Worship by the Church of Christ**
"Let all things be done decently and in order."
- Lesson Eight** **Place of Old Testament**
"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning."
- Lesson Nine** **Attitudes Toward Holy Spirit**
"The Spirit ... will guide you into all truth."
- Lesson Ten** **Church Discipline**
"Withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly."
- Lesson Eleven** **Past Controversies**
"I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off."
- Lesson Twelve** **Current Controversies**
"Let us walk properly and make no provision for the flesh."
- Lesson Thirteen** **Review**
"I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder."

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” (Matt. 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.

Founder

In examining denominations, it is seldom difficult to discern just who their founder was. Wesley, Eddy, Russell, and Smith can all be traced as the founder of various sects who claim truth in Christianity. When one compares all the denominations, however, he discovers that each teaches some doctrine that is distinct from others. Without fail, at least one major point of doctrine is totally contradictory of that in another denomination. How can it be said that Jesus is equally the founder of all these denominations?

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

Baptists argue that John the immerser founded their denomination. If such were granted, it would mean that the Baptist church is not one of Christ, for it would have preceded even the prediction by the Savior that his church was yet to be built.

Date of Foundation

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.

Prophecies

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.

The prophecy of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:31-45 places the time of foundation during the reign of the Roman empire. It is too late for it to come now.

The Called-Out

The word “church” is from the Greek word “ekklesia,” which means literally “the called out.” The church then is not a building, but a collection of souls called out of the world and into Christ. Neither is the church composed of congregations, but simply of redeemed souls.

The Bible uses the word church in the New Testament to refer to the universal church (Acts 2:47) or local congregations (1 Cor. 1:2).

Questions

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. Describe the four kingdoms Daniel foresaw before the kingdom of God could be established (2:36-45). Try to identify all four kingdoms.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

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