

A Study of the Church in the New Testament

Lesson 5: The Lord's Great Preparation for the Church

I. Introduction

- A. The Bible teaches that the church is very precious to the Lord.
 - 1. It is so precious, for Jesus built it! (*Matthew 16:18*)
 - 2. The Lord "shed His blood" so that the church could be purchased (*Acts 20:28*).
 - 3. The church is very precious, very important, for it is:
 - a. The "spiritual body" of the Lord (*Colossians 1:24*)
 - b. It is the "family" or "household" of the Lord (*1 Timothy 3:15*)
 - c. It is "God's temple," God's "dwelling place" (*1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Ephesians 2:19-22*)
 - d. Those in the "church" are in the "kingdom" (*Colossians 1:13*)
 - e. It is the spiritual "bride" of Christ (*2 Corinthians 11:2, 3; Revelation 22:17; Ephesians 5:22-33*)
 - 4. Please note that, because the church is the "bride," the church is "loved" by Jesus and He "gave Himself" for the church (*Ephesians 5:22-25*)
 - 5. But, the church is also precious to God, for God prepared so much for the church!

II. God's Wonderful Preparation for the Church

- A. God planned the church from ETERNITY
 - 1. God demonstrates His wisdom through the church (*Ephesians 3:10*)
 - 2. This was in harmony with His eternal purpose in Christ (*Ephesians 1:4; 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9*)
- B. God promised and prophesied about the church
 - 1. God promised that through a descendant of Abraham, God would bless all nations (*Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:8-16*). We have already seen that, when saved by Christ, we are in the church!
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image (*Daniel 2:1-45*)
 - a. The Interpretation:
 - 1) Head of Gold – Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon)
 - 2) Breast and Arms of Silver – Medo-Persian Empire
 - 3) Belly and Thighs of Brass – Grecian Empire

- 4) Legs and Feet of Iron (and clay) – Roman Empire
- b. Note that the Medes and Persians as well as the Grecian kingdom are found in Daniel (*Daniel 8:20, 21*)
- c. The “Stone” which struck the image represents the Kingdom of God (*Daniel 2:44, 45*)
- d. The Kingdom of God was to be set up in the days of the FOURTH empire. Notice “those kings” in *Daniel 2:44*.
- e. Jesus spoke about this when He said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand...” (*Mark 1:14, 15*)
3. There are many other prophecies about Jesus and His kingdom (*see Isaiah 2:1-4; 53:1-12; Daniel 7:1-15*)
- C. The Lord prepared for the kingdom in the days of John and Jesus.
 1. John the Baptist preached that men should “repent,” for the kingdom was near! (*Matthew 3:1, 2*)
 2. Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled” and the “kingdom is near” (*Mark 1:14, 15; Matthew 4:17*)
 3. Jesus sent out the twelve to preach the coming kingdom (*Matthew 10:7; Luke 9:2*)
 4. Jesus sent out the seventy to announce the coming kingdom (*Luke 10:9, 11*)
 5. It was Jesus who said, “Upon this rock, I will build MY CHURCH” (*Matthew 16:18*). The foundation of the Church is the Messiahship of Jesus!
 - a. Note the confession of Peter (*Matthew 16:13-19; Mark 8:27-30*)
 - 1) Peter declared that Jesus is the Christ! (*Matthew 16:16; Mark 8:29*)
 - 2) Jesus answered that “Upon this rock” He would build His church.
 - 3) Peter had said, “You are the Christ,” and Jesus said, “You are Peter.”
 - 4) The Greek word for “Peter” is “*petros*” (a masculine noun meaning “rock” or “stone”).
 - 5) The word for “rock” in the phrase, “Upon this rock” is the feminine Greek word “*petra*” meaning a “ledge of rock.”
 - b. Peter never claimed to be the head of the church
 - 1) Jesus is the “Head” of the church (*Colossians 1:18*)
 - 2) Peter said that he was a “fellow elder” with others in the church (*1 Peter 5:1, 2*)
 - 3) Christ is the “Head” of the corner, and in no other name is there salvation (*Acts 4:11, 12*)

- 4) As an “master builder,” Paul had laid down Jesus as the FOUNDATION of the Lord’s “spiritual house” (*1Corinthians 3:10, 11*)
- 5) In a slightly different figure, Jesus is the chief CORNERSTONE (*Ephesians 2:19-22*)
- c. In *Matthew 16:13-19*, please note the beautiful figures used concerning the Lord’s “spiritual building,” His CHURCH
 - 1) Jesus was the “builder” (“I will build”)
 - 2) The church is the spiritual “building”
 - 3) The “Messiahship” of Jesus, His “Christ-hood,” His identity as the Christ, the Son of God, is the FOUNDATION of the CHURCH
 - 4) Peter was to be the “doorkeeper.” Jesus said “I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom...”
- d. Please note that Jesus said “Upon THIS ROCK...” He did NOT say, “Upon YOU” when speaking to Peter (*Matthew 16:18*)
- D. By His death and resurrection, Jesus PERFECTED God’s plan concerning the Church (*Ephesians 1:22, 23; 3:1-21; 1Corinthians 15:1-4*)
 1. The Church, the Saved, is the “completeness” of the Lord who completes everything. God’s work is complete in Christ and the Church. Christ’s Lordship is completed in the Church (*Ephesians 1:22, 23*)
 2. To the Lord “be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen.” (*Ephesians 3:21*)

Important Study Questions

1. Can you find anything in the Bible about Peter being the head of the church?
2. When Paul wrote the book of Romans to the church in Rome, did he greet Peter as the “head” of the church? (*See Romans 16:1-16*) Notice how many people Paul greeted. Where was Peter?
3. If the Church had a human head (of course, it does not), who would be a better “human head,” Peter or Paul? Why do you think this?
4. Did Jesus say that His disciples would not “Lord it over” others? And, that they would not “exercise authority” over the church? Would Peter be

included in this group of disciples? Were the disciples of Jesus to be the “slaves” and “servants” of others? (*Matthew 20:20-28*)

5. Was the church something new in God’s plan, or was the church always a part of God’s plan? (*Ephesian 3:10, 11*)
6. Was the “kingdom” really coming NEAR in the days of Jesus’ ministry?
7. Does the great preparation by the Lord for the coming of the church really demand that the church is important to God?