

## church of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Lesson 1

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- The next several lessons will be focused on the church of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - It will be based on the book *The Church of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Mark Adams
  - At the time of the writing of this book, he was the minister at the Old Hickory Church of Christ in the Nashville, TN area
- The Lord's church was established in the 1<sup>st</sup> century
  - Matthew 16:18 – *“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.”*
    - We know that the Lord did not build his church on Peter (1 Corinthians 3:11)
    - But rather his confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (vs 16)
    - So the church was built around Christ and the fact that He is the Son of God (vs 16)
  - Ephesians 2:20-22 – *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”*
  - 1 Corinthians 3:11 – *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*
    - I am not a construction worker – I have been around construction
    - But I clearly understand the importance of the foundation, of the cornerstone
    - The foundation I would argue is the most important part of any structure, building, etc. – it supports the weight
    - Without it, whatever it is supporting would collapse
    - **Matthew 7:24-29**
      - The wise man built his house on the rock
      - Because he knew that the rock would adequately support the house
      - Without that strong basis – when the rains came, and the floods came, and the strong winds blew – his house was going to collapse
      - This is the man who hears the sayings of Christ and keeps them
      - He is strong and firmly rooted in the foundation which is Christ
      - But the foolish man built his house on the sand – he either didn't think about it or he thought about it and decided that sand would make a good foundation for a home (not sure where the logic is in that, of course)
      - But when the rains came, floods, winds, etc. – his house collapsed
      - Any structure needs a solid foundation and the foundation of the church is Christ
    - Christ is also the cornerstone
      - The cornerstone is the first stone laid for a structure
      - All other stones for a structure are laid in reference to the cornerstone

- The cornerstone provides the proper orientation for the structure
- Without a properly laid cornerstone, the building would be skewed one way or the other – it would not be aligned in the intended manner
- This is Christ to the church as well – the apostles teachings, the written Word we have today – it is all centered around Christ
- Even the OT
  - The OT points to the Christ
  - The gospels bring the message of Christ is here and He is the Savior
  - And the rest of the NT points to Christ’s life and gives us teachings to follow based on the principles that Christ taught
- Ephesians 1:22-23 – *“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*
  - The church is Christ’s body
  - We are in submission to Him (Ephesians 5)
- And He established His church on the day of Pentecost
  - Matthew 3:11 – *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”*
  - John 15:26 – *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”*
  - John 16:13 – *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*
  - John 14:15-27
    - Jesus will ask the Father and He will send the Holy Spirit to Jesus’ disciples (vs 16)
    - Father will send the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name (vs 26)
  - All of this was fulfilled in the book of Acts
  - Acts 2:1-4
    - The Holy Spirit came
    - Just as Jesus said would happen
    - They were filled with the Holy Spirit (vs 4) – you may say they were baptized with the Holy Spirit
  - Acts 2:40-47
    - Vs 47 – where was God adding people? To the church
    - Vs 41 – how were they being added? They received the word and they were baptized
    - They were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and therefore they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (vs 38)
    - And they were being added to the church by God
    - So the church had been established – else it wouldn’t have been in existence for God to start adding people to it

- And praise God for Christ's church and the saving power that He extends towards members of His church
  - Preaching the gospel is what we are called to do (Matthew 28:18-20)
    - And though we are preaching the gospel, and we benefit from the gospel – it is not our gospel (Romans 1:16) – it is the gospel of Christ
    - He has the saving power – by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have the Bible and contained within the Bible we have the knowledge and understanding of how to access the blood of Christ
    - And this is the message that we must preach to the world
    - 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 – *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”*
    - We need to planting, we need to be watering – so that people will accept God's saving grace and therefore He will add them to the church of which Christ is the Savior
- Is the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> century any different from what it is today (or I should say – what it should be today)?
  - Hebrews 13:8 – *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*
  - Daniel 2:44 – *“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”*
  - Does either of those verses indicate a church that was going to change from the 1<sup>st</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
  - Jesus is the Son of God (John 3:16)
  - He died, was buried, and arose on our behalf (1 Corinthians 15)
  - He is sitting on His throne and ruling His kingdom (Ephesians 1:15-23, Acts 2:30-36, Hebrews 1:3-4)
  - He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15)
  - He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 1:8)
  - Has any of that changed between the 1<sup>st</sup> century and now?
  - What about the Word?
    - 2 Timothy 3:16 – *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*
    - Hebrews 1:1-2 – *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”*
    - 2 Peter 1:20-21 – *“knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*

- Hebrews 4:12 – *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*
    - None of this has changed
      - If the head of the church has not changed, and if the inspired Word has not changed – then the body has not changed either
      - Galatians 1:6-9 – *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”*
        - The gospel has not changed
        - We still worship, serve, and live for Christ
        - Anything else is really no gospel at all
        - The church hasn’t changed either – even after ~2000 years, we are still the same
- The next several lessons will hopefully explain several things concerning the church
  - How Christ is the king and the church is His kingdom
  - How we are mere servants in the kingdom
  - The fact that there is only 1 kingdom
  - How we become a part of this kingdom
  - How Christ has organized His kingdom
  - How we are to worship
  - And how we are to interface with the world
- In this lesson, I’d like to expand further on some high level information
- **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**
  - Paul delivered the gospel to the Corinthians as of 1<sup>st</sup> importance
  - He says earlier in 1 Corinthians (chapter 2 specifically, vs 1-5) that he did not deliver them a message of human wisdom
  - If anyone could do it – it would have been Paul
  - Paul was a scholar
  - Far more advanced than any Jew of his own age (Galatians 1:14)
  - He could have learned the human wisdom of the day, probably could have excelled at that portion of life as much or at least equal to the philosophers of that day
  - But he didn’t – he actually had no desire to
  - He brought them a message of Christ and him crucified – that was it (1 Corinthians 2:2)
  - Anything else – he really had no desire for
  - He knew that the gospel is of first importance to the Corinthians, and it’s of first importance to us as well
- The gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus

- I think it's amazing that we have 4 accounts of this
- Do you think the Holy Spirit deemed this of first importance? Absolutely
- The OT points to Christ
- The gospels tell that Christ is here and the Holy Spirit deemed that 1 viewpoint was not enough – not even 2 nor 3, but 4
- And the rest of the NT points back to Christ and His supremacy over everything
- Over the old law – many books in the NT refer to how the new law of Christ is far better than the old law (Romans, Hebrews, Galatians just to name the first 3 that come to my mind)
- In telling the story of Jesus, the gospels proclaim how He conquered the powers of darkness and claimed His rightful seat as the King of kings
  - In Ephesians 2:1-2, a character is described as the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience
  - No doubt a reference to Satan as he is also described as the god of this age in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and the ruler of this world in John 12:31
  - Christ overcame all of this – He overcame Satan's temptations not only in Matthew 4, but throughout the course of His life
  - John 16:33 – *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*
  - Satan thought He was eliminating Christ by crucifying Him
  - How do you kill a snake? You cut off the head and the head of the church of Christ
  - So I'm going to cut Him off, I'm going to crucify Him
  - And for a day or 2, I'm sure Satan thought he'd won
  - Even the apostles didn't seem to fully understand Jesus' teaching at this time, as I get the feeling that they were kind of in limbo for a short time period following Christ's death
    - They clearly didn't understand fully understand at this point even though Jesus told them numerous times that He must die and be resurrected
    - In the immediate days after Jesus' death, it seems as if perhaps they were hiding almost – Jesus' crucifixion was a big deal and the Jews were bloodthirsty
    - The apostles knew that if they made too much of a public appearance, there's a chance that the Jews would come after them too, because someone is going to recognize that I was with Jesus
    - Paul told Agrippa that these things were not done in a corner (Acts 26:26) – in other words, this was a very well-known event that took place
    - And the apostles must be thinking at this time, "I've given the last 3 years of my life to this guy and He just dies, that's it?"
  - 1 Corinthians 2:7-8 – *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*
    - If Satan knew that He was playing right into God's plan of redemption for lost man, he wouldn't have continued in his pursuit to have Christ removed from the equation

- He'd have made Him an earthly king – he'd have given Him all the popularity in the world so that no one would even dare think of killing Him
    - But instead he played right into God's plan of *"you (Satan) shall bruise His heel, but He will crush your head."* (Genesis 3:15)
  - So Christ overcame the world
  - And as a result, God exalted Him to His right hand – sitting Him on His throne as our Lord and King (Acts 2:30-36)
- Let's finish this lesson by looking at 2 aspects of Christ's kingship
  - **#1 – Christ is our King, the Creator**
    - **John 1:1-5**
      - There's a theory out there that God's plan for redeeming lost man was His plan B
      - I don't know much of this theory, but I know that according to this theory, God would have logically had to have been in shock and unaware of the fact that Adam and Eve disobeyed in the garden
      - And as a result, God had to scramble around and come up with a last minute plan to redeem lost man
      - But this is flawed
      - Christ was not plan B – Christ is not and never will be plan B
        - He is the only name by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)
        - And this plan was from the very beginning
      - Hebrews 4:4 – *"...although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."*
      - That included the plan of salvation
      - And it obviously involved Christ (Genesis 3:15)
      - God was thinking of lost man from the very beginning – that tells me that we need to be thinking of those lost in the world right now
      - And it should be constantly on our minds
      - We should be constantly thinking and strategizing how we can bring souls to Christ – whether this be through personal evangelism or congregational evangelism
      - We know that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were present at the creation (Genesis 1:1-2, 26)
      - The way the Bible defines it is the following
        - God the Father was the master planner – He did the design work, so to speak – He put forth the blueprints
          - Genesis 1:1 – *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*
        - God's plan was executed by God the Son
          - John 1:1-5
            - In the beginning was the Word – He was with God and He was God
            - All things were made through Him
            - Nothing that was made was done so without Him

- Colossians 1:16 – *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”*
  - And God the Holy Spirit seemed to be the inspector of the work
    - Genesis 1:2 – *“...And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”*
  - So it is apparent that Christ was heavily involved in the creation
  - And we know that means that He created you and I
  - And we were created to do good works (Ephesians 2:10)
  - That others may see those good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16)
- **#2 Christ is our King, the Conqueror**
  - **1 Corinthians 15:20-26**
  - There’s no doubt that sin exists in the world today
  - Not because God created evil
  - But because mankind is corrupt
  - Proverbs 14:12 – *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”*
  - Romans 3:23 – *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*
  - 1 John 1:8 – *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*
  - We are humans – we fall short of God’s glory
  - But that’s why God sent us His Son
  - Romans 5:6 – *“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”*
  - We don’t have to let our mistakes define us, because through Christ we have justification (Romans 1-8)
  - We have constant renewal – if we’ll accept it and do our best to not habitually make the same mistakes
  - We sing sometimes “Death could not hold the king of kings”
  - And it certainly could not
  - Christ triumphed over the tomb – He resurrected on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day as He said He would
  - 1 Corinthians 15:20-26
    - We read that Christ conquered His own death by being raised from the tomb
    - And He is going to destroy it once and for all at the resurrection on the last day
    - When we will be raised with Christ
  - **Revelation 20:7-10**
    - When Satan is released from his current restrictions (whatever that may actually look like), he’s going to gather a large number of people for battle

- Their number will be as the sand of the sea
  - And they're going to surround the camp of God
  - But God is going to rain fire down on them
  - There's no battle here
  - God will be victorious
- Our King is a conquering king
- In conclusion
  - Though His kingdom is not of this world and people referred to Him as king in a scornful tone (Mark 15:17-19), He is our King and as His church, we must give Him the respect that His name deserves (Philippians 2:9-10)
  - We have the choice to either serve Him or neglect Him
  - We know what the outcome will be
  - Romans 14:11 – *“For it is written: As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.”*
  - We're all going to bow before Christ our King eventually
  - According to Romans 12, it is just logical and reasonable to submit your life as a living sacrifice to the Lord
  - When comparing that with Romans 14 that we just read every knee will bow, we can see why
  - The choice to serve Him or not truly is ours and it should be an easy one
- We've given some high level information on the church this evening and how Christ is our king and we are just mere servants in His kingdom
- With the rest of our lessons, I hope we can be reminded (or learn for the first time) of the purpose and functions of Christ's church