

LESSON IV

REVIEW BRIEFLY

In our last three lessons we have learned that God has changed His law three times:

- (1) From creation down to Mt. Sinai, man was under the Patriarchal law in which God "spoke to the fathers."
- (2) But the Jews alone received a new law at Mt. Sinai called the law of Moses.
- (3) Following the cross, the new law of Christ was given to all the world.

In our last lesson we learned that the church was begun on the First Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. And you recall that Pentecost was a Jewish feast day which came 50 days after the Passover.

THE CHURCH

1. (Key your memory to this word in the title.)
2. Not Catholic or Protestant

We want to pause at this point to study and see what this church really was. We know it was established on Pentecost, but what kind of church was it?

We must remember that this was before such terms as "Catholic" and "Protestant." Those are modern terms, and the people in this first church would not have understood you if you had used such terms.

DESCRIBED

1. Key your memory to this next word in the title.
2. New Testament Description

Instead, we are going to let the New Testament describe this church for us. You will notice on the chart that we have selected some verses which describe this church.

We are going to search for this church in the pages of the New Testament just as you might search for my car on a parking lot. You couldn't find my car on a huge parking lot if I didn't describe it for you. But if I describe my car, you could find it.

(Use your own car here.) My car is:

1. A Dodge
2. Green outside and inside
3. It has automatic transmission.
4. Just to be sure, I could give you my license number.

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Now, you could find it, couldn't you? There is no other car exactly like mine on any lot, is there?

Well, let's look for the church which is described in the New Testament.

HOW DESCRIBED

1. Guidebook

This church described in the New Testament had no written creedbooks, disciplines, or catechisms as modern churches do. That's a fact no one disputes. What guidebook did they use?

Luke 8:11 - Says the seed is the word of God. This is Jesus' interpretation, not mine. The only seed this church had to plant was the word of God.

II Timothy 3:16,17 - Paul (in his day) said the scripture could completely furnish a man. This is why this church needed no other guide.

2. Warnings

This church was cautioned not to go beyond its authority.

Galatians 1:6-8 - The Galatians were warned not to believe even if an angel brought a different gospel. (What right do men have to change the gospel if angels can't?)

Revelation 22:18,19- We are warned not to add to nor to take from the word of God.

(If they object that this is merely talking about the book of Revelation, point out that if we can't add or subtract from this inspired book, by what right can we add or subtract from any other inspired book of the Bible?)

3. Descriptions of the Church

You will note on the chart that we used the term "descriptions" instead of "names" of the church. Actually this church seemed to have no name except "the church," and that is what it is called most of the time. Certainly this church had no one name which must be used all the time.

Some names are not descriptive. For instance, we might call a tall man "Shorty." We have given him a name, but it is not a description, is it?

The following terms are descriptions of the church, but they are not necessarily exclusive names which must be used every time we speak of the church described in the New Testament.

Acts 20:28 - This church is described as belonging to God or being "of God."

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- Ephesians 1:22,23 - Here the church is described in another relationship as being the body of Christ.
- Romans 16:16 - The different congregations of the church all belong to Christ, and this description brings out that relationship. (This name over the door of a church building should be a description, not just a name.)
- Romans 7:4 - Here we are reminded that, as a group of saved people, they were married to Christ, hence, they were the "bride of Christ."

(Can't you imagine someone asking you what church you were a member of, and your answering, "The Bride of Christ Church"? There would be nothing wrong with it. It expresses a New Testament description of the church.)

4. Descriptions of the Members

Again we find no one name applied to members of this church, but we do find a lot of different descriptive titles for them. Let us note that each descriptive term brings out a different angle of what they were to be.

- Acts 11:26 - The meaning of "disciples" is that they were students of learners about Christ.
- Philippians 1:1 - "Saint" brings out the idea that they were to live pure and holy lives.
- Galatians 6:1 - They were called "brethren" since they were all in the same family of God and hence related to one another.
- I John 3:1 - Teaches that they were children or "sons" of God. This verse brings out the relationship that they had to their common Father, God.

Christians

- | | |
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| Acts 11:26
Acts 26:28
I Peter 4:16 | - These verses bring out the fact that they belonged to Christ, or that they followed Christ. |
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NEXT TIME

What Kind of Christians?

In these three verses we have read all the places in the Bible where the description "Christian" is used. Just at this spot I want to ask you a question to stimulate your thinking. I could just tell you this fact, but I think you will appreciate it more if you answer it for yourself.

You realize that these people we are talking about lived before there was any such thing as "Catholics" or "Protestants," don't you? For instance, if you had asked Paul what kind of Christian he was, he probably wouldn't have understood what you meant.

Today if someone says they are a Christian, the next question is, "What kind of Christian?" Since these people lived before such modern titles, what kind of Christian do you suppose they were?

Answer should be something like this:

"Just Christians" or "Just plain Christians"

That's exactly right - they were just Christians. That is the way it was in this church described in the New Testament.

We'll stop right there for now.

Next time we will complete our study of the church described in the New Testament.