

CHURCH HISTORY

OBJECTIVES FOR 13-WEEK CLASS IN CHURCH HISTORY:

At the end of 13 weeks, the regularly attending and diligently studying student should be able to:

1. Show where the New Testament church stands with reference to demoninations and be able to show from the scriptures that the New Testament church is not a denomination, nor is "Protestant".
2. List at least five critical areas where we need to be teaching our children today to prepare them to avoid "denominational" thinking.
3. Answer the statement, "The Catholic church was the first church" using both the Bible and recorded history as proof.
4. Show the self-sufficiency of the Bible and the New Testament church, proving that there is no need for additional revelation as some denominations teach.
5. Show when, where and by whom the New Testament church was established, this church being the "one church" spoken of in the New Testament.
6. List the key departures, in order of occurrence, and the reasons for these departures.
7. Find, if possible, when the church lost its identity as the New Testament church.
8. Find, if possible, when the church found its identity as the New Testament church.
9. Name, in chronological order, the people, events and dates of the Reformation.
10. Name, in chronological order, the people, events and dates of the Restoration.

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LESSON ONE: "The setting for Christianity" Historical, political, social conditions of the time.

Objectives: Be able to describe the nature of the government with regard to Rome and Jerusalem in the time of the coming of Christ. Name the rulers, Be able to describe the social conditions of Christ's time with regard to living conditions, wealth versus poverty, business and political activities. Be able to list at least five prophecies of Christ's coming, life, death and resurrection, and show their fulfillment in the New Testament.

Assignments:

1. The nature of the government at the time of the coming of Christ. Who were the Roman emperors? How was Jerusalem ruled? How would this affect the people at the coming of a "new" king and Kingdom?
2. The social conditions at the time of the coming of Christ. What were the social conditions? How many wealthy? How many poor? What was everyday life like as far as living conditions, business and political activities were concerned?
3. List prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, especially those relating to the establishing of a new religious order of some kind.

Important events to be placed on the time line, with approximate dates:

Important characters to be placed on the time line:

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LESSON TWO: "The setting for Christianity" Moral and religious conditions at the time of the coming of Christ and the establishment of the church.

Objectives:

Assignments:

1. What were the moral conditions of the time of Christ? Was there a difference around Jerusalem as compared to other parts of the world? What influence did religion have on morality?
2. What was the religious atmosphere among the Jewish people at the time of Christ? What were the major beliefs and sects among the Jews? What did each believe? What was the moral value of their religion? What was the connection between the Jewish religion and politics?
3. What was the religious atmosphere among the non-Jews at the time of Christ? What was the religion of the Romans? The other Gentiles? How much did the religion of the day influence the moral standards of the times? What connections between religion and politics?

Time line:

Important events to be placed on the time line, with approximate dates:

Important Characters to be placed on the time line:

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LESSON 3: The coming of Christ: His life, death and resurrection.

Objectives: Be able to give conclusive proof from the scriptures that Christ was the promised Messiah and not an imposter.
Be able to show from secular history that such a person as Jesus lived at the time of the New Testament and that such a person was accepted at the time as existing and doing the things claimed in the New Testament.
Be able to show the fallacy of the arguments used to show that Christ did not arise from the grave after his crucifixion

Assignments:

1. Evidence from the Bible of the existence of Christ. Show with scriptures Jesus was the culmination of God's plan to send a redeemer. What were the requirements of the Messiah? Who was Jesus if he was not the Messiah? How was he tested by the people of his day?

The entire New Testament, especially 4 gospels and Acts.

Matt. 1:20-23, John 1:9-12, John 3:16-17, Acts 2:22-36

Gal. 4:4-5

born of a virgin, a descendant of David, born in Bethlehem, a Nazarene

a list of a lunatic

2. Evidence from secular history of the existence of Christ. What did the writers of history at the time of the New Testament and immediately following have to say about a person named Jesus and about the influence of a group called Christians?

questioned

3. Evidence of the resurrection. There have been many arguments given about what happened to Christ's body when the grave was opened. What are some of the major arguments and what are the fallacies in each of them? What was said in the New Testament by those trying to prove Christ did not rise from the dead? Who were the first sceptics about his resurrection?

who stole it? high priests - apostles - soldiers

was grave empty?

Important events to be placed on the time line, with approximate dates.

Important characters to be placed on the time line.

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LESSON 4: The establishment of the church: When, where, by whom and the circumstances.

Objectives: Be able to show that the New Testament church, Christ's church was established when Christ ascended to Heaven and after His death and burial, on the first pentecost after the resurrection (With Scriptures)
Be able to show the church had it's beginning, according to God's plan, in Jerusalem. (With Scriptures)
Be able to show that Christ himself was the founder of the church, and that it was his intention to establish the kingdom when and where it was established. (With Scriptures)
Be able to give the circumstances surrounding the establishing of the church, how events led to the first sermons and the first converts.

Assignments:

1. Establishment of the church in 33 A.D. Show that the church was not in existence while Christ was alive on earth, and that it was not established by John the Baptist. Show Christ's intention and preparation for the church coming into existence when it did.
2. Establishment of the church in Jerusalem. Show that things were pointing to Jerusalem all along, even in prophecy, for the establishment of the church.
Joel 2:2-4
3. Establishment of the church by Christ. Show the error of the doctrine that God really had other plans, but because Christ was rejected by the Jews, that the church was just an outgrowth of this rejection and intended to be temporary. Explain the connotation of Romans 16:16 with regard to the name of the church.
*Christ planned to build His church before He was crucified - Matt. 16:18 - and not even death would overpower it.
Christ loves the church - not as a messiah, but to the extent of dying for it, nourishing and cherishing it as His own flesh. Eph. 5:25-29*
4. Describe the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the church and the events that took place immediately before the Apostles began to speak, and what happened when they started to preach.
5. Give scriptural proof that the church and the kingdom are referring to the same thing in passages such as Matt. 16:18,19.

Important events and characters to be placed on the time line, with approximate dates.

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LESSON 5: The nature of Christ's church: Organization, worship, work, members.

Objectives: Be able to show that there was a specific kind of organization, made up of people with specific jobs to do.
Be able to show that there was a prescribed worship to be followed by the members of this church that Christ established.
Be able to give scriptures to prove that the church has certain authorized work to do and authorized ways of doing this work.
Be able to show how people become members of the Lord's church and examples of this from the scriptures.

Assignments:

- John*
1. The organization of the church. What organization did the New Testament Church have? Could a church (congregation) exist without this organization? What are some typical organizations within denominations today that are not authorized?

Phil. 1:1 - elders, deacons, saints
Acts 14:23 - pres, Titus 1:5

- Rich*
2. When the Christians came together in New Testament times for worship, what did they do? What things did they do on specific days of the week? What are some of the things done today by religious groups claiming to follow Christ that is not authorized by Christ?

Acts 20:7 - breaking of bread, preaching
I Cor. 16:1,2 - collection
Acts 2:42 - prayer, breaking of bread, apostles' doctrine
I Cor. 14:15 - prayer, song

- Howard*
3. What work did the church do in the New Testament days? Give examples of each kind of thing done and show how it was done. What are some things done today that is not a scriptural work? What are some things done today that is a proper work, but not being done in an authorized manner?

support of preacher - Phil. 4:15,16 - sent directly to preacher
support of needy saints - Acts 4:32-35; 6:1-2
support of widows indeed - I Tim. 5:3,9,10

- Richard*
4. How does one become a member of the Lord's church today? Give some Bible examples of people becoming members of the church. What are some of the ways people get into religious churches today that are not following the New Testament pattern?

Acts 2:41,47
Gal. 3:27

- John*
5. The name of the church and the followers of Christ. What names did the Spirit use in describing the church of the New Testament? What names did the followers use? What should we use today?

Eph. 1:22,23; body
Col. 1:13,18 - kingdom, body
I Tim. 3:15 - house of God
Rom. 16:16 - churches of Christ
I Cor. 1:2 - church of God
Acts 11:26 } Christians
I Pet. 4:16 }

Important events and characters to be placed on the time line, with approximate dates.

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LESSON 6: Beginnings of departure: Apostolic prophecy, the nature of the departures and the causes.

Objectives: Be able to give scriptures showing that there would be departure from the New Testament pattern of doing things.
Be able to give scriptures showing where departures had already started before the close of the writing of the New Testament.
Be able to tell the first kinds of things that would appear in the departure, and natural consequences of additional departure.
Be able to list some of the causes of this departure, with scripture, and show how the same things can happen today.

Assignments:

1. Apostasy (Greek apo: "away", stasis: "a standing") in prophecy. Give some scriptures to show that apostasy was prophesied even before the New Testament was finished. Give scripture to show that these very prophecies came true, even to the people being talked to.

Acts 20: 28-30

Gal. 1: 5

II Pet. 2: 1

2 Tim. 2: 16-18

II Tim. 4: 3-4; 3: 1-5

I Tim. 4: 1-3; 6: 20-21

2 Thess. 2: 3-10

2. What were the first major departures, leading to all the rest? Give examples from the Old Testament showing that the same departures had the same results.

no organization - in accepting that for which there was no authority

3. Why would people depart from the pure church and go to other doctrines? Does the Bible give us any clues? Do we have any examples in the New Testament?

love of world - Demas - 2 Tim. 4: 10

distortion of scriptures - II Pet. 3: 16

led away by false teachers - II Pet. 3: 17; Acts 20: 30

lack of love for truth - 2 Thess. 2: 10-12

4. What problems of the same nature exist today? How can we recognize a departure, or a trend in departure? What tools are given us to protect from losing the identity of the church altogether? (Give at least four.)

1) we have an exact pattern

2) we have history to warn us

3) prayer

4) study

5. What departures that started in the New Testament are still with us today?

misuse of eldership

violation of church autonomy

Important events and characters to be placed on the time line, with approximate dates.

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LESSON 7: The falling away; beginning of the "Ante-Nicene" period. The nature of the world around the church in the second and third centuries, including the persecutions.

Objectives: Be able to describe the various persecutions that took place against early Christians, with the names of those who were the leaders. Be able to name some of the leading resisters and martyrs of those days. Be able to explain the reasons for the persecutions and compare them with the church today.

Assignments:

1. The ante-Nicene period: What is the significance of the name (briefly) What period of time is involved?
2. The Roman empire: What was the condition of the Roman empire between 100-300 A.D.? Why were these conditions conducive to Christians being persecuted by the Romans?
3. The persecutors: What is said about the persecutions of Nero, Domitian, Pliny and Trajan. What was significant about the persecution of Diocletian? Give the significant dates of the persecutions during this time. List others as time allows.
4. The martyrs: Describe the resistance and courage and faith of Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp and others. What was the condition of the church during the persecution?
5. Reasons for persecutions: Why would a body of God-fearing, non-violent, peace-loving religious people be persecuted? List a number of reasons why the persecutions were a natural part of the times, especially against Christians.
6. The church: During the first 200 years after the close of the New Testament, there was much persecution, but also some times of reasonable peace and freedom from persecution. Describe the church during these times, both from a spiritual and "physical" standpoint. Is there any comparison with the church today?

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LESSON 8: Introduction of doctrinal error during the Ante-Nicene period. The nature of the errors that were first introduced that are still with us today, in many cases. A study of why these errors were accepted and the symptoms they leave us for examining the church today.

Objectives: Be able to describe the early falling away in doctrine, and tell what they were. Be able to give the names given to various unscriptural offices that were created in this period and the final results. Be able to list the five major cities that had presiding offices. Be able to describe the events and give dates surrounding the "Edict of Toleration" and the Nicene Council and Creed.

Assignments:

1. Changes in Organization: Show how the Bible titles were shifted in significance to create unscriptural offices in the early church. Trace the history of the changes in the local congregation, the larger cities and rural areas.
2. Distinction between Clergy and Laity: Show how the early church began to see a difference between the preachers and other members. Why is this possible? Were there problems in the New Testament with this question? (Acts 10:24-26 and Acts 14: 13-15) Is there any effort in the Lord's church today to go in this direction, either by the preachers or the members? If so, give examples.
3. Union of Church and State: What were some of the issues or questions facing the church in those days? Why was a council a natural man-thought-of way to settle these questions? What was wrong with this approach? Is there any effort among religious people today to solve religious questions this way? Among the Lord's people?
4. Union of Church and State: Describe the conversion of Constantine. What was the Edict of Toleration? When was it? Describe the events and results of the council in Nicea in 325.

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LESSON 9: The beginning of the Catholic church and false doctrines. The Dark Ages. A look at the errors brought about by "nationalizing the church" into an earthly head, and the results of keeping the Word of God from the people.

Objectives: Be able to list at least ten major errors introduced in the first six centuries that became a part of the Catholic church. Be able to define the term Dark Ages and describe the conditions of the religious, social and political world during that period. Give the forerunners of the Reformation Movement. Explain the purpose and results of the Crusades and the Inquisition.

Assignments:

1. Look at some of these doctrines and tell how they got started and what's wrong with them, scripturally: Holy Water (120), Penance (157), Saints Days (200), Praying to the Saints (240), Sprinkling (250), Officiating Priests' uniform (257), Monasticism (260), Sign of the Cross (260), Relics (313), Christmas (350), Mass (350), Confession (390), Extreme Unction (599), Purgatory (599), Indulgences (?), Celibacy (?), Pope (606). (This assignment should be divided among at least three people. Keep answers short, using 1-2 scriptures to refute the doctrine.)
2. Dark Ages: Why is it called the Dark Ages? What was it like to be religious in that period? Describe some of the "Heretics" in the church at that time and what they believed, such as the Albigensians and Waldensians.
3. Forerunners of the Reformation: Report on John Wycliffe (England 1320-1384) and John Huss (Bohemia 1369-1415) and describe what they believed and what affect they had on the church at that time. What happened to them: (2 people)
4. What was the purpose of the crusades and describe the major ones? What was the inquisition and what was the results?

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LESSON 10: The Reformation, Coming out of the Dark ages into the Renaissance. The translation and distribution of the Bible. The early reformers, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and in England: Henry VIII, Smyth, Wesley. The establishing of major religions of today: Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist.

Objectives: Be able to describe the conditions that brought people out of the Dark Ages and show why this made the time ripe for the Reformation of the Catholic Church. Be able to list the early reformers and the part they played in establishing doctrines that are with us today, though still out of harmony with the Bible. Explain why the Reformation failed to restore New Testament Christianity.

Assignments:

1. The times: List several things that made the time right for a reforming of the catholic church. What was the conditions, socially, politically, religiously that brought about the possibility of the Reformation?
2. The people: Report on the work and beliefs of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin. What was the results of their efforts? (3 people)
3. The people: Describe the results of actions by King Henry VIII, John Smyth and John Wesley. What doctrines exist today as a result of their efforts? (3 people)
4. List some of the religious groups in existence today that resulted from the men we mentioned above. What do these people claim about their beginnings? How do they feel about the "New Testament church"? (Questions: Do they teach all the truth? Is what they teach all truth? Do they believe anybody else is right besides them? Answer these questions from their viewpoint, not ours.)

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LESSON 11: The beginning of the Restoration of the New Testament church, Reasons for the Restoration Movement, early leaders in the movement. A look at the reason the Reformation Movement failed to restore the original concept of the church Jesus built. The contribution of the Reformation people to the cause of Restoration.

Objectives: Be able to give the dates of the beginning of the Restoration movement; tell who the early leaders were and describe the differences between the Reformation and Restoration Movements, and the part each of the men played in getting the movement going.

Assignments:

1. Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli lived at the same time and were considered leaders in the Reformation Movement, yet they did not know each other for a long time after they had begun their work. How is it they could both be involved in this movement, going along the same direction--against the Catholic church--yet not be reading or following each other's ideas? Which of the two men probably most nearly reached the principles of Authority laid down in the Bible? (Is there a similarity between these two men and the later leaders of the Restoration Movement, as far as not knowing each other, yet agreeing in principle with each other?)
2. What were the conditions by the end of the 18th Century as far as the religious world was concerned, especially as far as the Reformation Movement was concerned? Was the Reformation Movement a success? Why were things right for a Restoration Movement?
3. What were the principles of the Restoration Movement that all of the leaders had in common, and that ultimately brought them in contact with each other?
4. What part did James O'Kelly, Dr. Abner Jones and Barton W. Stone play in the Restoration Movement? Give a brief report on each man and his contribution to the Movement. (3 People)

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Lesson 12: Concluding the Restoration Movement. The rise and fall of the work of the Campbells. The introduction of man-made doctrines. A look at such institutions as the missionary society, sponsoring organizations and centralized church control, as well as other digressive activities.

Objectives: Determine how close the Restoration Movement came to being successful and where it ran into trouble. Be able to show how uninspired men can have a spiritual goal, yet fail when they leave God's will out of their activities. Show the symptoms of digression and be prepared to defend the practice of singing without an instrument and supporting evangelists directly from the church treasury, without going through some other church or institution.

Assignments:

1. What part did Thomas and Alexander Campbell play in the Restoration Movement? Are they the founders of the "Church of Christ"? Where did the expression, "Campbellite" come from, most likely?
2. In October, 1849, a convention was held in Cincinnati, from which came the American Christian Missionary Society. This began the downfall of the success of the Restoration Movement, and further splits came. Compare this action with the early councils/synods, and the results. One led to peace, one led to division. Why? What is the New Testament pattern for supporting evangelistic work? (Give scriptures.)
3. In the late 1850's the melodeon was introduced into a congregation in Midway, Kentucky by Dr. L. L. Pinkerton. Again a split occurred among those interested in restoring New Testament religion. What was wrong with this form of worship? How can we explain the fact that virtually every religious organization today uses an instrument of some kind in their worship? (Give scriptures to support your answer.)
4. What are some of the other non-authorized practices that have been introduced since the end of the Restoration Movement? Was the Restoration Movement a success? Do we need another one today?

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LESSON 13: Lessons from church history: What can we learn from the mistakes of others as we study church history? A look at the symptoms of falling away, the need for restoring New Testament doctrines, ways of determining trends in the church.

Objectives: Be able to give the symptoms of digression, telling examples of how it was possible for the church to drift into error, without realizing it at the time. Be able to show how we today justify error, or trend towards error, and not think about it as error. Be able to state ways of preventing digression from enveloping the church.

Assignments:

1. The early church, even in the New Testament days, began to leave the doctrines of God and "establish their own righteousness". We can think of the results as merely symptoms of the falling away. We need to look for signs, and they are present in every generation, that tell us the church is faced with possibility of falling away. What are some of the signs within the church that have shown up in the last 25 years? Even in the "sound" churches there are signs.. what are some of them? What do these signs represent?
2. Conditions for falling away: What were the conditions that existed when the church found itself falling away? List as many parallels as possible that compare the times, conditions, thinking and spiritual values of the early days with the same today.
3. What happens when someone decides that the church is in error and makes an effort to change the course of the church, even a local congregation? What would happen if somebody in this congregation challenged something we were doing and showed where we were in error? (Think carefully!)
4. Without being a prophet, we can't tell where the errors will come, but if we had to speculate, where is the next falling away going to occur, as far as doctrine is concerned? What are/will be the symptoms?