

Gospel Gems

By Rev. C. E. Williams



Sunday School Lesson for week of December 2nd.

Subject: "What is the Church?"

Matthew 18, 15-20; John 17, 20-26; Cor. II, 23-26.

To quote one verse. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Jesus."

Memory selection: You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into the marvelous light. (1 Peter 2,9)

The word "Church" as used in common conversation today, has had an interesting history.

Its English form is synonymous with the Latin "ecclesis" which was used throughout the first Christian Century. To the men of that time it meant a society, an organization of like-minded individuals associated for the achievement of a common objective.

The silversmiths of Ephesus, for example (Acts 19, 23-34) were organized as guild and this association was commonly called an "ecclesia." Trade associations, religious groups or other bodies when formally organized, were similarly spoken of. The identifying characteristic of the "ecclesia" was the fact that it had an organizational structure of some kind.

The First Century Christian spoke of his groups of believers as "ecclesiae" - which when translated into English is called "church". The group was also classified as "societies". As the Christian Movement grew, they appropriated the use of "Church" exclusively for themselves.

It carried with it the idea that here is an exclusive organization into which only certain persons can really enter. Those persons being the "whosoever will" accept the plan of salvation of Jesus Christ - and, having been regenerated, repent of their sins, and willingly submit their wills into the Lord Jesus Christ's Will.

Jesus in the Book of John set up the standard, where He said, "You must be born again". The Church then is to the Christian a means of being born again, and thus they make their entrance into the Church, or this exclusive society of Jesus.

The Church represents that group who is exclusive in that no man can really join it, but they are 'born again' into it.

While there are many whose name appears on her rolls, there are many who are not members in reality. The Act of the Holy Spirit then is the only power which

can introduce us to the real nature of the Church.

The 'flesh' as it is termed, is at enmity with God and cannot therefore have fellowship with God; but Jesus has interceded and made possible our fellowship with God.

Thus we who were aliens from the common wealth of Israel, and strangers from the Covenants of Promise and having no hope, and without God in the world - now in Jesus Christ are made nigh by his intercession, and intervention, and are 'purchased of His Blood.'

He is the Christian's Peace, and has made the two one - has broken down the wall between God and us. The 'Church' is this group whom Jesus Christ has redeemed, by abolishing in His Flesh the enmity, even the Law of the Commandments contained in the ordinances, and unto Himself created one New Man instead of Two. (Eph. 2,15)

That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by His Cross, Jesus came and preached peace unto those who were afar off, and to them who were nigh.

Thus, those who were strangers and foreigners have fellowship; and are fellow citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God.

The 'Church' is the world's 'Light', representing those who have Christ as their personal Savior, redeemed by His Blood, saved by His Mercy.

Christ is the chief corner stone of the Church. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed.

The 'Church' is of those who were sick, bruised, and have been healed by the Suffering of Jesus Christ, and have accepted that Gift.

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