

THE WORD OF

TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32

23

THERE ARE ONLY TWO CHURCHES

In view of the warnings and admonitions of Jesus relating to the worship practices of His professed followers, each of us who are determined in our pursuit of the eternal prize, will be engaged in some serious personal examination. Thus they will determine whether they be in the faith, or be in conflict with the will of God.

Every church claims to be teaching the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph.4:21) and we all like to think that our church is the right one. But our emotions are a great deceiver in decisions such as this. What we need is a *"thus saith the LORD"* (Jeremiah 17:5-9).

Satan knows full well the power of God's Church and he has endeavoured to infiltrate the borders of the redeemed with his poisonous doctrines.

The subject of this lesson is not an easy one to present. It is not intended to slight any individual, for there are many honest souls labouring in God's service that are doing all they know to be the will of God for them. These are fully accepted of God and it is not the place of any man to judge his fellows (John 21:21,22; Romans 14:1-12). Notwithstanding, these honest souls may be working or worshipping in a system that Christ has particularly addressed as in need of counsel (see lessons 20, 21).

As such, with love and compassion toward those who would serve God with all they know, this lesson is given as a guide to the path of God's unerring Word.

IN WHAT CHURCH ARE GOD'S PEOPLE TO BE FOUND?

1. How does the Bible indicate that the people of God are not all centralised into one denomination?

John 10:16 _____

Compare: Isaiah 56:3-8; John 11:52 _____

Note: As Jesus recognised that there were some honest souls in each of the seven churches that He addressed, He extended the opportunity for knowledge and repentance, that these souls may embrace the full light of truth (lessons 20,21,22). He declares that His true followers are not all within one church, but, to some extent are a minority, integrated among the professed Christian churches.

The stranger (Gentile, non Jew) who joins himself to the Lord, is one who has held a belief that is foreign to God, but will now embrace the truth and observe it. This person is counted as part of spiritual Israel, the righteous nation who keep the truth of God.

2. Though the people of God are scattered throughout the world and in various denominations, collectively, He sees them as His children and a special nation. What beautiful language does God use to describe His beloved people, these honest souls who are keeping the Truth?

Isaiah 26:2 _____

Isaiah 43:6,7 _____

1 Peter 2:9 _____

Note: Honest souls are those who are endeavouring to live up to all the light they have. They are constantly on the alert to learn how to serve their beloved Saviour with greater fidelity and truth, and is this not what every sincere Christian will be doing, regardless of his or her spiritual level (Philippians 3:12-16)?

The people who are called by God's name are keeping the Truth. They are known as the sons and daughters of God, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and a holy nation, a nation based on righteousness (Isaiah 56:3-8; 60:21; John 17:8,11).

3. If God's people are to be found scattered among the professed Christian churches, what prospects for salvation are open to the man that has never heard of Jesus Christ, never seen a Bible, or has never spoken to a missionary, yet lives according to God's commandments?

Romans 2:11-16 _____

Note: God is not unfair but deals justly with all men. All He requires of anyone is that they live up to the knowledge they have (Philippians 3:15,16; 1Kings 8:61). Those who have NO literary knowledge of the Creator, have a God given mechanism that alerts them to the deceptions of the destroyer, that they may discern right from wrong. That mechanism is *conscience*, the mental contact through which the Spirit of God reaches the heart of every man. This is the work of the law written in their hearts, or as Romans 2:14 expresses it, "are a law unto themselves".

4. When God makes up the people of His kingdom, what does He take into account when assessing the case of every individual?

Psalm 87:3-6

Note: Taking into account where a man was born, is to take into account the opportunities he has had for hearing the truth. God is fair and will not exact from a man that which he has not been given.

5. Should a soul become acquainted with the Church that *is* teaching all of the revealed will of God and they enjoy the fellowship of the converted and the full light of truth, what is the possibility that they themselves can be in a lost condition?

John 6:70,71

Note: As we study the Bible we shall realise that we are saved as individuals, not as members of a specific group. Whatever our circumstances, be they the most discouraging, or the most favourable, God requires that, by His strength, we abide by what we know about how to obey Him and do His will (James 4:17). We should ever be on the alert that we are not drawn away from Him by our surroundings, or become deceived by assuming that the company of the righteous will count us as righteous (Ezekiel 18:20-24). Judas was lost even when exposed to the greatest revelation of truth.

RECOGNISING TRUTH AND ERROR

If God's people can be found in all churches, does that mean that all churches are teaching all of the revealed truth of God's Word and therefore accepted by God? The answer to this question will clarify as we proceed.

We are only God's people while ever we live up to all the light we have. If we follow the counsel of God and study for ourselves to know His will for us (Prov.22:17-21; Job 22:21-26; 2Tim.2:15; Isa.28:9,10), we may well grow beyond what our church teaches (Matt.5:19,20). We then need to choose whether we will adopt and practice the truth we have received, or continue in the doctrines of our uninformed years. If we choose to ignore the light

we have received we then cease to grow and eventually retrograde into a formal appearance of Christianity -- without life (2Timothy 3:5).

To determine whether our understanding of Scripture is a growing experience or some misinformed tangent, we should compare what we hear (be it from men, or be it the teachings of the church) with the instructions of Scripture and always take the Bible as the final word on that subject.

The King James Version of the Bible is the most reliable English translation. Other translations and paraphrased versions such as: New International Version (NIV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), New American Standard (NAS), New King James Version (NKJV), Good News Bible (GNB), and a host of others, do not teach exactly what the KJV teaches. They have a subtle difference that presents the salvation plan in a manner that leads a sinner to believe that he cannot overcome his sin, in this life, through the power of Jesus Christ. They also diminish the deity of Jesus. This is not saving truth (2Cor.2:17). Note Jer.3:23, where "hills" and "mountains" are doctrines that are not of God.

6. What do we have as a reliable source of truth?

2Timothy 3:15-17; 2Peter 1:19-21; 1Thess. 2:13; Psalm 119:11; 19:7,8

Note: There is only ONE reliable guide to life and that is NOT the word of MEN. Everything we hear concerning our relationship with God MUST be measured against the Word of God. Anything else will leave us open to misguidance (Psalm 119:105; 118:8; 146:3; Jer.17:5-8; 10:23; Prov.28:26; 1Cor.2:4,5,13).

7. What principles, or doctrine, will be the sole foundation of the Church of God as opposed to the church of men?

1Timothy 3:15 _____

Colossians 2:4-10 _____

Compare Matthew 15:3,8,9 _____

Note: It should be noticed that Satan does not teach one hundred percent error, for this would deceive no-one. The subtlety of his deceptions is an integration of truth and error. No church is teaching all error, but every church is teaching some error, hence God's people will be eager to correct any misunderstandings they may have acquired as a result of their associations with people.

8. In the midst of the proclamation of the three angel's message and the truths of God's Word, what other voices are likely to be heard coming from some other quarter?

Matthew 24:23,24 _____

Note: The churches consist of those who serve God with all that they know, those who have a pretence of piety and those who are quite indifferent to the light of truth. In this respect both God and Satan have their representatives in every church, in the pews and in the pulpits. It must therefore be anticipated that some error will arise from a most unexpected source.

9. How shall we distinguish the true Gospel of salvation from the gospel of the false prophet?

Isaiah 8:20 _____

10. Even before all of the apostles were dead, Paul recognised a stealthful infiltration of the early apostolic Church. How does he express this to the believers in the church at Thessalonica and to others?

2Thessalonians 2:3-7a _____

Acts 20:27-31 _____

Compare the words of Jesus, Matthew 7:15 _____

11. What is the result of following the teachings of men and their traditions?

2Peter 2:1,2; Matthew 23:8-15,27,28 _____

Note: A damnable heresy is a doctrine that, if adopted, will result in our condemnation and damnation. Needless to say, it is a doctrine not in harmony with Scripture. The wilful followers of these teachings are made twice as much the child of hell than are the ministers that deceived them (Compare 2Peter 2:17-19; Isaiah 9:16). The conclusion to be drawn from this is, that it does matter what we believe and what church we adhere to.

12. Using Israel as a representation of God's professed Church, what has God exposed as a dangerous condition to which His people should be on the alert in the present day Church?

Ezekiel 34:1-6

Note: With all due respect to the honest servants of God and recognising that there are ministers who have a sincere Christlike interest in their flock, these faithful ones work to discharge all the duties that God has placed before them -- they are accepted of God. Honest though they may be, in some respects many may unwittingly be teaching certain aspects of doctrine that are not really as the Bible presents them. They, like the rest of us, when the truth is finally brought home to them, will, if honest, fully adopt the truth.

On the other hand, there are religious leaders who have little regard for the overseeing of the souls in their care. Their appointment is a job, not a commitment; their interpretation of the Gospel is little more than a smooth doctrine to accommodate their own sins and the sins of the congregation. If, after reading your Bible, you have doubts about some sin that is troubling you and you consult your minister about it and he conveys the impression that God does not expect you to fully forsake that sin (and every other sin in your life), the instructions of the Bible through the power of the Spirit of God is what should be taken as the counsel of the True Witness, not the words of men (1Corinthians 2:4-7,12-15; Mal.2:7,8; 2Tim.4:3,4).

Whether they are honest souls or not, most ministers teach what

they have been taught at the seminaries and therefore propagate the precepts of their professors. It is very hard for us to concede that the religious leaders have actually been taught a form of religion that is not in line with the real Bible, the KJV. What better place than the halls of learning, the universities and religious seminaries, could Satan choose to inject his falsehoods into any church.

Many a young ministerial student with a hope and belief that he is called to the ministry, enters the seminary only to be brainwashed with the psychology of humanism and induced with a distorted view of the truth. What the flock needs are shepherds who love Christ and His flock and are under the unction of the Spirit of Christ, not a university degree (1John 2:19,20; John 1:12,13; 21:15-17; 10:11-13). This is why it is so necessary for each of us to test everything we hear of a religious nature by the Word of God.

13. Notwithstanding this condition of the churches, what has God promised to do for those who are sincere in their efforts to follow Him?

Jeremiah 3:15 _____

Note: God will not leave one struggling soul without guidance. One way or another, the Spirit of God will feed us with the truth that will direct our feet in the way of righteousness (Isaiah 48:17,18; Rom.10:13-17).

14. How shall we know when the minister, or anyone who speaks to us on religious or philosophical issues, is presenting the truth?

John 7:16-18 _____

Proverbs 1:23 _____

Hebrews 5:13,14 _____

Note: When we, ourselves, turn from our sin and seek the God of heaven with all our heart, we show our desire to learn and to do what is right. God will then enlarge our knowledge of His Word that we may truly worship Him in spirit and in truth. We shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or of men (John 4:23,24; Psalm 119:32,111).

When we hear the Truth of the Word of God and we believe and have faith that what it says is true, then obey it through the power of Christ, making it our life pattern, it will do its work in us of transforming the character. Thus, by exercising the Word of God in our lives we gain an acute discernment of right and wrong and good and evil (1Thess.2:13; Hebrews 4:2; 5:13,14). When we turn to the Lord there is a veil of mystery taken away (2 Cor.3:15,16; Colossians 1:26-28). Those who do not eat the flesh and blood of Jesus, taking in His Word, will be deceived by the god of this world, they will not discern the error mingled with truth (John 6:53-56,63; Matthew 24:23,24; 2Cor.11:3,4; 4:3,4; 2Thess.2:9-12).

15. How does God describe the characteristic of those who will be deceived, or taken by the false teachers and doctrines that are not from the Scriptures?

2Thessalonians 2:8-12, note v.10

Note: When it says that "God shall send them strong delusions", it does not mean that God will deliberately deceive someone that they might be lost (2Peter 3:9).

When God said that He hardened Pharaoh's heart, it did not mean that God set Pharaoh's heart against Himself. It was Pharaoh's constant resistance to God's promptings and manifestations of His power that finally made Pharaoh impervious to the pleading of God (Ex.11:9,10; Ex. chapters 5-12). Similarly, it is our constant reluctance to yield to the pleading of the Spirit of Christ and our love of sin that will cause us to reject the truth regardless of how it is presented. We are then in great danger of committing the unpardonable sin (lesson 4, page 6). God will give us the desires of our heart; if we desire wickedness, lies and rebellion, then that is what we shall receive (Hosea 4:9,17; Ps.81:11-13; Prov.1:23-33).

16. Those who are happy with a Christless church, what type of preacher do they employ and what type of doctrine do they want to hear?

2Timothy 4:3,4 _____

Isaiah 30:9-11 _____

Note: The people with the itching ears, are not the teachers, they are the people who delight to listen to their false doctrine. People will employ and be happy with the type of preacher that is like themselves (Hosea 4:8,9).

There are pastors and Church leaders who have a genuine regard for their flock and serve God with all that they know. These are accepted of God and while they may be unable to see certain aspects of Scripture at the present, God still uses them to win souls to Himself. If the ministers and their converts are honest souls, both will receive and adopt the truth as God reveals it to them (Luke 9:48-50; Mark 9:38-41). Unfortunately, so many ministers and professed Christians have no abiding love for Jesus Christ; they are too proud, or stubborn, to admit that it is time to grow when God makes an effort to reveal more light to them. If this situation is allowed to persist, the one who has refused the revelations of the Gospel, will, by their actions, have refused Christ. They hold more regard for the teachings of men than for the plain teachings of God. Thus, they soon become blind leaders of the blind.

17. What is the position of those who will NOT listen to the truth of the Gospel?

Luke 10:16 _____

Acts 3:22,23 _____

Acts 13:45,46; Hosea 4:17; Romans 11:20-22 _____

18. What will be the result of following those who are reluctant to hear the truth?

Hosea 4:6,17 _____

Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39 _____

19. What does it take to form God's Church?

Matthew 18:20 _____

Compare: John 12:26; Zeph.3:17; Deut.12:11,5 _____

Note: It does not depend on numbers, but if Christ is not there it is NOT His Church ---

God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations, it is the people who love God and keep His commandments... Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ's Church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabits eternity can alone constitute a Church. Where two or three are present who love and obey the commandments of God, Jesus there presides, let it be in the desolate place of the earth, in the wilderness, or in the city enclosed in prison walls. Ellen G. White, The Upward Look p.315.

20. How does God describe those who claim to know Him and to be His followers, but do not do the things that He instructs them to do?

1John 2:4, read also v.3-6 _____

Luke 6:46-49 _____

21. In Christ's address to the Philadelphian Church, the faithful living, how does God describe the assembly of those liars who claim to be faithful Christians, yet are not !?

Revelation 3:9 _____

Compare: Revelation 2:9 _____

22. For those who receive the classification described in Q20 and Q21 above, what are their prospects for entering the eternal kingdom?

Revelation 21:27 _____

23. What has God promised to those who live up to all the light that they have?


Revelation 22:14 _____

Note: God sees these faithful souls as keeping his commandments.

It is evident that our unity with Christ does not depend on our being a member of a traditional church, but whether or not we love God and obey Him (John 15:7,8; Heb.5:9). As long as we worship Him with all the knowledge of truth that we have, He will accept us (1Kings 8:61).

Our worship may be conducted in small groups of faithful believers where the truth is cherished and obeyed. The angels draw near to such and convey their supplication back to heaven, supplications that rise like a sweet savour in His nostrils (2Cor.2:15; Matthew 18:20). There are many of God's children whose only worship companions are the angels of heaven.

There are only two churches in the world -- God's Church and Satan's church. Satan's church has many characteristics and designs to suit many different people. While this and earlier studies have given sufficient details to identify either church, in the lessons to follow we shall discuss more of the sophistries of Satan that lure souls into a false sense of salvation.



May the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, be with you as you seek to know what is truth and how you may serve Him with all that He has been pleased to give you.

Humbly pray with all your heart that He will reveal to you the clear light of His Word.

May every true believer and child of God be found faithful to the light of His glorious Gospel is our prayer.